

Intersecting Traditions and Modernity: Perceptions of Quality Assurance in Outcome-Based Education among Vietnamese University Lecturers

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Abstract

In the continuously evolving landscape of global education, the role of Quality Assurance (QA) in fortifying and maintaining the relevance of teaching and learning processes has grown ever more critical. In this context, Vietnam—a country delicately balancing its rich traditions with a strong push towards modern educational paradigms—offers a unique vantage point. The primary aim of this study was to delve deep into Vietnamese university lecturers' perceptions regarding the intersection of QA and Outcome-Based Education (OBE), particularly focusing on its ramifications on their academic practices. Adopting a qualitative methodology, we engaged with ten lecturers from two distinct universities in the Mekong Delta. Through semi-structured interviews, participants shared their narratives, which were subsequently analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This analysis was enriched and contextualized through the lens of established theoretical frameworks. The emergent themes painted a multifaceted picture. While recognizing the transformative potential that QA can bring within the OBE framework, lecturers often found themselves grappling with the challenges of seamlessly integrating traditional teaching methodologies with the demands of OBE. Adding to this complexity were concerns about the potential erosion of the 'human touch' in teaching as technological interventions become more pervasive in QA processes. Another intriguing dimension was the interplay of deeply rooted Vietnamese cultural norms with contemporary QA practices, serving at times as barriers while at others as catalysts for innovation. The revelations from this study underscore the imperative for establishing culturally resonant QA systems, crafting comprehensive and contextual training modules, and ensuring a judicious blend of technology and traditional pedagogical practices. While resonating with universal themes in education, the findings also spotlight the nuances specific to Vietnam's academic landscape, making a case for contextually tailored educational interventions.

Keywords: quality assurance, outcome-based education, Vietnamese higher education

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education worldwide, the focus on Quality Assurance (QA) has emerged as a pivotal concern for academic institutions. The essence of QA lies in its potential to ensure and enhance the effectiveness and relevance of academic programs and the overall institutional performance (Rosa & Amaral, 2014). At the heart of this quality-oriented paradigm is the concept of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), which emphasizes the alignment of teaching, learning, and assessment processes with the desired outcomes, ensuring that learners acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes deemed necessary for their future roles in society (Rao, 2020).

Vietnam, a country with an ascending trajectory in Higher Education (HE) and a rich tapestry of cultural and pedagogical traditions, offers an insightful lens to examine the interplay between QA mechanisms and academic performance. As Vietnam grapples with global and regional integration, its universities are pressured to harmonize their academic programs and performance with international standards (Nguyen & Tran, 2018; Pham, 2012). This endeavor necessitates a deep understanding of how university lecturers, torchbearers of knowledge and innovation, perceive and engage with QA initiatives in OBE.

However, there is a conspicuous gap in the literature regarding the perceptions of Vietnamese university lecturers on the role of QA in influencing their academic performance in an OBE framework. Addressing this lacuna enriches the discourse on QA in Vietnam's HE sector. It sheds light on broader questions about the adaptability and effectiveness of global educational trends in diverse sociocultural settings. This qualitative study, therefore, aims to explore the perceptions of Vietnamese university lecturers regarding the role of QA in shaping their academic performance in an outcome-based educational setting. The findings promise to offer nuanced insights into the challenges, prospects, and intricacies of implementing and optimizing QA in a dynamic and culturally unique academic ecosystem.

Review of the Related Literature

QA in HE: A Global Perspective

QA has become an integral part of HE systems globally, driven by an increasing demand for accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. Harvey and Newton (2007) defined QA as establishing stakeholder confidence that the provision (input, process, and outcomes) meets and continues to meet needs,

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expectations, and standards. As expounded by Beerkens (2015), the primary objectives of QA include improving the quality of learning, teaching, and research in universities and enhancing public trust by ensuring that established standards are met.

OBE – A Paradigm Shift

OBE, as described by Spady (1994), is an educational model that emphasizes the results or outcomes of the learning process. The core principle of OBE is aligning the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and assessment techniques with predefined outcomes. OBE represents a shift from traditional input-based education, focusing on content and processes, to an approach that concentrates on what learners can do upon completing a course (Harden, 2007).

The Interplay of QA and OBE

Integrating QA mechanisms within an OBE framework ensures that educational outcomes align with predetermined quality standards (Almuhaideb & Saeed, 2020). Regular assessment and feedback loops are essential in this model to continuously refine the curriculum and teaching methodologies. There is a growing consensus, as noted by Coates (2005), that such an alignment improves institutional performance and student learning outcomes.

Vietnamese HE: A Brief Overview

Vietnam's HE system, rooted in traditional Confucian values, has witnessed radical changes over the past few decades, especially with the government's push toward global integration (Hayden & Lam, 2007). This journey towards modernization has brought about new challenges, especially in maintaining and enhancing academic quality (Nguyen et al., 2021).

QA in Vietnamese Universities

The emphasis on QA in Vietnamese universities has grown in recent years, largely driven by the state's aim to enhance the global standing of its institutions (Dao, 2015). Establishing the Vietnam National University's QA system in the early 2000s marked a significant step in this direction. However, as Nguyen et al. (2021) noted, while the infrastructure for QA is taking shape, the actual practice, understanding, and culture of QA in the academic community remain nascent.

University Lecturers' Perceptions of QA

The success of QA initiatives largely depends on the perceptions, attitudes, and engagement of the academic staff, who play a central role in the educational process (Aamodt et al., 2018). A study by Lucas (2014) suggests that if university lecturers view QA processes as overly bureaucratic or detached from their academic endeavors, they might resist or merely comply without genuine engagement. Conversely, when faculty members perceive QA processes as supportive and instrumental to enhancing teaching and learning, they are more likely to embrace and internalize them (Jabbar & Hussin, 2019).

While there is a plethora of research on QA in HE globally and in Asia, limited literature focuses specifically on Vietnam. Even more scarce are studies that delve deep into the perceptions of Vietnamese university lecturers concerning QA in an OBE framework. The literature synthesis underscores the global relevance of QA in HE and its interplay with the OBE model. While Vietnamese HE is making strides in this direction, the perceptions and engagement of its university lecturers remain under-researched. This study aims to bridge this gap by delving into how Vietnamese university lecturers perceive and interact with QA initiatives in the context of OBE.

Research Question

How do Vietnamese university lecturers perceive the role of QA in their academic performance in OBE?

Methodology

Participants

The study's cohort was meticulously selected from two eminent universities in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam, embodying a purposive sample of 10 university lecturers. This deliberate selection strategy aimed to ensure a diverse representation across various faculties, spanning a range of teaching experiences and encapsulating both male and female lecturers. The distribution of the participants reflected a balanced gender split, with five males and five females contributing their insights. Delving into their academic teaching history, three lecturers had garnered less than five years of experience, four fell within the 5 to 10 years bracket, and the remaining three boasted a rich history, extending beyond a decade in the academic sector.

The initial outreach to potential participants was facilitated through official university email channels. These electronic communications provided a concise yet comprehensive snapshot of the study, articulating its overarching objectives, the expected nature and extent of participation, and an unwavering commitment to maintaining the confidentiality of shared insights. Lecturers who expressed interest were subsequently presented with a more exhaustive information sheet. To further assuage any reservations and provide clarity, a face-to-face meeting (or a virtual alternative, based on preference) was organized, offering a platform for potential participants to articulate concerns or seek clarifications.

Navigating the intricacies of this study necessitated an acute awareness of ethical considerations, primarily because of the delicate balance between candidly discussing QA processes and safeguarding personal experiences. Central to the process was the principle of informed consent. Before sharing their experiences, every participating lecturer was equipped with a comprehensive informed consent form. This document delineated the study's purpose, its procedural dynamics, potential risks, and envisaged benefits. An essential aspect of this form emphasized the lecturer's unbridled right to retract from the study at any juncture without incurring any unfavorable repercussions.

Ensuring the anonymity of the participants was paramount. To this end, pseudonyms became the cornerstone of the study's documentation, effectively cloaking the real identities of the lecturers and any tangentially identifiable data. Additionally, the environment where the interactions transpired was meticulously curated to imbue a sense of comfort and privacy. Participants were empowered with the discretion to navigate around any questions that might stir discomfort. Transparency was maintained throughout, with participants being informed about the potential publication of the findings, albeit with the assurance that individual identities would remain obfuscated.

Lastly, ancillary background information was collated to paint a vivid contextual backdrop against which the lecturers' perceptions could be understood. This encompassed their academic qualifications, specific subjects they tutored, tenure at the current institution, and any prior brushes with QA and OBE-related training or experiences. In summation, with their diverse experiences and backgrounds, the chosen participants provided an invaluable reservoir of insights, ensuring the study's robustness. The unwavering emphasis on ethical considerations throughout the study's trajectory fortified the sanctity and integrity of the research process.

Data Collection

The primary method chosen for data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews. Recognized for their flexibility and depth, semi-structured interviews allow researchers to explore complex topics like perceptions and experiences while permitting participants to express themselves freely. Initial questions were designed to guide the conversation, ensuring that all key areas of interest concerning QA and OBE in the context of Vietnamese HE were covered.

Recognizing the importance of refining interview protocol for clarity and relevance, a pilot phase was initiated. A subset of university lecturers, not included in the main study was invited for

this pilot. The pilot interviews tested the questions' flow, coherence, and appropriateness. Feedback from the pilot participants was invaluable. It illuminated areas of ambiguity, redundancy, and potential sensitivity in the initial set of questions. Based on this feedback, revisions were made to the interview protocol, refining the questions to ensure they were clear, relevant, and respectful.

To provide a glimpse into the refined questions, here are some sample interview questions:

1. How do you perceive the role of QA in your teaching practices?
2. Can you share an experience where QA processes directly influenced your approach to teaching or assessment?
3. In the context of OBE, what challenges do you face in aligning your teaching methods with the desired outcomes?
4. How do you think your colleagues and the broader academic community perceive and engage with QA initiatives?

Each interview, on average, spanned 45 to 60 minutes, ensuring that participants had ample time to reflect and respond without feeling rushed. Given the cultural and linguistic context, interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to make sure participants were comfortable and could express their perceptions and experiences with nuance.

The interview venues were chosen with participants' convenience and comfort in mind. Most interviews were conducted in quiet, private rooms within the university premises, ensuring a neutral and familiar environment for the participants. Based on the participants' preferences, a few interviews were conducted in quiet cafes or via secure virtual platforms.

In conclusion, the data collection process was meticulously planned and executed to ensure its validity and reliability. The use of the Vietnamese language, the careful selection of venues, and the iterative process of refining the interview questions underscored the study's commitment to capturing authentic, in-depth, and culturally sensitive insights from the participants.

Procedure

The research methodology of this study was anchored in a structured yet adaptive procedural strategy, ensuring the depth and reliability of the findings at each phase. The inception of this research voyage commenced with an exhaustive literature review. Delving deep into the annals of existing research, the study cast its net over a vast array of literature spanning the domains of QA, OBE, and the unique academic landscape of Vietnamese HE. This meticulous exploration illuminated gaps and nuances in the prevailing body of knowledge and provided a robust scaffolding for subsequent research phases.

Emerging from the literary foray, the research transitioned into establishing and presenting theoretical frameworks. Two salient frameworks crystallized during this phase, furnishing the study with critical analytical lenses. The first framework elucidated the intricate mechanics and philosophies underpinning QA in HE. It dissected the objectives, methodologies, and challenges endemic to QA practices. The second, contrastingly, was rooted in the transformative paradigm of OBE. This framework underscored the paradigmatic shift from traditional teaching methodologies, spotlighting the implications and nuances of OBE in contemporary educational settings. These frameworks not only sculpted the contours of the impending interview regimen but also furnished a structured paradigm for data analysis.

With theoretical anchors in place, the study ventured into practical engagement by constructing interview questions. Drawing inspiration from the frameworks and literature, a compendium of semi-structured questions was curated. Crafted with intentionality, these questions aspired to evoke detailed, layered, and candid responses, granting invaluable insights into the lecturers' perceptions and lived experiences. Following the blueprint etched out by the formulated questions, the research seamlessly transitioned into the data collection phase. As detailed earlier, this phase hinged on semi-structured interviews facilitated in the Vietnamese language, ensuring authenticity and comfort for the participants.

Post-collection, the raw data underwent rigorous thematic analysis. Grounded in the methodological principles articulated by Braun et al. (2023), this phase commenced with transcribing interview dialogues. Subsequent readings familiarized the research team with emerging patterns, leading to the generation of initial codes. These embryonic codes coalesced into overarching themes, meticulously reviewed and refined to encapsulate the intricate fabric of the data. The analytical dance was choreographed harmoniously with the previously established theoretical frameworks, synergizing empirical findings with broader educational philosophies. Interwoven through the fabric of the entire research journey was a thread of reflection and iteration. This self-reflective mechanism ensured the research's fidelity to its objectives while instilling adaptability, allowing for recalibrations based on emergent insights or challenges.

Results

The Overarching Significance of QA in Teaching Practices

In the collected data, the profound significance of QA in shaping lecturers' teaching methodologies emerged as a salient theme. A compelling majority, eight out of the ten participants, articulated their perception of QA not just as a formal procedure but as an intrinsic guide fostering pedagogical excellence. One participant candidly expressed:

Over the years, my respect for QA processes has only grown. It is not just a set of guidelines or checkboxes for me. Rather, it is a compass that points me towards a more impactful, learner-centric teaching style." Another reiterated this sentiment: "When I think of QA, I do not see a bureaucratic exercise. I visualize a scaffold that holds my teaching aspirations, ensuring that I deliver the best to my students.

These perspectives can be expounded through the lens of the established theoretical frameworks. The first framework, which delves into QA in HE, accentuates that such quality mechanisms transcend mere evaluation, acting as transformative tools that propel lecturers towards continual refinement. This transformative ethos, palpably resonated in the shared experiences, paints QA as a dynamic instrument of academic excellence. Further, the principles of OBE, the second framework, emphasize a shift from the act of teaching to the outcomes of learning. As expressed by the lecturers, this alignment with QA signifies an active endeavor to ensure that their teaching strategies are congruent with overarching educational goals. Far from a bureaucratic mandate, QA emerges as a revered instrument, steering lecturers towards enhanced pedagogical efficacy.

Challenges in Aligning Traditional Teaching Methods with OBE Principles

A particularly evocative finding centered on the discernible challenge experienced by a majority of lecturers, seven out of ten, in reconciling entrenched traditional teaching methodologies with the forward-leaning principles of OBE. As they grappled with transitioning from a familiar, content-centric pedagogy to the outcome-driven ethos of OBE, palpable friction points emerged. One seasoned lecturer remarked:

I have been teaching for over two decades. While I appreciate the ideals of OBE, transitioning from the methods I have employed for years is daunting. I often revert to my old ways, especially under pressure." Another echoed similar sentiments, noting, "OBE demands a shift not just in how we teach, but how we think about teaching. It is not easy, especially when the traditional methods have been deeply ingrained in our academic culture for so long.

These sentiments can be further unpacked by diving deeper into the prism of the pre-established theoretical frameworks. While championing transformative teaching approaches, the QA framework inherently acknowledges the tussle between new

educational paradigms and deep-seated academic traditions. Simultaneously, the OBE framework accentuates the essential shift from content-rich instruction to an outcome-focused methodology, a transition that, while promising, can pose inherent challenges to lecturers ensconced in traditional teaching modes. Thus, the journey towards integrating OBE within the Vietnamese HE framework appears to be a complex tapestry of aspiration and inertia, underscored by the allure of progressive pedagogy and the weight of time-honored practices.

Perceived Value of Continuous Feedback in Enhancing Academic Performance

An enlightening revelation from the study was the perceived paramount importance of continuous feedback mechanisms in bolstering academic performance. A considerable majority, with six out of the ten participants, emphasized their belief that regular and structured feedback loops play a critical role in refining teaching strategies and, in turn, elevating the overall educational experience. An articulate lecturer shared:

Continuous feedback, be it from peers, students, or the QA system itself, acts like a mirror. It offers me a candid reflection of where I stand and what needs recalibration." Another participant weighed in, noting, "The dynamism of the educational landscape necessitates that we, as lecturers, remain agile. Regular feedback acts as a beacon, guiding us through the ever-evolving pedagogical terrains.

Positioning these sentiments within the theoretical frameworks of the study offers profound insights. The QA framework intrinsically advocates for iterative review processes, positing that feedback loops are not mere evaluative tools but catalysts driving pedagogical evolution. Similarly, the tenets of OBE underscore the iterative nature of learning, where continuous feedback aids in aligning teaching strategies with desired outcomes. Thus, this finding underscores a pivotal realization: in the quest for academic excellence, continuous feedback is beneficial and indispensable, serving as both a reflective tool and a navigational guide in the intricate dance of education.

Reluctance to Embrace Technological Interventions in QA Processes

An intriguing facet that emerged from the dialogues was a palpable hesitancy among participants, with five out of the ten lecturers fully embracing technological interventions as part of their QA processes. Despite acknowledging the potential efficiencies brought about by technology, there remained an underlying sentiment of reservation. One lecturer poignantly expressed:

While technology can streamline, it also impersonalizes. For me, the essence of teaching is human connection, and I fear technology might dilute that." Another lecturer shared similar concerns: "I am not averse to technology. But it becomes intrusive when it starts dictating how I should teach or evaluate.

Delving into this sentiment using the study's theoretical frameworks provides added depth to the apprehensions. The QA framework emphasizes the importance of personalizing educational experiences while maintaining standardized quality benchmarks. Although beneficial in maintaining standards, the introduction of technology could be perceived as encroaching upon the personal touch that lecturers value. Furthermore, in the context of OBE, where the emphasis is on individual learning outcomes, the standardized approach that technology often brings can seem in contrast to the very essence of OBE. Thus, this finding highlights a nuanced tension in the academic realm: the balance between technological efficiency in QA processes and preserving the invaluable human element in education.

The Intersection of Cultural Norms and QA Implementation

A nuanced insight surfaced from the interactions was the undeniable interplay between cultural norms inherent to the Vietnamese educational context and the implementation of QA processes. Remarkably, six of the ten lecturers identified cultural underpinnings as influential factors in how QA is perceived and enacted. A lecturer poignantly highlighted:

Our respect for hierarchy and tradition sometimes hinders open dialogue. This cultural norm can sometimes be a roadblock in a QA system where feedback is crucial." Another added, "In our culture, we often prioritize collective harmony over individual critique. This can make certain QA practices, especially those demanding candid feedback, a delicate endeavor.

Positioning these perspectives within the study's theoretical framework unravels deeper dimensions. While advocating for transparency and open dialogue, the QA framework might sometimes be in subtle conflict with cultural values prioritizing group cohesion and respect for established hierarchies. Additionally, the principles of OBE, which emphasize individual learner outcomes, can intersect intriguingly with a culture that leans towards collective harmony. This finding underscores a compelling dialectic: the dance between universal QA standards and the specific cultural nuances of the Vietnamese educational landscape, reminding educational stakeholders that the journey of academic excellence is as much about global standards as it is about local sensibilities.

Need for Comprehensive Training to Navigate QA Systems

From the discourse, a pressing need for more holistic and consistent training in QA systems emerged as a recurrent theme. Notably, seven out of the ten participants echoed sentiments indicating that while they recognize the value of QA, there is a palpable gap in their understanding or capacity to navigate its intricacies effectively. One lecturer candidly shared:

The QA system is vast and sometimes overwhelming. Sometimes, I am scratching the surface, and a deeper understanding would greatly benefit my teaching approach." Another observed, "While we have sporadic QA workshops, we need a more sustained and comprehensive training regime to harness its potential truly.

Interpreting this sentiment through the study's theoretical lenses offers valuable insights. The QA framework, inherently complex with its myriad standards and practices, demands familiarity and proficiency for effective implementation. This is especially significant in the context of OBE, where aligning teaching methods with specific outcomes necessitates a thorough grasp of QA processes. The finding illuminates a critical area of intervention for educational institutions: to ensure that the potential of QA is recognized and fully realized, there's an imperative to bridge the knowledge gap through structured, ongoing training endeavors tailored to the unique needs and contexts of the lecturers.

Discussion

Overarching Significance of QA in Teaching Practices

Previous studies, particularly those from more established educational systems in the West, have long posited the central role of QA in shaping teaching methodologies (Brady & Bates, 2016; Tatto, 2015). This study aligns with this perspective, further cementing the notion that QA, even in the Vietnamese context, is perceived as an intrinsic guide fostering pedagogical excellence. However, this research uniquely contributes to highlighting the transformative nature of QA in a culture undergoing rapid educational reform. The emphasis on QA as a 'compass' and a 'scaffold', as articulated by the participants, underscores a deeper, perhaps more profound relationship between lecturers and QA in

Vietnam, setting the stage for further research on cultural nuances in QA perceptions.

Challenges in Aligning Traditional Teaching with OBE Principles

While the challenges of adapting to OBE are universally documented (Halbleib & Jepson, 2015; Katawazai, 2021), the Vietnamese perspective, steeped in its unique blend of time-honored teaching traditions and contemporary educational aspirations, adds a fresh dimension to this narrative. This study emphasizes the practical hurdles and the philosophical and cultural tensions that Vietnamese lecturers navigate. This nuanced dance between the allure of progressive pedagogy and the weight of entrenched practices is a distinctive contribution to the broader discourse on OBE adoption.

Reluctance to Embrace Technological Interventions

Prior research, such as that by Zuhairi et al. (2020), has championed technology integration in QA, emphasizing its efficacy in enhancing educational outcomes. While the study does not dispute this, it does spotlight the palpable reservations among Vietnamese lecturers about potentially diluting the human essence of teaching. This underscores a crucial reflection on the delicate balance between technological advancement and cultural preservation, a theme explored in the prevailing literature.

Intersection of Cultural Norms and QA Implementation

While studies have examined the role of culture in educational paradigms (Vujičić & Tambolaš, 2019), the current research offers a deeper dive into the intricate interplay of Vietnamese cultural norms with QA implementation. Highlighting the subtle tensions between collective harmony, respect for hierarchy, and the candid feedback mechanisms essential for QA presents a unique vantage point, emphasizing the importance of localized solutions in global educational practices.

Need for Comprehensive Training in QA

While the call for better training in QA processes is echoed globally (Ellis & Hogard, 2018; Ingvarson & Rowley, 2017), this study underscores this need from the lecturers' perspective at the crossroads of tradition and reform. The expressed desire for more sustained training resonates with a deeper yearning to be effective agents of change in Vietnam's evolving educational landscape. In conclusion, while the current findings find resonance with global themes, they also illuminate unique facets of the Vietnamese academic milieu. Thus, the study stands as a testament to the universality of certain educational challenges while emphasizing the inimitable nuances that each culture brings to the table. This interplay of the global and the local enriches the discourse, ensuring that the education field remains universally relevant and contextually sensitive.

Conclusion

The ever-evolving landscape of global education underscores the necessity for QA mechanisms to ensure that teaching and learning processes remain robust, effective, and relevant. This dynamic assumes distinctive dimensions in Vietnam, a nation with a rich tapestry of traditions and an earnest aspiration for modernization. This study sought to delve into these dimensions by exploring Vietnamese university lecturers' perceptions of QA in their academic practices, particularly within the context of OBE.

The methodological approach of this study was rooted in qualitative paradigms. Through semi-structured interviews with ten lecturers from two universities in the Mekong Delta, this study embarked on a journey to uncover the nuances, challenges, and aspirations surrounding QA and OBE. The rich narratives were then analyzed using thematic analysis within established theoretical frameworks.

The findings painted a multi-hued picture. Lecturers acknowledged the challenges of aligning traditional teaching methods with OBE principles. They voiced concerns about potentially losing the human essence of teaching with the advent of technological interventions in QA. The complex interplay of deep-seated Vietnamese cultural norms with modern QA practices emerged as both a challenge and an opportunity. Furthermore, a palpable need for comprehensive training to effectively navigate QA systems was underscored.

Drawing from these findings, several implications arise. First, in Vietnam, and potentially in similar contexts globally, they may benefit from developing and implementing training regimes tailored to their lecturers' unique needs and contexts. Such training should acknowledge the existing pedagogical foundations while equipping lecturers with the tools to effectively integrate modern QA and OBE principles. Then, QA systems and processes should be designed with a deep sensitivity to local cultural norms and values. This does not imply compromising global standards but calibrating them to resonate with local realities. Next, while technological interventions can streamline and enhance QA processes, it is essential to strike a balance, ensuring that the 'human touch' in teaching and learning is not compromised. Continuous dialogues with lecturers can provide insights into achieving this equilibrium. Moreover, given the challenges in reconciling traditional teaching methods with OBE principles, platforms that foster collaborative exchange of best practices, challenges, and solutions among lecturers can be invaluable. Such platforms can act as support systems during the transitional phase.

While the aspirations for quality and excellence in education are universally shared, the pathways to these goals are intricately woven with local threads. This study underscores the importance of weaving these threads with care, respect, and vision, ensuring that the tapestry of education in Vietnam, and by extension in similar contexts, is beautiful and robust.

Limitations

Regardless of its rigor, every research endeavor carries inherent limitations that offer avenues for future inquiry and refinement. Reflecting on this study, several limitations and recommendations for future studies become evident. One significant limitation pertains to the size and geographical scope of the participant group. Engaging with ten lecturers from only two universities in the Mekong Delta provided rich qualitative insights. However, this limited sample restricts the generalizability of the findings to the wider Vietnamese academic community. Future studies might consider diversifying the participant pool by including lecturers from multiple universities across various regions of Vietnam. Such an approach could capture a broader range of experiences and perspectives, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the role of QA in Vietnamese HE.

The primary methodology of this study was semi-structured interviews, which, while offering depth, rely heavily on participants' self-reporting. This approach might be influenced by recall bias or the desire to present oneself favorably (social desirability bias). A potential direction for subsequent research is to incorporate mixed methods. By combining interviews with observational studies, future researchers could obtain a multi-dimensional view of lecturers' interactions with QA and OBE, thereby enhancing the study's validity and depth. The current research focused predominantly on lecturers' perceptions, neglecting the equally vital student perspective. Understanding how students perceive and experience QA mechanisms can provide a holistic picture of the educational landscape. It would also be valuable for subsequent studies to explore students' perspectives on QA within OBE. This approach would offer a more rounded understanding of the efficacy and impact of QA mechanisms in the educational ecosystem.

Conducted at a specific point in time, the study might not capture the evolving nuances of the dynamic field of education and its ongoing reforms. Longitudinal studies that track the evolution of perceptions and practices regarding QA and OBE over extended periods would be highly beneficial. Such studies can chart the trajectory of changes and offer insights into the long-term

implications of QA in OBE settings. While the current research emphasized the cultural context of Vietnam, a deeper exploration into specific cultural norms, traditions, and values impacting QA perceptions was not extensively undertaken. Ethnographic studies delving deeper into the cultural intricacies of Vietnam could provide a more nuanced understanding of how local traditions and norms shape educational paradigms.

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