

The Current Situation Of Applying And Implementing Quality Management Principles – A Case Study At A Higher Educational Institution In Vietnam

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Abstract—In the context of increasing competition and integration in higher education, quality management has become a strategic imperative for universities. This review article examines the current state of applying and implementing the 07 Quality Management Principles at the University of Finance – Marketing (UFM), Vietnam. Drawing upon ISO 9000 frameworks and institutional practices, the study explores how UFM integrates principles such as customer focus, leadership, engagement of people, process approach, improvement, evidence-based decision making, and relationship management into its teaching, admissions, infrastructure development, and curriculum design. Through a combination of policy analysis, stakeholder feedback, and internal evaluation, the review highlights the positive outcomes achieved, including enhanced student support, curriculum alignment with market needs, and improvements in facilities and digital infrastructure. However, it also addresses key challenges such as resistance to change, resource limitations, and the need for broader stakeholder engagement. Based on these findings, the article proposes practical solutions for institutional leaders to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms and ensure sustainable development in higher education. The study offers valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers committed to advancing quality-driven university governance in the era of educational transformation.

Keywords—quality management principles; higher education; leadership; training management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, as countries around the world follow the common trend of integration and openness, quality becomes a key competitive advantage for organizations (Andreeva et al., 2019). It can be said that the most important factor that determines whether an organization can survive and grow is the quality of its products and services, especially whether they meet customer needs at the lowest possible cost. Therefore, every organization must find solutions to address the issue of quality - not only for its own survival but also for the greater goal of improving the quality of life for people.

In the field of higher education, the government's current trend of allowing public universities to be financially autonomous and permitting the establishment of private universities has led to strong competition among universities in attracting students. This has made it essential for educational institutions to improve their training quality management capabilities in order to survive and grow (Patel & Pitroda, 2021). At the same time, it helps meet the goal of providing high-quality human resources for society.

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The University of Finance – Marketing (UFM) is a public university that follows a financial autonomy mechanism. The university's training management is not only based on the Ministry of Education and Training's credit-based training regulations and the school's own policies, but it also applies the 07 quality management principles in its training quality management system. This aims to improve the effectiveness of training management, contributing to the enhancement of curriculum and teaching methods, ensuring the continuous improvement of training quality. The goal is to align education with the needs of society and to fulfill the broader mission of education in the best possible way.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. Definition of Quality

According to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which is widely accepted by many countries, "Quality is the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfills requirements" (Marsden & Shahtout, 2024).

As defined in ISO 9000, "Quality is the degree to which a set of characteristics related to the ability of a product, service, or process fulfills specified requirements or standards".

From these definitions, it can be understood that quality is measured by how well the requirements are satisfied, which includes both the needs and expectations of customers.

B. Definition of Quality Management

Management activities in the field of quality are referred to as quality management. Quality management is the coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to quality. The purpose of quality management is to establish policies, objectives, and responsibilities, and to carry them out through actions such as quality policy, quality planning, quality control, quality assurance, and quality improvement within the framework of a quality system (Langabeer, 2018; Marsden & Shahtout, 2024).

III. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Quality management is based on the following 07 basic principles: customer focus, leadership, engagement of employees, process approach, improvement, evidence-based decision making, relationship management.

A. Customer focus

Customers are the main target of products and services, and they are the driving force behind production and service activities. Therefore, organizations must understand and align their products with both the current and future needs of customers (Lins et al., 2006). The quality of a product or service must be customer-oriented. Businesses must produce and sell what customers need, not just what the business already has. This principle is considered the most important core principle. Many businesses today still do not take good care of their customers. Customer care includes many activities such as understanding and meeting customer requirements, and focusing on customer needs. Customers are the ones who generate the main revenue for a business, helping it to maintain operations and grow. In today's highly competitive market, retaining existing customers and attracting new ones is always a big challenge for businesses (Negrete et al., 2020). This principle helps organizations understand customer needs now and in the future, and align their goals with the expectations and desires of their customers..

B. Leadership

Leaders play an important role in deciding the development path of an organization. They are responsible for ensuring consistency between the organization's goals, direction, and internal environment. Leaders must participate in guiding, building strategies, systems, and finding ways to encourage everyone to join in, promote creativity, and raise awareness of the quality of products and services to achieve shared goals. It is important to create a unified direction between goals and actions, have a clear vision, and build core values for the organization. This principle increases the effectiveness and efficiency in achieving quality objectives because leaders provide direction, supervision, and promote communication at all levels (Negrete et al., 2020).

C. Engagement of employees

Human resources are always the most important resource in any organization. Each employee is like a crucial link in a chain. Without one link, the whole system may not function properly or may not function at all. That is why the participation of all individuals in the organization is necessary. The enthusiasm, skills, and experience of each person will help the organization achieve its quality goals effectively and quickly (Goharshenasan & Shahin, 2017). This principle encourages everyone to participate and contribute ideas for improvement. It also increases satisfaction, trust, and cooperation within the organization.

D. Process approach

A process approach is a method where related or interacting activities are managed together to create added value for products or services. Quality management from this perspective means managing continuous processes and their interrelations (Goharshenasan & Shahin, 2017; Negrete et al., 2020). Every business activity must follow specific processes. To operate efficiently, organizations need planning, control, and evaluation for each step, even the smallest ones. This principle helps organizations approach problems logically and scientifically. It allows identification of root causes through input information, and evaluation of whether objectives are achieved based on predicted outputs. It also helps compare actual results with initial plans, and review human resources and budgets accordingly.

E. Improvement

As society develops, customer needs also change, pushing organizations to improve continuously. Improvement is a key goal for many businesses that want to grow sustainably and compete in the long term (Hofmann, 2021). Creating attractive, differentiated products requires employees to understand improvement methods and tools. Organizations can improve their management methods, operations, technology, equipment, and human resources—constantly innovating to improve product functionality. This principle motivates innovation and improves the quality of products and services. It also increases the ability to predict and respond to future risks.

F. Evidence-based decision making

All decisions should be based on analysis, evaluation, and specific evidence - not on assumptions or personal feelings. Evidence can include records, documents, events that are documented by photos, videos, or other verified materials (Negrete et al., 2020). All quality decisions must rely on complete, accurate, and selected market information, along with scientific analysis methods and concrete data. This principle ensures decisions are made accurately and effectively, helping businesses avoid unnecessary risks.

G. Relationship management

Effective relationship management might result in enhancing customer satisfaction by addressing customer needs and complaints effectively, organizations can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty (Yang & Huang, 2022). Specifically, quality management system principles help organizations achieve high-quality standards in their products and services, leading to better performance and customer satisfaction.

IV. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF APPLYING THE 7 QUALITY MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES AT THE UFM

Currently, UFM has been applying the 7 quality management principles: customer focus, leadership, engagement of employees, process approach, improvement, evidence-based decision making, and relationship management. Quality is built through the active participation of everyone with self-awareness, which encourages a spirit of self-management and cooperation among the university's lecturers and staff. The management system always pays attention to relationships with other social stakeholders related to education and training. The university's policies are developed and implemented based on actual facts and data, with shared experiences and encouragement of creativity and continuous improvement. The quality management principles are applied through leadership reviews and internal evaluations to ensure the system runs smoothly. In addition, quality management at the university is highly professional. This is shown through consistency in task handling, equal quality of work among staff, quick task processing, readily available data and information to support fast decision-making, and cost savings (in terms of labor, materials, and time). Sustainable

development is also promoted by meeting the balanced needs of all stakeholders, including society, the university's owners, and employees.

A. Customer focus

The main customers of the University of Finance – Marketing are its students. Therefore, the University believes that the quality of its students is a key factor that determines both the development of the institution and the quality of its training programs. With the goal of training high-quality human resources, the University places students and student support activities at the center of its operations. From admissions, teaching, training programs, and facilities to learning outcomes, all activities are aimed at meeting the needs and expectations of students—and even exceeding them when possible.

- Admissions:

To help candidates access information easily and effectively, the University has developed clear and up-to-date policies and regulations on admissions in compliance with current laws. The admission policies for each academic program are well-defined and detailed, including information about degrees, study duration, quotas, examination/admission methods, admission timelines, tuition fees, and scholarships. These are communicated through various recruitment channels. To assist students in choosing the right field and career, the University has asked the Admissions Council to involve faculty members in counseling and answering questions from prospective students. It has also expanded the types of counseling activities by inviting guest speakers from international companies, partner institutions, and industry experts.

- Student support:

The University assigns departments, lecturers, and staff to monitor students' academic and personal progress, their learning results, and study load, and to issue academic warnings when necessary to support students in improving. Departments such as the Student Affairs Office, the Academic Affairs Office, and others are responsible for monitoring progress and delivering timely and accurate notifications and responses to students' concerns. Previously, a lecturer could serve as an academic advisor for up to three classes. However, starting in 2024, to improve the quality of academic advising, each lecturer will advise only one class. This change helps reduce workload for lecturers and improve the quality of student support.

- Quality improvement:

With a learner-centered approach, the University focuses heavily on serving its students. In recent years, it has worked closely with internal departments to organize regular student dialogue conferences (held twice a year) and conduct student surveys to collect feedback on various issues such as training programs, facilities, teaching staff, and administrative staff. According to the University's undergraduate program design procedure, the University has developed a survey system to gather student feedback on teaching activities and training organization before graduation. Before designing new programs, the program development committee must complete a survey plan, conduct surveys with different groups - lecturers, students, employers - using different methods such as workshops, interviews, or email questionnaires. After collecting responses, the committee analyzes the data and reports the results. Based on labor market needs and feedback from stakeholders, the committee identifies the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional competencies for each training program.

B. Leadership

In meetings where decisions are made—ranging from major to minor—related to strategy, objectives, teaching quality, facilities, admissions, learning outcomes, etc., the University's leadership is always present. They set specific goals, listen to input from department managers and lecturers, and then propose concrete implementation methods. This ensures that the University has a strong top-down management structure. The University has organized meetings between the Board of Rectors and heads of relevant departments to discuss the alignment of learning outcomes with the University's Development Strategy. Based on the feedback collected from stakeholders, the University approved and issued new teaching programs for various faculties.

C. Engagement of employees

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- Admissions Activities

The University has established a diverse admissions team that includes leaders of faculties, experienced lecturers from specialized departments, outstanding students, and staff members from related departments such as the Academic Affairs Office, Student Affairs Office, and the Center for Admissions and Business Relations. These team members participate in online admissions counseling for high school students through career orientation sessions held during school flag ceremonies. They also take part in exchange programs, admissions counseling workshops alongside other universities and colleges, and guide high school students during their visits to the University from both within the city and neighboring provinces.

- Quality Assurance Activities

The University organizes meetings to discuss and reach agreement on the learning outcomes of its training programs. These meetings involve lecturers from different faculties and other stakeholders. Based on these discussions, the University drafts the full structure of the training programs. Before designing or adjusting any training program, the University conducts surveys to collect feedback from various stakeholders, including experts, managers, lecturers, researchers, students, and employers. This shows that, before making any decisions, the University always surveys and listens to everyone involved to ensure that its decisions are accurate and effective.

D. Process approach

UFM identifies learning objectives and expected outcomes as key indicators of the connection between the university, its academic programs, and the training needs of society. Therefore, the objectives and learning outcomes of each program are developed based on the University's mission, vision, core values, long-term strategy, as well as the general goals of higher education as stated in national education laws, and the requirements of management bodies. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students are expected to achieve upon graduation are clearly defined. These outcomes cover both general and specialized requirements, and they reflect the expectations of external management bodies.

The University has set a general objective: "The overall objective of the training program is to help learners acquire and develop fundamental knowledge in social sciences, politics and law, broad and comprehensive knowledge in business and business administration, and strong practical understanding of business and management to serve as a foundation for solving management problems in enterprises and organizations". Based on this shared objective, along with the University's mission and vision, all activities—from admissions to teaching and learning processes—are implemented in alignment with this central goal.

E. Evidence-based decision making

All decisions made by the University's leadership are based on concrete evidence and specific data. The process, method, and tools for collecting feedback are clearly defined in the University's regulations on gathering opinions from stakeholders and leadership. The results from these surveys, after being processed by the Quality Management Office using specialized software, are compiled and compared across training programs or different units within the University. These results are then sent to relevant departments, which analyze the data and create reports on how the feedback has been used to make improvements and enhance quality within their units. After receiving feedback from stakeholders, the University carries out various improvement activities. In addition, the University compares the satisfaction levels of its stakeholders with those of other educational institutions to evaluate the quality of its training programs. The University's admissions policy is shaped by stakeholder input and based on labor market demand

analysis and forecasting. This policy is updated annually. After each admissions cycle, the University collects feedback from stakeholders and reviews labor market forecasts. Based on this information, the University proposes improvements and updates to the admissions policy for the following academic year, aiming to improve both the quantity and quality of student intake.

F. Improvement

- Admissions Activities

Each year, the University prepares an annual admissions plan. The policies and regulations regarding admissions at both the University and Faculty levels are updated yearly to comply with the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and to follow general admissions trends across universities nationwide. The admissions methods change from year to year. For example, there were 2 methods used during the 2018–2019 academic year, while there were 4 methods by 2022–2023. These include: direct admission and priority admission according to MOET regulations, admission based on good academic performance in high school, admission based on results from the national high school graduation exam using subject combinations, admission based on the results of entrance exams from the Vietnam National University.

- Facilities

Each year, the University conducts surveys to collect student feedback about its facilities. Based on the results, improvements have been made—over 100 classrooms and practice rooms have been renovated and upgraded. The Information Library in District 7 was opened, and traditional bench seats were replaced with individual cushioned chairs in all classrooms to support more flexible learning, group work, and student activities. The University Library has clear and detailed usage policies and rules, which are regularly updated and adjusted based on real conditions. The Library's services are also continuously improved. All updated information is promptly posted on the Library's website so users can access it quickly. The University continues to improve its infrastructure and equipment to better meet student needs.

- Training Quality

The University of Finance – Marketing regularly surveys and compiles feedback from employers, graduates, lecturers, and experts to identify strengths and weaknesses in the undergraduate program. These insights are used to improve and develop training for future cohorts. The survey results also reflect labor market needs at different times and help assess the relevance and quality of teaching methods. Based on these, the University adjusts the program by: redesigning learning outcomes based on new standards, adding necessary subjects, increasing the duration of practical sessions in some subjects, integrating multiple courses into a single new one, adjusting the total study duration to better align with the number of credits. These changes are focused on increasing the effectiveness of application and hands-on experience in the training process.

G. Relationship Management

To improve the effectiveness of its admissions activities, the University has actively collaborated with its Center for Admissions and Corporate Relations to implement its admissions policies through specific actions, based on the University's admissions plan. The University has organized workshops and training sessions on teaching program design methods and approaches. By directly collecting feedback from experts during these events, the University makes informed decisions on curriculum development and assigns personnel to carry out the implementation. Regarding employers: The University has issued a procedure for employers to evaluate the quality of its graduates. Based on this procedure, the University conducts surveys to identify the essential skills and attributes that graduates need in order to meet labor market requirements. Using the survey results, the University prepares evaluation reports on the graduates' ability to meet expectations in terms of professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and overall competencies. These results are then used to design and adjust training programs to better fit labor market demands.

V. EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF TRAINING QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT THE UFM

A. Positive Aspects

The University of Finance – Marketing has been applying the 7 quality management principles in teaching, admissions, quality improvement, facilities, and more. As a result, the quality of services has seen significant progress—some areas have even achieved outstanding improvements compared to previous years. The application of quality management principles at the University is becoming more systematic. There is a consistent effort to update, improve, and standardize documents to ensure they are uniformly implemented across all departments. The practice of directly collecting feedback from students, lecturers, and stakeholders allows the University to accurately analyze and identify the real needs and expectations of learners. Based on this data, the University can take timely action to meet those needs and enhance service quality.

In addition, strict document control helps the University analyze and evaluate results, identify the root causes of issues, and propose quick and effective solutions. This improves the University's reputation, enhances service quality, and strengthens internal operations. By applying the 7 quality management principles, the University also maintains strong external relationships with businesses, recruitment partners, and other stakeholders. This provides the University with more opportunities to access new ideas, methods, and real market demands. In 2022, the University completed an accreditation report covering learning outcomes, admissions, training programs, and infrastructure.

After collecting both direct and indirect feedback from students, lecturers, department leaders, and stakeholders, the University upgraded its IT systems and infrastructure—such as computers, network systems, backup systems, cybersecurity, and access rights—to better meet training, research, and community service needs. The IT Department proactively coordinated with functional units and advised the Board of Rectors on conducting regular quarterly and annual reviews, upgrading the UIS software system and related platforms, enhancing backup and security systems, and reporting on digital transformation efforts to the Department of Information and Financial Statistics (Ministry of Finance) starting from August 2022. This was done according to Official Dispatch No. 1095/THTK-HTKT dated October 27, 2022, on implementing the Ministry of Finance's digital transformation plans under Decision No. 1484/QĐ-BTC. The University also developed the project: "Digital Transformation at the University of Finance – Business Administration," Project Code: CS-DA-09-22.

Additionally, the University has built a well-equipped library with many resources and computers to support students in their learning, creating a professional and comfortable study environment. The University always pays attention to students' employment after graduation. Therefore, every year, the Quality Management Office carries out a graduate employment survey for all programs and majors. The results are collected and presented in the table below.

TABLE I. EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND TIME TO EMPLOYMENT AFTER GRADUATION (BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM)

Academic Year	Employment Status				
	Employment			Further study	Unemployed
	In-field Employment	Related-field Employment	Unrelated-field Employment		
2019	44.40%	26.00%	10.00%	2.40%	17.20%
2020	89.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.77%
2021	63.55%	16.82%	7.48%	2.80%	9.35%
2022	25.36%	34.06%	14.49%	2.90%	23.19%
2023	50.52%	28.53%	7.33%	3.40%	10.21%

Based on the results above, it can be seen that in the past five years, more than 80% of graduates from the Business Administration program have secured employment. Most of these graduates work in positions that are either directly related to their field of study or closely connected to it.

B. Limitations

UFM has been applying the 7 quality management principles and has gained many significant benefits. However, alongside these advantages, there are still some limitations that need to be addressed. At the beginning of implementation, the University's leadership faced challenges in promoting and communicating the principles to department-level managers. Old mindsets and traditional methods still influenced some levels of management, so the University needs more time to help all leaders fully recognize the benefits and importance of applying quality management principles to the design and delivery of academic programs. The successful application of quality management principles requires coordination across many levels—leadership, managers, lecturers, students, and other stakeholders. Therefore, the University must maintain strong and wide-ranging relationships and constantly improve its thinking and approaches to meet the evolving needs of both learners and the labor market. As technology advances and quality management systems become more sophisticated, the University's existing resources may not be sufficient to meet these growing demands. This makes it difficult to fully utilize the available technological capacity and limits the University's ability to independently manage its quality systems.

C. Potential solutions

The University's leadership should introduce specific policies to encourage department managers and lecturers to apply quality management principles in their teaching activities. At the same time, regulations on penalties for individuals or departments that violate rules should also be established. This will help create a strict, effective, and non-overlapping management mechanism. The Quality Management Office should receive further training to improve their professional expertise and closely coordinate with other departments. There should be more support and efforts to improve and establish standards, perform assessments, and calibrate measurement and testing tools. This will make the analysis of evidence more accurate, clear, and efficient. From these analytical results, the University's leadership can develop appropriate strategies and improvements that better meet student needs. Increasing awareness across the University community is also essential. Organizing regular meetings to openly discuss the implementation of quality management principles will be meaningful and necessary for the University's long-term survival and development.

VI. CONCLUSION

Training quality management is not only about managing people but also about managing all related factors that influence the training process. Setting clear quality objectives and policies serves as a guiding principle for an organization's success. Training human resources to meet labor market demands is an essential trend in a market-driven and globalized economy. Identifying society's workforce needs and aligning training goals accordingly is a key step toward success in education.

Besides meeting professional qualifications, employers increasingly require graduates to be skilled in soft skills, professional practices, and especially foreign languages. Therefore, the University of Finance – Marketing constantly works to improve its quality management approach to better serve students' needs and meet employer expectations. The application of the 07 quality management principles in training quality management at the University of Finance – Marketing has brought many benefits to students, staff, faculties, and the University as a whole, including: enhancing and improving the effectiveness of quality management and the achievement of training quality objectives and policies; improving the management of academic programs; strengthening and developing faculty and staff quality; improving the management of infrastructure, libraries, textbooks, and learning materials.

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