

Research on communication of Vietnamese universities

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Abstract: Communication is considered to be significant to universities: provide students updated information to make appropriate choices and decisions during their learning process; and promptly feedback to contribute to building a better educational and training environment; improve institutional governance efficiency. Communication tools used in universities are diverse in forms and contents. This study focuses on two popular forms, which are policy communication (communication of policies and laws on higher education) and internal communication (communication about professional activities and community activities of the university). The theoretical framework has been developed and a survey was conducted to collect opinions of 450 students from many universities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) (Northern region); The University of Danang (UD) (Central region); Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) (Southern region). The results show that the policy communications of these universities are not effectively implemented. The findings suggest innovations for managers to improve communication effectiveness and governance efficiency in these higher education institutions.

Keywords: policy communication; internal communication; university; Vietnam

1. Introduction

Vietnam's higher education system includes 224 universities and institutes (MOET, 2024); regulated by law on the scope of activities, organizational principles, organizational structure and collectively called universities (VNA, 2012). Vietnam is a developing country with the population of 100.3 million people (GSO, 2024) but the quite-low-labor quality (Hoa, 2023), which has brought opportunities for universities to implement the human resource training strategy serving the country's socio-economic development.

However, the quality of higher education institutions in Vietnam is generally recognized to be less competitive in comparison with that of countries in Asian region as well as in the world (Phong, 2023). Vietnam holds little attraction for foreign students and workers to study and work. The reasons partly come from not only the not-highly-ranked quality but also the ineffective communications of universities. Hence, the research on communication of universities is significant to the higher education development in Vietnam.

In this study, on the basis of the theoretical framework on communication of universities, a survey was conducted to collect opinions of 450 senior students (course 2020–2024) from many universities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) (Northern region); The University of Danang (UD) (Central region); Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) (Southern region). The survey questionnaire addressed on these students'

opinions on policy communications and internal communications implemented by their higher education institutions, which were scientifically conducted so that empirical information could be provided for university managers to serve for better governance.

2. Literature review

Communication plays an important role in management and social life. Communication is significant in spreading information about social and political events and issues, enabling organizations and people (social entities) to get essential information to make appropriate decisions and actions (PACE, 2024). According to Loi (2023), communication is carried out through different means, including mass media, social media, online media, etc. Communication is considered as a powerful tool to build brand image, make products/service well-known to people, create institutional reputation and customers' trust.

Communication is commonly known as the process of transmitting information to different entities to create communication, connection among them and increase their understanding and perception. Information transmission from one person to others can be performed via different forms, including words, articles, images, videos, sounds, etc. (Minh, 2022). In terms of educational management, VJA (2023) defines communication of higher education institutions is the process of analysis, orientation, and planning to support universities to convey information to target customers (learners, others related to learners, etc.) and attract their attention to the institutions' activities so that these institutions' strategic goals could be reached. In agreement with the aforementioned viewpoint of communication, this study emphasizes that the basic elements of university communication include: communications unit (university); target audience (students); communication content (educational and training policies and institutional activities); Communication targets (attracting students' attention to institutional activities, supporting universities realize their strategic goals).

Sharing the same viewpoint, researchers emphasize that communication of universities plays an important role in overall operation of these higher educational institutional, specifically, in transmitting institutional policies, teaching methods, institutional achievements of education and training to learners and others related to learners, which contributes to the improvement of their educational and training quality (An, 2019). Thanks to communication programs, universities get chances to introduce and promote the institutional activities, images, brands, etc.; students and the community can access the latest information about universities' strategic goals, training programs, and related activities to make appropriate decisions to their learning activities as well as choose effective training cooperation. Nhung (2023) and Brain Talent (2024) also emphasize that the role of communication activities in higher education institutions is not only to raise awareness of students and the community about education and training programs by providing information of educational and training policies as well as the institutions' activities but also to help students update the latest information related to their study, jobs and career development opportunities, etc., which contributes to improving the educational and training quality of the higher education institutions.

Hence, it can be defined that communication of universities is the process of transmitting information from the institutions to students and other related entities to promote their brand images, policy information, professional activities and other related activities. In terms of management, university communication supports universities in information management and the realization of higher education goals; helps students and other relevant entities have access to updated information to make appropriate choices or give their feedback to contribute to the institutional development. This study confirms its research viewpoint and develop the scale “Information management and the realization of higher education goals” (IM) with observed variables, including: Universities promote their image to attract attention from students and the community, creating a better educational and training environment (IM1); Universities provide or propaganda update and accurate about their educational and training policies and activities, improving their educational and training quality and governance efficiency (IM2); Students access update, accurate and sufficient information about educational and training policies and activities of universities (professional activities, community activities) to collect reliable information for their study and career orientation (IM3).

Regarding communication content, the preceding studies all emphasize the main aspects of policy communications and internal communications. Accordingly, policy communication is related legal issues and state policies in the field of higher education; Internal communication refers to main activities of universities (professional activities, community activities), such as: enrollment, educational and training programs, new teaching methods, new educational technology and the latest educational materials, event organization, participation in community activities of the higher education institutions to promote their image to public.

According to prescribed functions and responsibilities, universities are in charge of disseminating and propagating policies and laws as a form of legal education for students. Legal issues are directly related to universities and students such as: policies on developing training levels and forms; employment policies on industries and professional fields; Incentive policies for students, etc. In this study, the scale “Policy Communication” (PC) is designed with content based on the goal of improving students’ awareness, attitudes and understanding during the study at universities, including: Policy communication performed by universities helps students understand and update policies and laws on higher education to orient their academic activities and career development (PC1); Policy communication performed by universities helps students understand and update laws, employment policies regarding their industries and professional fields to orient their academic activities and career development (PC2); Policy communication performed by universities helps students understand and update laws, incentive policies for students to orient their academic activities and career development as well as encourage them to achieve good study results (PC3).

When policy and legal contents are paid attention to communicate, universities will focus more on important macro-oriented work, then the development of universities will follow a strategic direction and the strategic goals can be more conveniently achieved. Along with that, well-implemented internal communication will help students update and better understand professional and social activities carried out by the higher education institutions to appropriately participate in, bringing

development opportunities for their study, practice and for themselves. Therefore, the scale “Internal Communications” (IC) is developed, focusing on internal communication activities to increase students’ perception, attitudes and understanding of students during their study at universities, including: Internal communication performed by universities helps students understand and update the latest information about enrollment, educational and training programs, duration of learning courses, and course contents delivered to lecturers and students, and related information to completely perform students’ learning tasks (IC1); Internal communication performed by universities helps students understand and update the latest information about teaching methods, educational technology and new educational materials, which enables them to accomplish their learning tasks with good results (IC2); Internal communication performed by universities helps students understand and update the latest information about community activities held by university to appropriately participate in, bringing development opportunities for the study, practice and individuals themselves as well as promoting universities’ image (IC3).

Table 1. Theoretical framework.

No	Scales	Code	5-level Likert scale				
			1	2	3	4	5
I Policy Communication		PC					
1	Policy communication performed by universities helps students understand and update policies and laws on higher education to orient their academic activities and career development.	PC1					
2	Policy communication performed by universities helps students understand and update laws, employment policies regarding their industries and professional fields to orient their academic activities and career development.	PC2					
3	Policy communication performed by universities helps students understand and update laws, incentive policies for students to orient their academic activities and career development as well as encourage them to achieve good study results.	PC3					
II Internal Communications		IC					
4	Internal communication performed by universities helps students understand and update the latest information about enrollment, educational and training programs, duration of learning courses, and course contents delivered to lecturers and students, and related information to completely perform students’ learning tasks.	IC1					
5	Internal communication performed by universities helps students understand and update the latest information about teaching methods, educational technology and new educational materials, which enables them to accomplish their learning tasks with good results.	IC2					
6	Internal communication performed by universities helps students understand and update the latest information about community activities held by university to appropriately participate in, bringing development opportunities for the study, practice and individuals themselves as well as promoting universities’ image.	IC3					
III Information management and the realization of higher education goals		IM					
7	Universities promote their image to attract attention from students and the community, creating a better educational and training environment.	IM1					
8	Universities provide or propaganda update and accurate about their educational and training policies and activities, improving their educational and training quality and governance efficiency.	IM2					
9	Students access update, accurate and sufficient information about educational and training policies and activities of universities (professional activities, community activities) to collect reliable information for their study and career orientation.	IM3					

Source: Synthesized through literature review.

That policy communications and internal communications are carried out well supports higher education institutions to attract students’ attention to their higher education policies, professional activities and social activities. This supports not only students to update the latest information and orient their career and future academic development but also universities to manage information and achieve their development goals. Therefore, the research hypothesis of this study is: Policy communication (H1), and Internal communication (H2), which are well implemented, have a positive influence on information management of universities, supporting the institutions promote their image and realize their development goals.

Based on the preceding researches, this study has developed the theoretical framework of research model includes 3 scales: 02 scales— independent variables, including “Policy Communication” (PC) and “Internal Communication” (IC); 01 scale—dependent variable “Information management and the realization of higher education goals” (IM). The above scales include 9 observed variables, designed into 9 questions in the survey questionnaire and measured with a 5-level Likert scale: 1—Strongly disagree; 2—Disagree; 3—No opinion; 4—Agree; 5—Strongly agree (Table 1 and Figure 1).

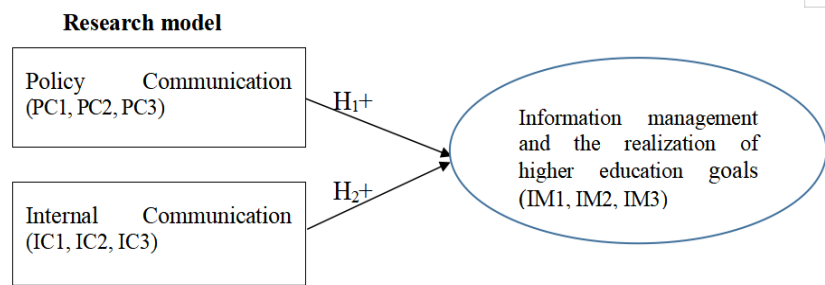


Figure 1. Research model.

3. Methodology

Qualitative methods and quantitative methods are used in this study to approach and implement the research on the influence of Policy Communication and Internal Communication on information management and the realization of higher education goals. The survey was conducted with the research sample of N = 450 senior students from universities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) (Northern region); The University of Danang (UD) (Central region); Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) (Southern region).

1) Qualitative method

The collection and analysis of secondary data was carried out to make the initial findings of the theoretical research on influence of Policy Communication and Internal Communication on information management and the realization of higher education goals. Then, in-depth interviews were conducted and comments on the initial research issues were collected to complete the theoretical framework and research model, including the following scales: “Policy communication” (PC); “Internal Communication” (IC); “Information management and the realization of higher education goals.” (IM) (Table 1 and Figure 1).

2) Quantitative methods

Quantitative methods are mainly used in practical research. The primary data was collected and analyzed by directly surveying opinions of 450 senior students (course 2020–2024) from many universities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) (Northern region); The University of Danang (UD) (Central region); Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) (Southern region). The data collected from the survey allowed the conducted regression analysis to be performed so that the relationship of the scales and the proposed research hypothesis could be tested.

According to Hai (2019), the minimum sample size needed to perform regression analysis for a model with 3 scales and 9 observed variables is $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$. In this study, the survey of opinions of students from 3 universities with sample size $N = 450 > 45$, ensuring the reliability of data collection. The survey results are: 450/450 students agreed to answer and 450/450 valid answer sheets, reaching a valid response rate of 100%. With data collected from the survey, the reliability of the scale and observed variables were evaluated; Analyze regression analysis were carried out to test research hypotheses and draw research conclusions.

4. Research results

Based on the theoretical framework, the survey of opinions of 450 senior students (course 2020–2024) from many universities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) (Northern region); The University of Danang (UD) (Central region); Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) (Southern region). The collected data allowed a Cronbach’ Alpha test to be performed to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable when they meet the standard conditions: Cronbach’ alpha > 0.6 ; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 (Hai, 2019) (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Statistical results and testing results of the scales.

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach’ Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Policy Communication (PC)	PC1	450	1	5	3.73	0.623	0.662	PC1 = 0.431
	PC2	450	1	5	3.68	0.624		PC2 = 0.438
	PC3	450	1	5	3.66	0.634		PC3 = 0.445
2. Internal Communication (IC)	IC1	450	1	5	3.89	0.551	0.657	IC1 = 0.552
	IC2	450	1	5	3.95	0.533		IC2 = 0.546
	IC3	450	1	5	4.02	0.587		IC3 = 0.551
3. Information management and the realization of higher education goals (IM)	IM1	450	1	5	3.81	0.592	0.673	IM1 = 0.558
	IM2	450	1	5	3.92	0.578		IM2 = 0.547
	IM3	450	1	5	3.94	0.595		IM3 = 0.568
Valid N (listwise)		450						

Source: Authors’ survey results.

Data in **Table 2** shows observations on the scales “Policy communication” (PC), “Internal communication” (IC), “Information management and the realization of higher education goals” (IM) are all rated at an average level of Mean > 3.6 , statistically

significant according to the defined Likert scale (1–5). However, the observed variables of the scale “Policy Communication” (PC) are rated at the lowest level with Mean (PC1) = 3.73, Mean (PC2) = 3.68, Mean (PC3) = 3.66, showing that policy communication of the higher education institutions is rated at a low level.

With the standard test values, all 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the model continued to be used to perform subsequent analysis. The regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship of the independent variables “Policy communication” (PC), “Internal communication” (IC) with the dependent variable “Information management and the realization of higher education goals” (IM) (Table 3).

Table 3. Multivariate regression results.

Coefficients ^a						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	0.708	0.318	-	2.981	0.000	-
1 Policy Communication (PC)	0.436	0.190	0.369	4.482	0.000	1.801
Internal Communication (IC)	0.564	0.181	0.501	7.454	0.000	1.801

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Information management and the realization of higher education goals (IM); R Square = 0.696; Durbin-Watson = 2.031.

Source: Authors’ survey results.

Data in **Table 3** shows: R Square = 0.696, confirming that the scales “Policy communication” (PC), “Internal communication” (IC) explain 69.6% of the variation in the scale “Information management and the realization of higher education goals” (IM); VIF = 1.801 (1 < VIF < 2), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.031 (1 < d < 3), showing that the regression model has no autocorrelation phenomenon, confirming the scales “Policy Communication” (PC), “Internal Communication” (IC) has an independent nature and jointly affects the scale “Information management and the realization of higher education goals” (IM). The regression coefficients of the two independent variables “Policy Communication” (PC), “Internal Communication” (IC) are both statistically significant Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and has a positive value: B (PC) = 0.436, B (IC) = 0.564, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables “Policy Communication” (PC), “Internal Communication” (IC) and 01 dependent variable “Information management and the realization of higher education goals” (IM); Hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted. The multivariate regression model of this study is determined as: $IM = 0.708 + 0.436 \times PC + 0.564 \times IC$.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

From the results of regression analysis in **Table 3**, there is a basis to evaluate the correlation between independent variables and dependent variables according to regression coefficients. Based on the regression coefficients of the scales as independent variables: B (PC) = 0.436, B (IC) = 0.564, it can be confirmed that the correlation level of the independent and dependent variables is in increasing order: “Policy communication” (PC), “Internal communication” (IC).

The analysis and testing results of the study helps to confirm that: Students from many universities: Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) (Northern region); The University of Danang (UD) (Central region); Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) (Southern region) find their universities' policy communications ineffectively implemented. This reveals that these universities have not paid enough attention to implementation of higher education policy communication, which negatively affects information management and the realization of higher education goals of these higher education institutions. It is suggested for universities to pay more attention to their communication programs and develop the content of policy communication programs in an appropriate way so that policy communication can be together carried out with internal communication to attract students' attention to higher education policies, the institutions' professional and social activities.

Therefore, it is necessary for universities to much appreciate the role and attach importance to policy communication as a measure to guide the implementation of the universities' strategic goals; regularly perform policy communication to help students and related entities realize and highly evaluate the goals and missions of the training majors and professional fields and benefits from higher education, building trust from the society in training majors; Implement a synchronous communication plan to implement common policies and general development orientations in higher education, as well as disseminate information about the professional and community activities of universities. That not only helps students update information and make appropriate choices to orient their academic and career development, but also supports universities to promote their activities and reputation for the further development.

Author contributions: Conceptualization, NST and NTH; methodology, NST; software, TTL; validation, NTH, TTL and NTT; formal analysis, NST; investigation, NDH; resources, NTT; data curation, NST; writing—original draft preparation, NST; writing—review and editing, NTH; visualization, NTT; supervision, NDH; project administration, NST; funding acquisition, NDH. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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