

Best Paper Award

ANQ Congress 2008, New Delhi, India:

Quality Assurance in Vietnamese Higher Education in the Context of the Global Educational Integration

Ngo Van Nhon

Vietnam Quality Association of Ho Chi Minh City, VQAH (Vietnam)

vqa.hcm@gmail.com

Summary

Education is becoming increasingly international. Not only are the materials becoming more influenced by the rich international environment, but applying the quality assurance at all levels are also playing an increasingly important role. This paper will make suggestions to apply the combined model of quality assurance for Higher Education (HE) in the context of the Global Education Integration.

Along with economic growth, Vietnam has achieved a significant progress in general education and higher education as well. In the academic year of 1992 – 1993, Vietnam had approximately 162,000 university and colleges students at around 110 higher education institutions, accounted for 2% of the cohort, yet, in the year of 2007 – 2008. To enhance the quality of higher education administration, it is necessary to work out both immediate and long-term measures based on the combination of QMS ISO 9001:2008 Model, EFQM Model and Vietnam Educational Quality Assurance Model.

Keywords

ISO 9001:2008 Model, EFQM Model, Vietnam Educational Quality Assurance Model, Quality Management System (QMS).

1. Vietnam Higher Education Current Situations in Brief

Along with economic growth, Vietnam has achieved a significant progress in general education and HE as well. In the academic year of 1992 – 1993, Vietnam had approximately 162,000 university and colleges students at around 110 HE institutions, accounted for 2% of the cohort, yet, in the year of 2007 – 2008, Vietnam has over 1.6 million students at 369 higher education institutions (64 of those are private institution, which account for 17, 34% in total), and accounts for 13% of the cohort. This means out of 10,000 populations, 188 of those are students. The number of faculties is above 56,000, which means each teaching staff will be helping more than 28 students. Only 5,900 of those have PhD degree (occupy less than 11% of the teaching staff), 314 are full professors and 1,845 associate professors.

The educational scale is not sufficient for the nation's industrialization and modernization; and neither imbalanced between supply and demand. Quality and relevance of graduates'

qualifications are a paramount issue. Graduates lack of labors skills needed, so that the employers are facing with difficulties in employing adequate and capable labors.

2. Quality Assurance (QA) Models in Vietnam HE

A view to having scientific criteria for examining the four following aspects of the country's higher education system: Concept of higher education quality; The role of higher education administration; State administration of higher education quality; and International integration trend and commercialization of higher education. The quality assurance models in Vietnam HE are compatible the QMS ISO 9001:2008 Model, EFQM Model (European Foundation for Quality Management) and Vietnam Educational Quality Assurance Model.

2.1 QMS ISO 9001:2008 Model

ISO 9001:2008 specifies requirements for a quality management system (QMS) where an organization: needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide product that meets customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, and aims to enhance customer satisfaction through the effective application of the system, including processes for continual improvement of the system and the assurance of conformity to customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

All requirements of ISO 9001:2008 are generic and are intended to be applicable to all organizations, regardless of type, size and product provided. Where any requirement(s) of ISO 9001:2008 cannot be applied due to the nature of an organization and its product, this can be considered for exclusion. Where exclusions are made, claims of conformity to ISO 9001:2008 are not acceptable unless these exclusions are limited to requirements within Clause 7, and such exclusions do not affect the organization's ability, or responsibility, to provide product that meets customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

The impact of QMS standards worldwide has been so extensive, that it is now virtually impossible to bid for international contracts if a company is not ISO 9000 registered. Considering the fact that ISO 9001:2008 standards are generic in nature, they should be applicable to service organizations, such as software companies, health care and Higher-Education.

However, ISO 9001:2008 is compatible with HE management system, we must design and build the document system not only follow up requirements of ISO 9001:2008 but also interact specific characteristics of HE (see below Figure 1)

Untill now, there are over many universities in Vietnam certified ISO 9001:2008 from many international certification bodies e.g. BV, NQA, TUV, DNV,...and accredited from famous accreditation bodies in the worldwide e.g UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service), ANAB (ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board).

ISO 9001:2008 is still new to Vietnam HE. The Institute for Quality assessment and Development-IQAD (Formerly the International Quality Center-IQC) together with colleagues from consulting bodies will combine technical consultancy with local and foreign experiences to do internal audits and the certification bodies to do external audits for 40 universities in 5 year-period 2005 - 2010.

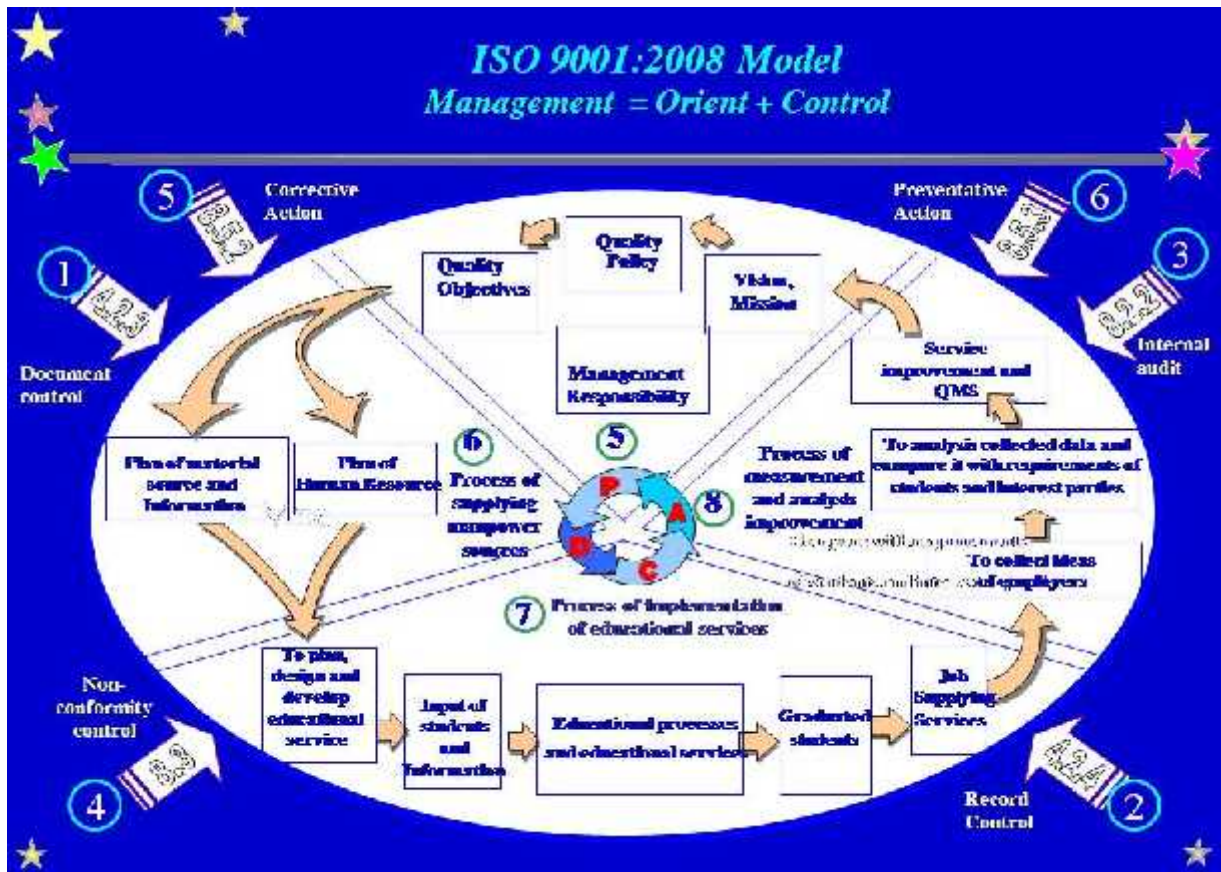


Figure 1: ISO 9001:2008 Model applies in HE

2.2 EFQM Model

The EFQM Model is a framework for HE management systems, promoted by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and designed for helping HE organisations in their drive towards being more competitive.

Regardless of sector, size, structure or maturity, organizations need to establish appropriate management systems in order to be successful. The EFQM Model is a practical tool to help organizations do this by measuring where they are on the path to excellence; helping them understand the gaps; and then stimulating solutions.

The model can be used in four ways:

1. As a framework which organizations can use to help them develop their vision and goals for the future in a tangible, measurable way.
2. As a framework which organizations can use to help them identify and understand the systemic nature of their business, the key linkages and cause and effect relationships.
3. As the basis for the EFQM Excellence Award, a process which allows Companies to recognize its most successful customer experience (internal and external) and promote them to achieve the organizational target guided by their mission statements
4. As a diagnostic tool for assessing the current health of the organization. Through this process an organization is better able to balance its priorities, allocate resources and generate realistic business plans. This fourth, diagnostic use is also known as self-assessment.

Self-assessment has wide applicability to organizations large and small, in the public as well as the private sectors. Increasingly organizations are using outputs from self-assessment as part of their business planning process and use the EFQM model as a basis for operational and project review. Excellent organizations achieve and sustain superior levels of performance that meet or exceed the expectations of all their stakeholders. The EFQM Model is a non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria. Five of these are 'enablers' and four are 'results'. The 'enabler' criteria cover what an organization does. The 'results' criteria cover what an organization achieves. 'Results' are caused by 'enablers' and feedback from 'results' help to improve 'enablers'. (see Figure 2)

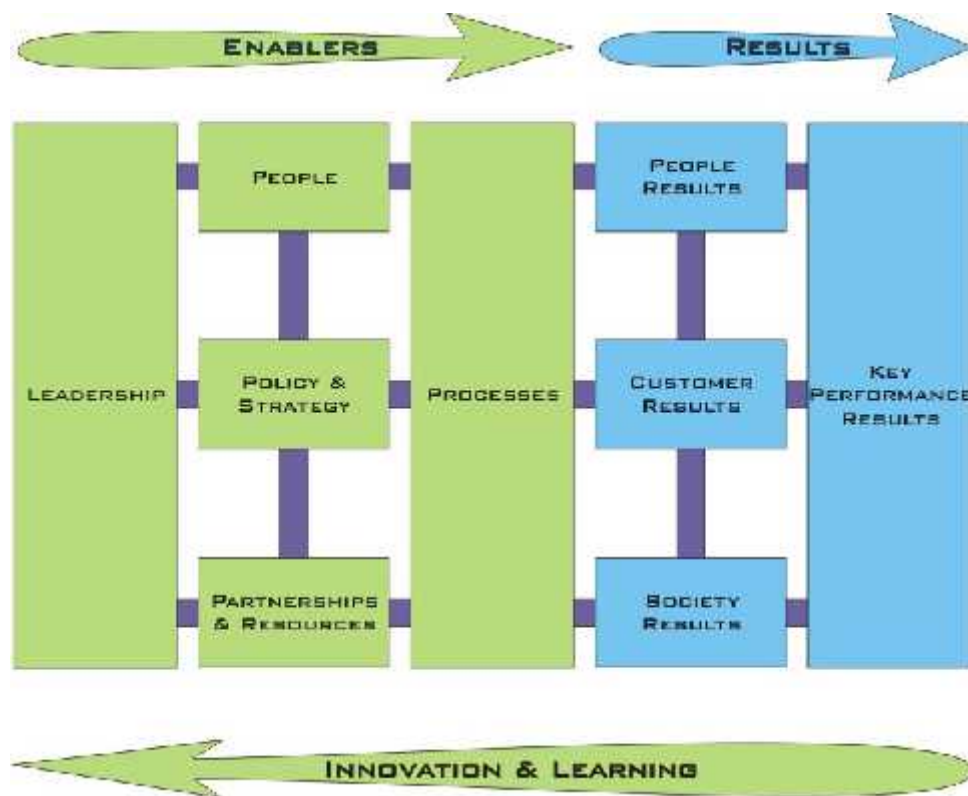


Figure 2: EFQM Model with 9 criteria

The model, which recognizes there are many approaches to achieving sustainable excellence in all aspects of performance, is based on the premise that excellent results with respect to

performance, customers, people and society are achieved through leadership driving policy and strategy, that is delivered through people partnerships and resources, and processes.

However, if we would like to integrate between EFQM with HE management system, we must design and build the document system not only follow up requirements of EFQM but also interact specific characteristics of HE (see below Figure 3)

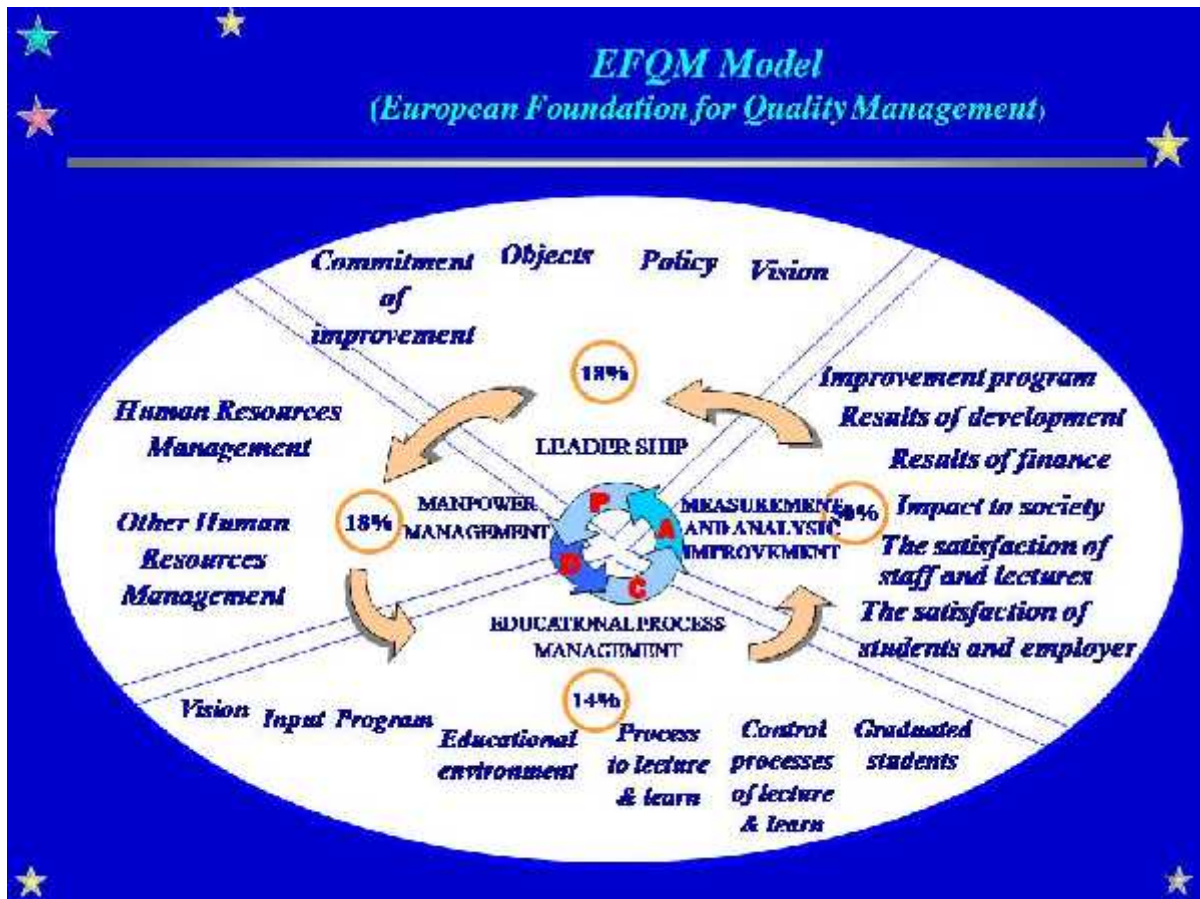


Figure 3: EFQM Excellent Model applies in HE

For reference we wish to present 5 stages of development of higher education management system based on EFQM model as follows (see Figure 4)

- 1st stage: Towards subject oriented school
- 2rd stage: Towards teaching school
- 3th stage: Towards learning school
- 4th stage: Towards linking school
- 5th stage: Towards open school – Scenarios for future

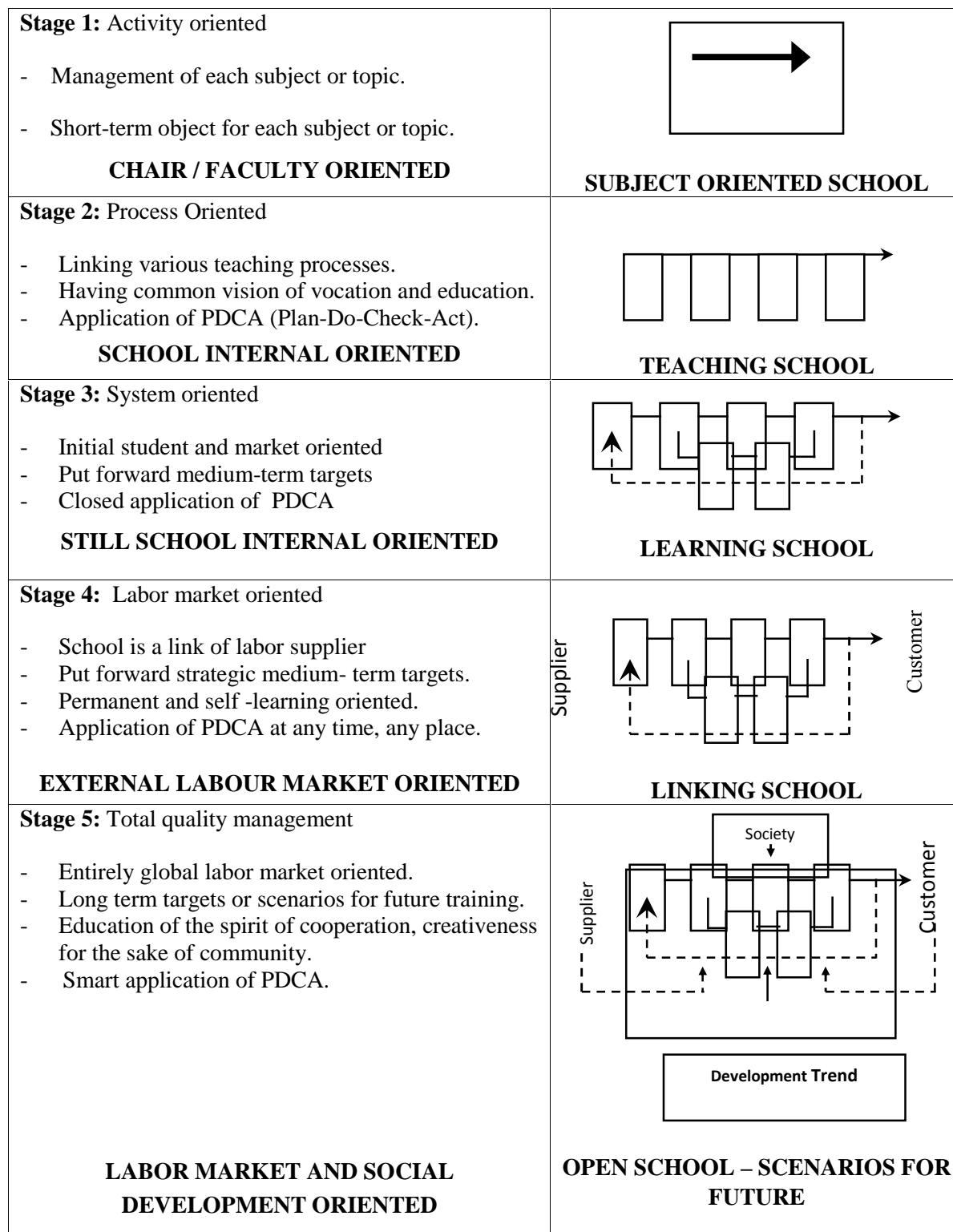


Figure 4: Five stages of development of HE management system based on EFQM model

2.3 Vietnam Educational Quality Assurance Model

Educational quality accreditation was brought into the Vietnam Education Act and specifically stipulated in articles 17, 58 and 99 of the Amended Education Act in 2005. This Act proclaims that the mission of educational accreditation has been of great concern to the government and requires a scientific and strictly implemented procedure. With financial support from the Higher Education Project 1 (HEP 1) and the cooperation of institutions and scholars in the field of quality assurance and accreditation in Vietnam and other countries, The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) has helped the first 20 universities to conduct their internal studies and external reviews. During February 2007, most of Vietnam's universities received training in skills needed to conduct their self studies for the period of 2007 - 2009 in order to meet the MoET standards for accreditation. All of these courses on accreditation were carried out based on *The Provisional Regulation on Higher Education Accreditation* issued by MoET. Recently, the official *Regulation on standards for university accreditation* has now been published and all universities in Vietnam will have to follow this Regulation. MoET's establishment of the General Department for Educational Testing and Accreditation (GDETA) in 2003 showed commitment and progress toward developing education quality management. However, in order to accomplish the mission of education quality assurance and improvement, universities need to be more active in the development of their own plans for conducting internal and external assessment. To do this, the role of each higher education institution is very important and that raises an issue about establishment of external accrediting agencies.

According to the 2007 regulation, the quality standards for Vietnamese Higher Education institutions comprise the following 10 aspects:

1. Mission and Goals (Standard 1)
2. Organization and Governance (Standard 2)
3. Curriculum (Standard 3)
4. Educational Processes (Standard 4)
5. Managerial, Teaching, and Support Staff (Standard 5)
6. Students (Standard 6)
7. Research and Development, Innovation, and Technology Transfer (Standard 7)
8. International Relations (Standard 8)
9. Library, Learning Equipment, and Other Facilities (Standard 9)
10. Finance and Financial Management (Standard 10)

Each standard is further broken down into what is called 'criteria'. The 10 standards altogether comprise 53 criteria which clearly state the conditions required for a university to be assessed as 'meeting standards'. A quick look at the criteria will show that they just follow international norms and conventions, but for Vietnam they are seen as really revolutionary because they refer to a reality that is radically different from that of Vietnamese higher

education. For example, Criterion 1 of Standard 1 (mission and goals) requires universities to have clearly stated mission statements which are widely publicized to all stakeholders – a requirement that had been unheard-of and unthinkable before the Accreditation Standards came into existence. Also, Criterion 2 of Standard 4 requires all universities to organize their curriculum and instructional activities around a credit-based system, another improbability for most of Vietnam’s higher education institutions whose leaders were educated in the former Soviet bloc where a very different system was in operation. A rough translation of the 53 criterion of the Accreditation Standards is included in the Appendix.

It can be said that the above-mentioned 10 standards with the 53 accompanying criteria have covered almost all aspects relating to the governance and operations of a modern university, with not too much difference from regional or international standards. The existence of a transparent set of standards to manage the quality of a university can be celebrated as a breakthrough in the educational administration mentality of the country’s leaders, showing a strong determination for global integration by the Higher Education sector, and promising to bring about positive changes in terms of quality improvement in the time to come.

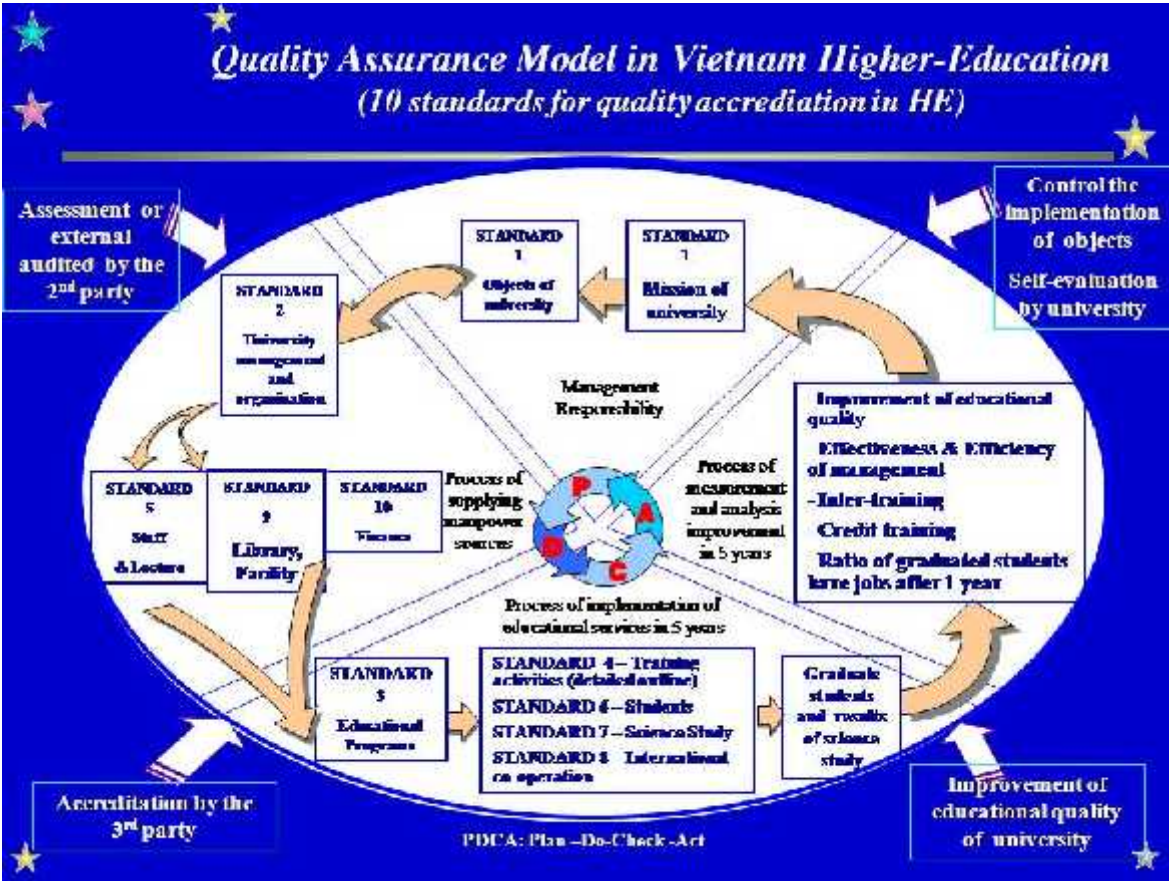


Figure 5: Quality Assurance Model in Vietnam HE based on 10 standards for quality accreditation

Looking back at the QA activities that have been conducted in the past years, one can say that the still very young QA system of Vietnam's education has made a number of significant achievements. Indeed, at the start of the new millennium, the whole of Vietnam's education system was completely unfamiliar with terms like quality, standards, and fitness for purpose, self-assessment, external review, audit, accreditation, or recognition. However, only a few years after that, compulsory accreditation of all Higher Education institutions in Vietnam has become institutionalized, and the implementation of QA activities is carried out with great rigor. Some of the achievements made in the field of QA in Vietnam's Higher Education during the past years include:

- Establishment of the national QA agent (GDETA);
- Development of regulations concerning accreditation activities for Vietnam's Higher Education institutions;
- Initiation and perfection of the horizontal structure of the QA system in Vietnam's Higher Education (GDETA, the QA centers of the national and regional universities, and QA units within all Higher Education institutions);
- Development and implementation of the National Accreditation Plan for Vietnam's Higher Education to the 2010;
- Capacity development for QA specialists and key persons, including administrative staff working in the field of QA for the whole country;
- Participation in regional and international QA networks (e.g., AUN, APQN, and INQAAHE) at national and institutional levels (mainly the two national universities)

3. Conclusion

Vietnam's higher education reform must be focused on the reform of administration. This can be carried out through turning state run universities into universities of that have legally independent establishments, opening of private universities or colleges operating according to market economy laws.

Education is becoming increasingly international. Not only are the materials becoming more influenced by the rich international environment, but applying the quality assurance at all levels are also playing an increasingly important role. This paper will make suggestions to apply the combined model of quality assurance for Higher Education in the context of the Global Education Integration.

References

1. Nguyen Quang Toan, ISO 9000 & TQM – To establish a management system focuses quality and customer focus, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 8th Edition, Revised & Update Version, Ho Chi Minh City, 2001
2. Nguyen Duc Chinh (Chief Author), Quality Accreditation in Higher Education, Vietnam National University, Hanoi Publishing House, Hanoi, 2002
3. Vu Ngoc Hai, Tran Khanh Duc (Co-Chief Author), Modern Education Systems in the early years in 21st Century, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 2003
4. ISO, International Standard ISO 9001”2008 - Quality management systems -Requirements, Switzerland 2008, 4th Edition
5. Vu Phuong Anh, http://ncgdnv.blogspot.com/2009_03_01_archive.html
6. EFQM, <http://www.efqm.org/en>



ANQ Congress Delhi 2010

October 19 - 22, 2010

Best Paper Award

presented to

Ngo Van Nhon

*for your paper presentation at the ANQ Congress 2010 on
Quality Assurance in Vietnamese Higher Education in the
context of the Global Educational Integration
held at the Jaypee Institute of Information & Technology,
from October 19 - 22, 2010, NCR Delhi, Noida, India.*

Hosted by:



Mr Janak Mehta
Chairman - ANQ