



Applying System Theory to Building Quality Culture Model in Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

In recent times, in parallel with the development of quality assurance and education accreditation activities, Vietnam's education system has begun to pay much attention to the development of culture in general and the cultural development of Vietnam quality in particular in each educational institution. Besides, higher education institutions' academic quality assurance system has fundamental signification in considering, reforming the limitations, orientating plans and strategies to assure and enhance the internal activities' quality and satisfy the external quality assurance needs. Therefore, the quality culture is critical in building and developing internal quality assurance systems. This paper proposes that quality culture is the quality cognitive evolving map based on the systems theory and the quality culture forming process from the activities and the quality assurance activities in higher education institutions - a mental approach from the responsibility spirit to the quality culture. Based on implementing the internal quality assurance systems, the quality culture forming process - a long-term cognitive function on quality - expresses the effort and persistence of individuals and organizations in higher education institutions.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Information

The quality of higher education in the trend of regionalization and globalization has been motivating the quality assurance organizations of different levels to innovate constantly develop

positively. Universities orientate strategies and create procedures for quality assurance following the general situation of the national, regional, and international development to innovate and improve the quality of higher education. In any period, the quality assurance organizations have made efforts to find solutions to build the quality assurance system that suits the internal context, satisfies the external requirements, and aims to enhance and unify the quality perception of the individuals and organizations. This factor is a complicated problem that occurs not only in the higher educational institutions (HEIs) but also in the national, regional, and international quality assurance organizations and networks. There has been a report on the study on quality assurance models in Southeast Asian countries: towards a Southeast Asian quality assurance framework of Seameo (Rihed, 2012). Besides, seminar and roundtable meeting: Building quality culture and national qualifications framework to review and provide information on the diverse quality assurance systems of the region, supporting and enhancing the regional quality assurance activities, building the quality culture, the national qualification framework and developing the quality assurance framework of Southeast Asia countries (AQAN, 2013).

Nowadays, the quality culture is the most critical factor that helps build the quality assurance competency/qualification or systems. The quality culture in the HEI refers to the thoughts and the perception of the quality of the individuals. And organizations in the hope of quality assurance activities. The implemented quality culture will create the quality values to form the quality culture. The formed quality culture will vigorously promote the quality assurance activities or develop the coherence and consistency between the quality assurance activities and the quality culture.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Systems Theory

System theory came out into society in the late '40s of the 20th century with the advent of cybernetics and computers (Bertalanffy, 1968; Tran, 2001). Today, system theory has widely applied in many fields. Before some authors have studied the issues related to the relationship between the objects, phenomena and their changes follow a particular rule and the affinity of mutual binding to build system theory.

Bertalanffy (1968) showed that inside a plan, no individual operate independently (alone) that whose members are interdependent in a dynamic way (funky) and synergy (all members of the system). The system is a set of elements that mutual influence, is a set of interacting components to accomplish a particular goal or function (Tran, 2009). The system is a collection of interacting parts. The number shown is not confined to its constituent parts (i.e., the whole more than the sum of the components). A system can be physical, biological, social, or symbol (logo) or include details (Chen & Stroup, 1993). Ackoff (1981) showed that a system includes elements related to each other and has some attributes: Each component affects the function of the whole; Each part is affected by at least one other component in the system; All subgroups of the element also have two properties

aforementioned. Therefore, if we wish to change the design, change the steady-state, change some of the conditions in the system. Besides, that is the influential members participate in each group with the critical task and must cooperate with your team members and the other groups to change attitudes and behavior of the groups and promote the system change from conflict to cooperation (Tamas, 2004).

University is a subsystem of the design of the national higher education, and it has a system-level on a par with the other universities. University is a system composed of many parts; these parts interact and are interdependent. Suppose we want the system to work well, focusing on a specific position and considering every action affecting the system (Ngo, 2012).

Bertalanffy (1968) suggested that an open system is constantly exchanging information with the environment and regulated by the information feedback process to assess whether the system's outputs can attain the goals that the system had established or not. The system has a dynamic interaction between the components in the design, interactions with the development environment. Therefore, if the system is not stable, it will change the input level. At each time, internal and external environmental monitoring systems decide on whether to accept (open) or unacceptable (closed) from external influences (Matthews, 1992).

Based on systems theory, Laszlo and Krippner (1997) made a Heuristic representation of evolving individual cognitive map Figure 1.

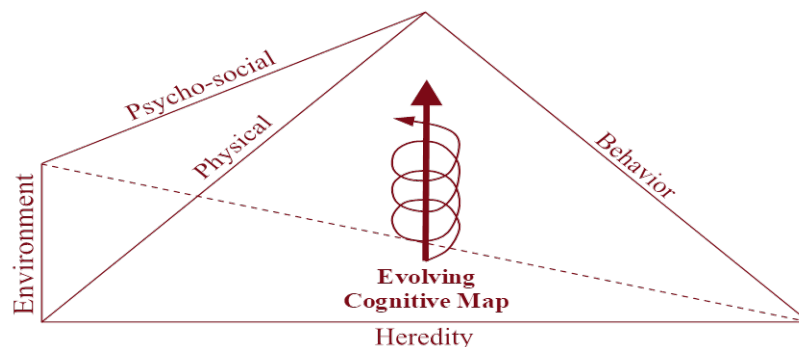


Figure 1: Heuristic representation of evolving individual cognitive map (Laszlo and Krippner, 1997).

The cognitive evolution map is an evolutionary system theory related to social change and time and place. The author argues that a cognitive map is a mental image or representation of individuals and groups in their environment and relationship; it is related to the substantive aspects of the attitudes and behavior and the value and composition of trust shaping human perception. The organizations can restructure, reset dynamic institutions more, and be better suited to deal with these societal changes.

The open system in the universities is related to the impact, the influence from external activities such as social pressure - mechanisms and quality assurance activities at the other universities. Each university's "open" level is different from the external environment to accept or not accept information from the outside. Since then, the authors can identify the boundaries of quality systems among the universities through awareness, norms, behaviors, and competencies. This boundary can be considered the main characteristics of each university and has changed over

time. Inside the university, everyone cooperates and works in harmony. That is the share of the work through their boundaries. In addition, each university has a limitation to the higher authorities and be influenced and impacted from the management levels differently. In contrast, the limit will be closed.

System boundary. Boundary describes the system from the environment and any subsystem from the system as a whole. Matthews (1992) argued that in a time, the system monitor observes the internal and external environment to decide the opening or closing for external influences.

In the study, Friedman and Allen (2011) referred to the many problems of the interaction between humans, between departments within the organization, including adaptation, the stress in life, deal with something or somebody, human power as the key concepts for understanding the nature of human's interactions in the environment. The authors emphasize that the stress originates in the abuse of power by a dominant group in the system. For example, two different people have different experiences due to different perceptions in the same situation. This one may be too stressful but for the other one a little stressful. A stable system tends to be relatively closed to avoid too much-challenging information bringing about unbalance. Still, it can not remain stable forever because of changes in the group members and environment to maintain the group. We need to select the transformation of the members' environment or both to adjust the boundaries (Connors & Caple, 2005).

Tamas (2004) focused on the boundary between the systems at the same level. System boundary support defines inside and outside system phenomena, including open and closed limitations, which are applied to determine the scope of the system affected. For example, each person has a different open boundary and to what extent they decide to "open" or "close," "accept" or "reject" a particular issue. The recessed edge will pass if everyone cooperates, works in harmony, and shares together; otherwise, it will be closed. In addition, the author also mentions some environment-related systems, as shown in Figure 2.

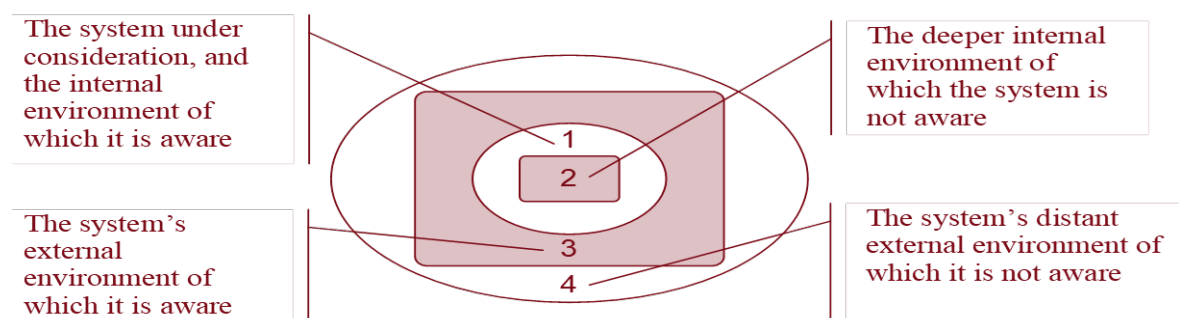


Figure 2: System Environments

We can see that the system theory is applied to many different scientific fields to ensure operations. The relationships had the process interact systematically is to help the system be stable and sustainable under the effects of the inside and outside elements. In addition, the plan must be open, accepting, and coping with external conditions such as the environment, human and other

systems in the integration and development associated with the development of the standard methods and the other same level system.

In short, the system is a collection of elements (which may be the subsystems) that can influence interdependence, impacts, and adaptation to the external environment. The research applied open systems theory to control the relationship between the impact and effect factors and the quality culture.

2.2 Quality Culture

Quality culture is a tool for improvement, quality standards in the organization, a cultural component to promote quality development in all activities, and close and systematic relationships with other artistic elements.

Crosby (1986) defined quality culture as everyone responsible for the quality. European University Association suggests that quality culture has two components: (1) A set of values, trusts, expectations, and commitments towards quality (referring to the knowledge, awareness, involvement, anticipation, and emotion). (2) Factor for structure and management of the process determined to improve the quality and coordination efforts made (mentioned task and responsibilities of the individual and collective) (EUA, 2006).

Organizational culture shapes some values to build a quality culture. Quality culture is an organization's value system creating a favorable environment for establishing and improving quality continually (Ahmed, 2008). Besides, quality culture is that all members (from students to leaders) and all units (from the departments to the unions) know how their work is of high quality.

In brief, quality culture is a subculture in organizational culture. For this study, quality culture formation is the formation/awakened consciousness, awareness, and responsibility of the quality of everyone in the university consistent with the strategy and goals when any activity had especially the quality assurance activities. In other words, the quality culture supplements some quality values into an organizational culture to generate more power and support cultural institutions to fulfill the organization's mission and goals.

Quality culture view. Quality culture views actions closely related to organizational culture to improve and enhance quality continuously (Ahmed, 2008; Gvaramadze, 2008). School culture/quality culture as a tool to reflect (Tran, 2009; Vettori, 2012). Quality culture had assessed and improved continually to create the quality circle (Nguyen, 2011). Conclusion: conclusion and had made that work follows quality requirements (Le, 2008). The quality assurance activities are attached to the university's daily life and are considered responsible for all the professional and administrative members (Lewis, 2012).

Quality culture view towards perception focuses on human factors work quality habitually (Le, 2008). Besides, the quality culture as a context subject nature, lifestyle, way of thinking, and how to understand something). Lanarès (2009) and Vu (2011) emphasized quality culture's individual and collective cognitive factors.

Quality culture project (2002 - 2006) in European university association determines quality culture based on two components: First, a set of values, trusts, expectations, and commitments towards quality (quality commitment). Second, the factors elements, management, and processes are determined to improve the quality management quality (EUA, 2006).

Harvey and Stensaker (2008) offered four types of a quality culture within the cultural theory framework from the combination of ideas (Douglas, 1982). Thompson et al. (1990) and Hood (1998) emphasized the quality culture as a survey tool and resolved issues related to the efficiency in all activities and awareness of humans.

The quality culture model in Europe offers a quality culture model that includes four components (Schein, 1992; Rüegg-Stürm, 2002; Morgan, 2002). In particular, (1) Structure (representing the quality system of the organization); (2) Capacity (representing the consolidated organizational mechanisms of quality to culture); (3) Quality culture (representing expression, manifestation, and ritual of the organization); (4) The link elements (link the elements through communication, participation and trust and) and shaping some quality culture values in the context of culture organization (EUA, 2006; Ehlers, 2009).

Besides, Ehlers (2009) showed that four types of culture emphasize the commitment level of management and staff decide the existence of culture in the organization, including (A) When the commitment of management and staff is insufficient, the culture had fate, (B) When commitment focus on professional and management roles is terrible, the culture cannot be transparent, (C) When the management roles are good and the participation of staffs are nasty, the guarantee process belongs to the manager and (D) When the participation and commitment of managers and staffs are good to make up the consensus culture.

Lanarès (2009) proposed how to monitor the development of the quality culture through activities that what they say and what they do at the individual and collective level to determine how to measure four kinds of quality culture through perception and action.

Le et al. (2012) proposed a quality culture model in higher education institutions closely linked with quality assurance activities, including five components of quality culture in educational institutions: academic background, social environment, humanistic environment, and natural, cultural environment. This model shows that it contains all quality assurance activities necessary to perform (based on the quality standards of the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, AUN, and ABET) and as a basis for assessing the expression level of quality culture in educational institutions.

In the above model, Ehlers and Lanarès (2009) stressed the capacity of individuals and groups, an essential element in shaping the quality perception in the formation and development process of quality culture. The remaining model focuses on the type of culture or activities to shape the quality culture values.

3 Method

Systematize and generalize trends and perspectives of domestic and foreign authors related to quality culture. In this study, a group of theoretical research methods: The authors used analytical methods, synthesizing research works on quality culture, training management, and training quality management in the country and the world. They clarified the theoretical issues of quality culture and teaching quality management in universities in Vietnam according to the total quality management approach (Hair et al., 2010).

Survey method: Using questionnaires of managers, lecturers, and students at universities in Vietnam to collect information to identify the current situation of building a quality culture in universities in Vietnam and the status of training management in universities in Vietnam.

Observation method: Observing the opinions of administrators, lecturers, and students in the process of building a culture of quality and managing training quality, thereby gaining more information to assess the status quo quality culture and training quality in universities in Vietnam and the current situation of management of training quality in universities today, thereby proposing measures to build a quality culture and manage training quality of universities in Vietnam follows the approach of total quality management (Hair et al., 2010).

Method of summarizing experience: Overview of actual results achieved in the process of building a quality culture and management the quality of training in universities in Vietnam over the years recently; study the school's summary report, the training quality analysis report, the final report of the institutions using the training products to clarify and more prosperous than the current situation of training quality management in universities in Vietnam. Product research methods: Collect and analyze precise developments evidence the results of training activities and manage the training quality of managers, lecturers, and students. Compared with the product's defined goals, it serves as a basis for determining training and governing training quality. Selection of sampling method: Based on the research purpose, the importance of the research work, time to conduct the research, funding for the study, skills of the research team to decide on the selection probabilistic or non-probabilistic sampling method; then go on to pick out the specific form of this method (Hair et al., 2010).

4 Result and Discussion

Determining sample size is usually based on: accuracy requirements, available sampling frame, data collection method, allowable cost. There is typically a formula to calculate sample size; for non-probability samples, often based on experience and understanding of the research problem to choose the sample size. Expert method: Consult with managers and other experts contribute to the study's theoretical basis and verify the feasibility, urgency, and direction to implement the measures proposed in the research paper to have more reliable information ensure objectivity for research results. Experimental method: Conduct a trial of the proposed steps to verify the necessity and feasibility of the criteria, thereby perfecting the proposed measures to suit reality - the author group article 250 educational managers from 50 universities in Vietnam. As a result, 215 valid votes

had obtained during May 2021, and the rate was 86%. In the quality culture forming and developing process, we realize that the two most important values (cores) are responsibility and quality, which express the perception and actions. The commitment and the quality are accountable to the members who participate in the quality assurance activities. And the quality and responsibility of every member in all activities of the HEI. There must be quality in the working process (Do, 2013a). Table 1 shows the survey results.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics from surveying 250 managers from 50 universities in Vietnam.

Contents	References	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Quality and responsibility values	Huong (2018)	215	1.00	5.00	3.53	0.885
The quality perception evolving map	Friedman & Allen (2011)	215	1.00	5.00	3.56	0.920
Responsibility spirit and responsibility culture	Connors, & Caple (2005)	215	1.00	5.00	3.51	0.922
Responsibility spirit and quality spirit	Ahmed (2008)	215	1.00	5.00	3.46	0.905
Responsibility culture and quality culture	Harvey (2009)	215	1.00	5.00	3.06	1.003
The influential and impacting factors	Lewis (2012)	215	1.00	5.00	2.926	1.043
Quality competency	Hang and Thai (2021)	215	1.00	5.00	3.098	0.959

Quality and Responsibility Values: To develop the quality sustainably in all activities in the HEI, we must enhance and improve the quality continuously to satisfy the needs of the users on the training products. Besides, the beneficiaries of the training (expressing the spirit and culture in quality) meet the requirements of social development. To be responsible, we must know what to do and achieve quality (expressing the confidence and culture in commitment). In other words, to achieve quality, there must be the responsibility in responsibility.

The Quality perception evolving map had based on two core values (Figure 1) and the evolving perception map of the system theory (Laszlo & Krippner, 1997). We build the quality perception evolving map of the individuals and organizations using four spiritual and cultural values of responsibility and quality: responsibility spirit, responsibility culture, quality spirit, and quality culture.

The quality perception evolving map consists of two parts: The quality culture developing process from the activities in the HEI and the influential factors (the organizational culture, the heredity, and the environment - situation) and the impacting factors (the behavior, the competency, and the psychology - society) on the quality culture evolution. To clarify the quality culture forming process from the HEI and internal quality assurance activities, we consider a cognitive function from the responsibility spirit to the quality culture.

Responsibility Spirit and Responsibility Culture: Mergler (2007) defined the individual responsibility spirit as the ability to recognize and control the thoughts, emotions, and behavior of oneself and be willing to take responsibility to oneself and society for the results of the activities one has done. Mergler presents the individual responsibility spirit structure, consisting of four components.

From the components of the individual responsibility spirit, we realize that the personal responsibility spirit is critical and is the foundation for forming the cultural forms in the HEI such as the organizational culture, the university culture, the responsibility culture, the quality culture...

In particular, the responsibility spirit is the beginning of the responsibility culture and a multipurpose tool for creating the quality culture (<http://www.vnu.edu.vn>). Although each culture has its values and principles, very close relationships create a unique culture system in every HEI.

The authors should express each individual's responsibility spirit through the HEI activities to form the responsibility culture in every department, faculty of different functions and duties based on the cognitive energy, the control, and the responsibility for what they have done. The individual responsibility spirit is the foundation for forming the responsibility culture. That means each individual is responsible not only for their work but also for the people concerned with the work they have been doing. For example, the results of their work are the input of the process of other people's work; or they have been doing their job with others (teamwork). This phenomenon frequently occurs with the individuals in ill-developed organizations; their low cognitive thinking causes them to work perfunctorily without being interested in the other people in the teams or those involved in their work because an outcome is not the one they are in the application. This factor will lead to passing the buck and evading the responsibility.

When the responsibility culture (collective culture/core) is formed, the values of the responsibility culture impact the shared values of the individuals and enhance the responsibility spirit, especially of the newly recruited individuals or the ones who had transferred to work in a responsible organization. The responsibility culture is the general responsibility of all individuals in an organization according to the missions, goals, and commitment the spirit value when performing any work.

Responsibility Spirit and Quality Spirit: Building a quality culture to help the training center quickly adapt to the national and international quality standard system; demonstrating a quality commitment to society; forming a quality management environment; having a clear orientation in human resources development. The university is committed to quality with the spirit of self-discipline, voluntary, trust, cooperation, sharing, responsibility, and always creativity to improve the quality of products and services. The quality spirit results from the practical quality assurance activities integrated into the responsibility spirit.

The internal quality assurance activities include inspecting, monitoring, evaluating, ensuring, maintaining, and improving the quality of the specific procedures and processes of all the activities operating in the HEI. When mentioning that the individual responsibility spirit is related to quality, John G. Miller said, "Make better choices at the moment by asking better questions," "Choose the wrong thought, and we're off into the emotional goat heads of blame, complaining, and procrastination. But the right thoughts lead us to a richer, more fulfilling life and the feelings of pride and accomplishment that come from making effective decisions", "Personal accountability is not about changing others. It's about making a difference by changing ourselves". For a job, we started with the question "What?" or "How?" (Not "Why?", "When?" or "Who?") and focus on actions and behaviors, not personalities (Scholz, 2010).

Responsibility Culture and Quality Culture: The quality spirit is formed and exists within each individual in a responsible organization to create the quality culture values. When the quality culture had developed, the quality culture values have an impact on the quality values of the individuals, enhance the quality spirit, especially, they have effects on the newly recruited individuals or the ones who had to work in a quality organization

The quality culture is the consciousness, the perception, and the responsibility of all individuals on quality following the missions, goals, and quality spirit value when performing any work. When individuals do anything, they must be conscious and responsible for creating and setting up the quality standards that suit the missions and goals based on the quality spirit values.

5 Conclusion

To build and develop a quality culture in universities, educational institutions need to raise stakeholders' awareness and quality assurance work. Building and creating a quality culture helps every member understand what needs and tries to do everything right from the beginning, right at all times, following the essence of total quality management. Building a quality culture means that every member and organization knows how their work will be improved and improved according to the plan. Besides, all participate in implementing the planned goals with a positive, proactive, and self-disciplined spirit; simultaneously, they fully participate in building a quality management system towards the satisfaction of the parties involved in the quality assurance process. The quality culture, a critical factor in building and developing the quality assurance system, is the long-term cognitive process on quality, which depends on every HEI's quality culture-building plans and strategies. Every HEI has a different starting point, objectives, techniques, and quality competencies. However, the ultimate goals are quality assurance, continuously enhancing and improving quality, and developing sustainably.

Quality culture formation is the long process of gradually building scientific and logical quality assurance activities to improve the quality and form the authentic quality culture. Developing the habit of performing quality activities will lead to the proper perception of the individual (responsibility spirit) and organizational (responsibility culture) responsibility. Avoid skipping stages, achieving the quality assurance perfunctorily, or applying the quality assurance or quality culture model, which is not suitable for the activities and general awareness of the individuals in the current context. Building the quality culture in the HEI is very important and necessary in the global trend of the quality development of higher education to continuously improve the quality and develop sustainably in the HEI.

6 Availability of Data and Material

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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