

Applying KPIs In Evaluating Lecturers at Some Universities in Vietnam

Tran Quoc Viet¹

Abstract

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are now being used in some universities in Viet Nam. This study explores how KPIs are currently applied in evaluating lecturers at some universities in Viet Nam. It addresses the following key issues: an overview of the KPIs application in some universities; the legal basis of the lecturer evaluation; the principles underlying the lecturer evaluation; and the relationship between KPIs and welfare policies, and personnel management. The study further discusses the current limitations in applying KPIs in evaluating lecturers at some universities in Viet Nam

Keywords: KPIs, University, Lecturer, Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are an assessment tool that has been widely and effectively applied in organizations around the world. Essentially, they form a system for evaluating work performance - a means for measuring and assessing work effectiveness through data, ratios, and quantitative indicators to reflect the performance of an organization, a functional department, or an individual (Parmenter, 2015).

KPIs are increasingly being adopted by many organizations in Viet Nam. They are now used for a range of jobs across various industries, including education. Some universities in Viet Nam have begun to apply KPIs.

A scientific and accurate measurement of lecturers' performance helps universities determine the extent to which tasks are completed, enabling university leaders to make well-informed decisions that improve organizational quality.

This approach also helps university leaders communicate development orientations, specific tasks, and objectives to the entire lecturers, ensuring all activities remained aligned with the development strategies of the organization.

In other words, KPIs serve as an effective tool for monitoring the implementation of the strategic goals and the daily operations of a university through a system of performance measurement and evaluation.

Therefore, it is an urgent necessity to study and develop key performance indicators (KPIs) for university lecturers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers across the globe have studied the application of KPIs in universities.

Azma, F. (2010) introduced a nine-factor framework to assess university performance based on key performance indicators (KPI), which include Area and information technology; Communication; Graduates; Social and cultural services; Journals and periodicals; Employees; Student Affairs; Financial Affairs and Processes; Faculty members.

Gaspar, D. (2014) presents importance of development and implementation of appropriate key performance indicators (KPI) at universities in order to make preconditions for better strategic management of these institutions. Strategic management of the modern universities is based on vision, mission, defined strategy and strategic goals. According to Gaspar, to enable monitoring of their implementation, universities have to collect,

¹ Hanoi Metropolitan University, Viet Nam. E-mail: tranquocviet@live.com

access and analyze data on their key performance indicators, which is almost impossible without information technology support.

The research of Özdemir, A. and Çakır, L. (2021) developed performance indicators in line with the goals by examining the strategic goals and objectives in the strategic plans of public universities in Turkey. The authors studied strategic plans of eleven different universities selected by purposeful sampling and created a performance indicator pool consisting of 300 criteria. Based on expert opinions the performance indicators were reduced to 45 under six main strategic dimensions: Finance, Stakeholder, Learning and Development, Internal Processes, Education and Research, and Institutional Image.

Chalmers, D. (2008) in "Teaching and Learning Quality Indicators in Australian Universities" developed the framework for teaching and learning quality indicators under four key dimensions of teaching practices: Institutional Climate (characterized by a commitment to the enhancement, transformation and innovation of learning; Adoption of a student-centred learning approach); Diversity (related to ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity, as well as diversity regarding students' abilities, talents, and learning approaches); Assessment (assessment while students are studying in their enrolled program of study; assessment of the addressing of pedagogical issues); and Engagement and Learning Community (student's commitment and engagement with their own education; Fostering and facilitating learning communities).

Suryadi, K. (2007) proposed a model of key performance indicators (KPIs) measurement in higher education institutions based on a combination of analytic hierarchy process, trend analysis, and comparative data. KPIs are determined as a description of key success factors related to the sustainability of educational institutions. These KPIs are categorized into academic, research and supporting KPIs. Each KPI is weighted using an analytic hierarchy process and KPI's points are set based on its trend over the last three years and its current level compared to benchmark or competitor performances. Combination between trend and comparative level is reflected by three levels of points: Good (100), Fair (50) and Poor (0).

In Viet Nam, many researchers have conducted in-depth studies on this topic.

In their article "Developing the set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to evaluate the performance of Dai Nam University's faculty members", Do Quang Hung, Phan Trong Phuc, and Nguyen Thu Huong (2020) noted: "Although initial implementation may face many difficulties, development of a KPIs framework to evaluate the lecture's performance aligns with the current trends of transformation of the human resource management in organizations. It also fosters staff development, boosts lecturer's productivity, and enhances the training quality of a university."

In the study "Criteria for performance of staff", Nguyen Thi Tuyet (2008) introduced a set of criteria for comprehensively evaluating lecturers based on three main aspects of their work. For teaching, lecturers are assessed according to their competencies: teaching achievements, the quantity and quality of teaching, teaching performance, and contribution to curriculum and material development. For research, lecturers are evaluated based on their competencies: published research works, the number of books and reference materials produced, and their participation in academic conferences and seminars. For social contribution, they are assessed according to their competencies: their efforts to advance the university and community, participation in professional councils, and serving community and society.

In "Developing a system of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure performance of some departments of Hanoi University of Science and Technology," Tran Vu Huong Tra (2017) presented the theoretical foundations of a KPI-based staff evaluation system, analyzed the existing employee evaluation practices at Hanoi University of Science and Technology, and proposed solutions to develop KPIs for evaluating staff performance in some departments at the university.

In "Performance Evaluation of lecturers at the University of Industrial Fine Arts", Mai Manh Hung (2016) emphasized that the key factor in ensuring an organization's long-term success, particularly a university, is its ability to measure how well lecturers perform their job, tasks, and duties. Performance evaluation is a process to ensure that lecturers meet the required standards and improve their performance during their tenure at the university.

In "Designing an evaluation toolkit for lecturer's competency assessment at Hanoi University of Industry according to occupational standards", Nguyen Giang Nam and Nguyen Phuong Thao (2020) designed an evaluation toolkit for lecturer's competency assessment featuring seven standards and thirty-two criteria spanning three areas: Teaching and student advising; scientific research and continuous learning; and professional activities that serve the university and the community. The authors asserted that employee evaluation in organizations in general, employee and lecturer evaluation in universities in particular, is gaining increased attention and being studied comprehensively. This is because performance evaluation is a crucial factor affecting outcomes and a key driver for organizational development.

These published studies clearly highlight the necessity of evaluating university lecturers by using KPIs. They address fundamental aspects of KPI application in evaluating lecturer performance. This article aligns with these perspective and further develops them by systematically examining the KPI application in evaluating lecturers at some universities in Viet Nam.

THE CURRENT STATUS OF KPI APPLICATION IN EVALUATING LECTURERS AT SOME UNIVERSITIES IN VIET NAM

Firstly, in recent years, some universities in Viet Nam have actively applied KPIs in evaluating the quality of lecturers.

Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education introduced the System of Performance Competency Evaluation - KPIs applied in Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education in 2014. Each unit and position has a job description or a monthly work plan. Task assignments and workload depend on the roles and functions of each unit and individual. Managers use KPIs to periodically assess the performance of units and positions. Based on the KPI completion, the organization determines corresponding rewards or penalties for each unit and employee at the end of the evaluation period.

Dalat University adopted the System of Performance Evaluation Indicators - KPIs applied in Dalat University in 2016 which includes ten assessment criteria: learning quality, teaching quality, training outcomes, scientific research results, serving community, quality assurance, infrastructure, finance, and administration.

Thu Dau Mot University issued the Regulation on the Set of standards for performance competency assessment - KPIs applied in Thu Dau Mot University in 2021. Each job position has specific evaluation criteria which focus on key tasks and are assigned appropriate point values for assessment. The KPI-based evaluation follows the academic year cycle, with preliminary performance evaluations at the end of each semester as the basis for final assessment and KPI-based evaluation at the end of the academic year .

Vietnam National University, Hanoi issued the Framework for performance indicators (KPIs) in 2022 applied in Vietnam National University, Hanoi. The KPI Framework was developed in line with the following principles: aligning with the strategic orientation and goals, key development indicators of the Vietnam National University, Hanoi until 2025; prioritizing and focusing on the core indicators which reflect both performance and final outcomes, and align with the functions and tasks of each unit.

Hanoi Financial and Banking University adopted the System of performance competency indicators - KPIs in 2022 focusing on six indicator groups: infrastructure; teaching staff; training; scientific research; finance; connection and serving community.

Thuongmai University transformed its lecturers and staff productivity management model in 2022. By the 2023-2024 academic year, the university has completed its Productivity Indicator Bank at the Thuongmai University and shifted to the KPI-based work result management model, using a modified Balanced Scorecard (BSC) framework.

The implementation of the KPI systems at some universities has yielded significant successes in assessing lecturer performance. More importantly, this improvement aligns with the current trend of transformation of the personnel management in universities.

Secondly, in terms of legal basis, the existing lecturer evaluation criteria in higher education institutions follow the general regulations set forth by the State and the education sector.

Specifically, the lecturer evaluation criteria are established according to the following documents:

- The 2012 Higher Education Law.
- The 2018 Law on Cadres and Civil Servants.
- Decree No. 90/2020/ND-CP dated August 13, 2020, issued by the Government on the evaluation and classification of the quality of cadres, civil servants, and public employees.
- Decree No. 48/2023/ND-CP dated July 17, 2023, issued by the Government, amending and supplementing a number of provisions of Decree No. 90/2020/ND-CP dated August 13, 2020 on the evaluation and classification of the quality of cadres, civil servants, and public employees.
- Circular No. 47/2014/TT-BGDDT dated December 31, 2014, issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, regulating working regimes for lecturers.

Thirdly, the principles for lecturer evaluation are consistent with the general principles for evaluating cadres, civil servants, and public employees.

Some key principles for lecturer evaluation are as follows:

- Ensuring objectivity, fairness, and accuracy; avoiding favoritism, oppression, bias, or formality; ensuring the correct authority in lecturer evaluation.
- The lecturer quality evaluation must be based on their assigned responsibilities and tasks, and the results of task performance reflected through specific work and outputs.
- Lecturers who have worked for less than six months in a year are exempt from evaluation and classification of quality, except in cases of maternity leave.
- Lecturers who have been absent from work for three to less than six months in a year, as stipulated by law, are still evaluated but cannot be classified as "good performance" or higher.
- Lecturers on maternity leave, according to legal regulations, have their quality classification results for the year based on their actual working period within that year.

Fourthly, the KPI-based lecturer evaluation is closely linked to additional income payments, commendations, appointments, rotations, and disciplinary actions. The KPI system serves as an effective tool for universities to evaluate lecturer quality and forms the foundation for welfare policies and personnel management.

First and foremost, KPIs provide an essential basis for universities to allocate additional income.

At Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education, the performance evaluation system (KPIs) is used exclusively to allocate additional salary and responsibility allowances from the university (the salary and responsibility pay according to the State's salary scale remain unchanged). The additional salary comes from the difference between the university's revenue and expenditure after deducting development investment costs and required fund allocations. The Rector announces the specific rate for additional salary allocation each year. The distribution of additional income is based on a scoring and ranking system for each KPI-based evaluation category. The university has established task completion coefficients and classification for individual lecturers. The actual additional salary is calculated by multiplying the additional salary determined under the internal expenditure regulations by the task completion coefficient.

At Vietnam National University, Hanoi, the KPI framework is used to evaluate the performance of the affiliated units of the Vietnam National University, Hanoi, and serves as a basis for financial resource allocation.

Similarly, at Thuongmai University, performance evaluation results are used to determine additional income payments and extra workload payments.

At Thu Dau Mot University, based on the performance evaluation results (KPI scores), the actual financial situation of each academic year, and the university's budget balance, the university leaders determine additional income levels. Additional income is only applicable to the lecturers who achieve an annual KPI score of at least 55 points and are not subject to disciplinary action within the evaluation cycle. The corresponding additional income level depends on the achieved KPI score.

Furthermore, the performance evaluation results are one of the key factors for universities to rank lecturers for commendation and reward purposes and to implement lecturer appointments, rotations, and disciplinary actions.

The Vietnam National University, Hanoi, uses the KPI framework to evaluate the emulation, leadership and management task performance of the heads of its affiliated units.

The KPI evaluation results are also used by the Thuongmai University for lecturer training, development, recruitment, assignment, and use.

Lecturers working at Thu Dau Mot University must earn a KPI score of over 80 points to achieve the "Outstanding Completion of Duties" rating.

Lecturers working at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education must have a minimum KPI rating at C Grade to achieve the "Advanced Laborer" status, a minimum KPI rating at B Grade to get the title of "Grassroots-level Emulation Fighter". Those seeking the title of "Ministerial-Level Emulation Fighter" must have been "Grassroots-level Emulation Fighters" for three consecutive years, with at least one year achieving a KPI rating at A Grade. The lecturers who receive a KPI rating at E Grade for two consecutive years are subject to job rotation or dismissal. Those seeking higher appointments must have their KPI ratings of the previous year at least at B Grade, alongside meeting other criteria.

DISCUSSION

Firstly, some criteria of the lecturer evaluation still rely heavily on qualitative data and do not emphasize quantitative indicators.

Some criteria related to the quality of the professional tasks and task performance results have not been specifically quantified and are difficult to measure. Consequently, evaluation can become subjective and emotionally driven, failing to accurately reflect the competencies and work performance of the staff. This limitation highlights the need to promote improvements of the KPI-based lecturer evaluation criteria and make it detailed and specific.

Secondly, insufficient evidence to support the KPI-based lecturer evaluation is a common issue.

In theory, each evaluation criterion should be scored based on specific evidence. However, in practice, during the evaluation process, the departments responsible for evaluating lecturers in universities have not focused on collecting and compiling evidence and rarely required other units or individuals to provide supporting proof. As a result, evaluations may be superficial. Those in charge of evaluating lecturers may conduct evaluation without sufficient evidence or justification, which do not accurately reflect a lecturer's real performance. Hence, universities are recommended to improve the regulations on evaluation process, make the process more stringent, and closely oversee the implementation of lecturer evaluation.

Thirdly, the application of KPIs in lecturer evaluation in universities essentially involves a shift from an old evaluation method to a new one. This transition has not necessarily received support from all members of the organization.

Some individuals, even leaders of the affiliated units of the universities, are not mentally prepared for the new evaluation system. Though they do not oppose the implementation, they often conduct evaluations in a perfunctory and superficial manner. It is, therefore, crucial for universities to regularly and effectively communicate the importance of KPIs and provide guidance on KPI-based evaluation processes and procedures for all administrators and lecturers.

Fourthly, lecturer evaluation results are not closely linked with salary, bonuses, and promotion opportunities; and more importantly, this relationship is not clear and transparent.

As a result, KPIs have not become a significant concern for lecturers and have not played a key role in motivating them. This limitation can only be reduced when universities explicitly link as many of the lecturers' benefits and obligations as possible to KPIs.

Fifthly, the proportion of universities in Viet Nam that apply KPIs in lecturer evaluation remains very small compared to the overall number of universities.

Therefore, it is urgent for universities to study and design KPI frameworks for early adoption. Researchers should also devote more attention to this issue, conduct deeper studies, and widely disseminate relevant academic findings.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted some characteristics of the KPI application in lecturer evaluation at some universities in Viet Nam and has also discussed the limitations of this application process.

In the current context of improving the quality of higher education in Viet Nam, it is especially important for university administrators at all levels to measure and evaluate work performance of their lecturers. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) deserve to be selected for sound measurement and evaluation, offering a new governance approach for universities.

The critical point is for universities to develop KPI frameworks suited for their unique conditions and contexts. In addition, they must ensure consistency and synchronization in implementation methods and strengthened regular monitoring throughout the implementation process.

REFERENCES

- Azma, F. (2010). Qualitative Indicators for the Evaluation of Universities' Performance. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 2, Issue 2, 2010, Pages 5408-5411.
- Chalmers, D. (2008). Teaching and Learning Quality Indicators in Australian Universities. *Outcomes of Higher Education: Quality, Relevance, and Impact. Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE)*. September 8.
- Dalat University (2016). The System of Performance Evaluation Indicators - KPIs applied in Dalat University. Issued under Decision No. 425/QĐ-ĐHĐL dated May 24, 2016.
- Gaspar, D. (2014). Information Technology and KPIs Development at Universities. *Interdisciplinary Management Research*, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics, Croatia, Vol. 10, pages 38-47.
- Hanoi Financial and Banking University (2022). The System of performance competency indicators - KPIs. Issued under Decision No. 23/QĐ-ĐHTNH-ĐBCL dated January 21, 2022.
- Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education (2014). The System of Performance Competency Evaluation - KPIs applied in Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education Performance Evaluation System. Issued under Decision No. 1127/ĐHSPKT dated December 22, 2014.
- Do Quang Hung, Phan Trong Phuc, Nguyen Thu Huong (2020). Developing the set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to evaluate the performance of Dai Nam University's faculty members. *Industry and Trade Review – Results of Scientific Research and Technology Applications*, Issue 23, September 2020.
- Mai Manh Hung (2016). Performance Evaluation of Lecturers at the University of Industrial Fine Arts. Master's Thesis, University of Labor and Social Affairs.
- Nguyen Giang Nam, Nguyen Phuong Thao (2020). Designing an evaluation toolkit for lecturer's competency assessment at Hanoi University of Industry according to occupational standards. *Vietnam Journal of Education*, Special Issue, April 2020, pp. 233-237.
- Özdemir, A. & Çakır, L. (2021). Investigation of Performance Indicators in the Strategic Plans of Public Universities in Turkey. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, Vol.4, No.1 (2021), Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3813231>
- Parmenter, D. (2015). *Key Performance Indicators: Developing, Implementing, and Using Winning KPIs*. Third Edition. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.
- Suryadi, K. (2007). Key Performance Indicators Measurement Model Based on Analytic Hierarchy Process and Trend-Comparative Dimension in Higher Education Institutions. In *Proceedings of the 9th International Symposium on the Analytic Hierarchy Process for Multi-criteria Decision Making (ISAHP)*, Viña del Mar, Chile, August 2–6, 2007.
- Thu Dau Mot University (2021). The Regulation on the standards for performance competency assessment - KPIs applied in Thu Dau Mot University. Issued under Decision No. 41/QĐ-HĐTr(TC) dated June 18, 2021.

- Thuongmai University (2024). Report on the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals for 2023 - 2024. December 2024.
- Tran Vu Huong Tra (2017). Developing the system of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure performance of some departments of Hanoi University of Science and Technology. Master's Thesis, Hanoi University of Science and Technology.
- Nguyen Thi Tuyet (2008). Criteria for performance of staff. VNU Journal of Science: Social Sciences and Humanities, [S.l.], Vol. 24, No. 3, September 2008.
- Vietnam National University, Hanoi (2022). The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Framework applied in Vietnam National University, Hanoi. Issued under Decision No. 4377/QĐ-ĐHQGHN dated December 12, 2022.