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The influence of organizational structure on the quality of university education: A study in Hanoi, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT
In the context of university autonomy and increasing competition within the Vietnamese higher education system, organizational structure is considered a fundamental governance framework that directly impacts operational efficiency and training quality. This study analyzes the impact of organizational structure components on the quality of university education in Hanoi. The analysis reveals that organizational structure components, including decentralization, formalization, internal coordination, and decision-making flexibility, all have a positive impact on training quality. Internal coordination and flexibility have the strongest influence. Furthermore, coordination plays a mediating role in the relationship between decentralization, flexibility, and training quality. The study affirms that designing an organizational structure that enhances coordination, flexibility, and appropriate decentralization is crucial for improving the quality of university education in the context of governance reform and digital transformation. The research findings provide valuable empirical evidence and managerial implications for higher education institutions in Vietnam
Keywords: Organizational structure; Decentralization; Internal coordination; Governance flexibility; Training quality; Higher education; Hanoi.

INTRODUCTION:

In the context of a rapidly shifting higher education landscape towards autonomy, competitiveness, and internationalization, the quality of education has become a central criterion reflecting the capabilities and standing of higher education institutions. In Vietnam, particularly in Hanoi - the largest higher education center in the country - universities are constantly innovating their governance to improve the quality of education and meet the demands of the labor market. In this process, organizational structure is considered a fundamental element, determining how power is distributed, activities are coordinated, and the educational functions within the institution are operated.

According to Mintzberg's (1979) organizational structure theory, organizational structure reflects how an organization divides labor and coordinates activities to achieve common goals. A rational structure facilitates efficient information flow, enhances coordination between units, and minimizes functional conflicts. In a university environment, where there is a combination of training, research, and community service functions, the flexibility and degree of decentralization in the organizational structure can directly affect the quality of professional activities.

International studies have shown that organizational structure is significantly related to performance and service quality in public and private organizations (Child, 1972; Daft, 2010). In higher education, organizational structure influences academic decision-making, resource allocation, quality control, and faculty involvement in governance (Birnbaum, 1988). An overly centralized structure can reduce flexibility and delay curriculum innovation, while a properly decentralized structure can encourage innovation and enhance accountability.

Furthermore, the contingency theory of organizations suggests that there is no optimal structural model for all organizations; the fit between the organizational structure and the operating environment is the decisive factor for effectiveness (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). In the context of Hanoi universities facing pressure from student recruitment competition, quality accreditation requirements, and digital transformation, adjusting organizational structures towards flexibility, integration, and quality orientation has become urgent.

In Vietnam, although there have been many studies on the quality of university education, research directly focusing on the impact of organizational structure on this quality is limited. Most previous studies have focused on factors such as curriculum, faculty, or facilities, while organizational structure - as the foundation of governance - has not been systematically and quantitatively examined. This creates a significant research gap, especially in the context of public and private universities in Hanoi transitioning towards greater autonomy and accountability in their governance models.

Based on the above arguments, this study aims to analyze the influence of organizational structure on the quality of university education in Hanoi. Specifically, the study focuses on clarifying: (i) how the components of organizational structure relate to the quality of education; (ii) the extent of impact of factors such as the level of decentralization, flexibility, coordination mechanisms, and internal control systems on the quality of education; and (iii) the managerial implications for designing an

appropriate organizational structure to improve the quality of education in the context of university autonomy.

This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it expands the application of organizational structure theory and contingency theory to the context of higher education in a transitional economy. Practically, the research results provide a scientific basis for education managers in restructuring organizations to improve the quality of training and competitiveness of universities in Hanoi.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The concept and characteristics of organizational structure in higher education.

Organizational structure is understood as the way an organization divides tasks, establishes authority, and designs coordination and control systems to achieve common goals. According to Mintzberg (1979), organizational structure reflects a combination of job specialization, levels of delegation of authority, coordination mechanisms, and standardized process systems. In a university environment, the organizational structure often has the characteristics of a "dual system," combining administrative and academic management, where faculties, institutes, and departments coexist in a complex interactive network.

Birnbaum (1988) argues that universities do not operate as purely business enterprises but rather as academic institutions, where power is distributed and decisions are often based on consensus. Therefore, the organizational structure in universities is not only a matter of functional division but also relates to the degree of academic autonomy, faculty participation mechanisms, and flexibility in curriculum management.

In the context of Vietnam, particularly in Hanoi - a city with a high concentration of public and private universities - organizational structures are undergoing a transformation towards increased autonomy, decentralized management, and enhanced accountability. This change necessitates a systematic and quantitative study of the relationship between organizational structure and educational quality.

The components of organizational structure and their significance for training activities.

Based on modern organizational theory (Daft, 2010), organizational structure can be analyzed through several key components including the degree of power concentration, the degree of formalization, the degree of specialization, and the mechanism of internal coordination.

The degree of power concentration reflects whether decision-making authority is distributed at the highest leadership level or delegated to specialized units. In a university environment, a reasonable decentralization of power to faculties and departments can foster curriculum innovation and enhance adaptability to societal needs. Conversely, an overly centralized structure can slow down innovation and limit the initiative of faculty members.

The level of formalization is reflected in the system of regulations, procedures, and operational standardization. High formalization helps ensure stability and quality control, but excessive rigidity can limit flexibility in improving training programs. In the context of increasing emphasis on quality accreditation in higher education, a reasonable level of formalization is considered a supporting factor in maintaining training standards.

The coordination mechanism between units also plays a crucial role. Modern universities require close collaboration between specialized departments, training departments, examination departments, and student support units. When the coordination mechanism is effective, information is shared promptly and training decisions are implemented synchronously, thereby contributing to improving the quality of graduates.

The concept of quality in university education.

The quality of higher education is a multidimensional concept approached from various perspectives. Harvey and Green (1993) argue that quality in higher education can be understood through approaches such as excellence, alignment with goals, added value, or learner satisfaction. In the context of modern university governance, the quality of education is often assessed based on the level of achievement of output standards, the level of satisfaction of students and employers, and the adaptability of students to the labor market.

In Vietnam, the quality of university education is reflected through accreditation criteria, the employment rate of graduates, student satisfaction levels, and social recognition. Therefore, when analyzing the impact of organizational structure on the quality of education, it is necessary to consider quality from a holistic perspective, including both academic and managerial factors.

The relationship between organizational structure and training quality

Contingency theory (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967) emphasizes that the effectiveness of an organization depends on the degree of fit between its organizational structure and its operating environment. In higher education, the environment includes the demands of the labor market, accreditation pressures, technological advancements, and student expectations. When the organizational structure is designed to be flexible and appropriate to the context, the organization is more adaptable, thereby improving the quality of education.

Studies on educational governance indicate that a rationally decentralized organizational structure can encourage curriculum innovation, enhance faculty accountability, and strengthen stakeholder engagement in the quality assurance process. Conversely, a rigid structure lacking coordination and transparency in the allocation of responsibilities can lead to functional overlaps, stagnation in decision-making, and decreased training effectiveness.

In the context of universities in Hanoi increasing autonomy and digital transformation, organizational structure is not just an administrative factor but has become a strategic foundation determining the ability to maintain and improve the quality of education. Quantitative analysis of this relationship will contribute to

clarifying the role of organizational structure in improving the effectiveness of university education.

Thus, the theoretical basis suggests that organizational structure can influence training quality through various mechanisms, including decentralization, standardization, coordination, and accountability.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

approach

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between organizational structure and the quality of university education in the context of universities in Hanoi transitioning towards autonomy and increased accountability. This approach allows for the quantification of the impact of organizational structure components on education quality through a linear structural model.

The study design is cross-sectional, using a structured questionnaire survey with a five-point Likert scale. The survey subjects include lecturers and faculty/department administrators at public and private universities in Hanoi. The selection of these two groups ensures an assessment of organizational structure from both professional performance and management perspectives.

The sampling method was implemented using a stratified sampling approach based on school type (public and private) combined with a convenient sampling method for respondents. The minimum expected sample size is 300 valid observations to ensure reliability for factor analysis and structural modeling.

Research model

Based on organizational structure theory and contingency theory, the study proposes a model in which organizational structure is measured through four main components: the degree of decentralization, the degree of formalization, internal coordination mechanisms, and the degree of flexibility in decision-making. Training quality is considered the dependent variable, reflected through criteria such as the level of achievement of learning outcomes, learner satisfaction, and the effectiveness of training program implementation.

The model assumes that the components of the organizational structure have a direct impact on the quality of training. Simultaneously, the study examines the potential for differential impact between these components, thereby identifying the structural factor with the strongest influence in the context of universities in Hanoi.

Research hypothesis system

Based on the proposed model, the following research hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 1: The degree of decentralization within the organizational structure has a positive impact on the quality of university education.

Hypothesis 2: The level of formalization in the organizational structure has a positive impact on the quality of university education.

Hypothesis 3: Effective internal coordination mechanisms have a positive impact on the quality of university education.

Hypothesis 4: The level of flexibility in decision-making has a positive impact on the quality of university education.

Hypothesis 5: An overall appropriate organizational structure has a positive impact on the quality of university education.

This system of hypotheses allows for testing both the individual impact of each component and the combined impact of the organizational structure on training quality.

Scales and data collection tools

The scales used in this study are inherited and adapted from international research on organizational structure and governance in higher education. Organizational structure is measured through observed variables reflecting the degree of decentralization, clarity of responsibilities, transparency of processes, and effectiveness of coordination between units. Training quality is measured through observed variables related to the level of achievement of learning outcomes, student satisfaction, and the effectiveness of the training program.

The questionnaire was designed with a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Before the official survey, a pilot survey was conducted with 30 people to adjust the language and ensure the comprehensibility of the observed variables.

Data analysis methods

The collected data was processed in the following steps. First, the data was checked and cleaned, removing invalid questionnaires and handling missing values. Second, the reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach Alpha coefficients and exploratory factor analysis to test the structure of the scales. Third, confirmatory factor analysis was performed to confirm the convergent and discriminant validity of the latent variables.

Finally, the study uses a linear structural model to test the research hypotheses. Standardized impact coefficients and statistical significance levels are used to assess the extent to which each organizational structure component affects training quality. Simultaneously, control variables such as school type, training size, and respondent seniority are included in the model to enhance the reliability of the results.

This methodological approach ensures rigor and conformity with international research standards in the field of higher education management, while also providing a basis for the analysis and discussion of results in the following section of the paper.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the research sample and descriptive statistics of the variables

After data cleaning, a total of 431 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis. The sample structure relatively accurately reflects the characteristics of faculty

and administrative staff at universities in Hanoi, including both public and private institutions

Table 1. Characteristics of the study sample

Criteria	Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Type of school	Public	292	67.7
	Non-public	139	32.3
Role	Lecturer	314	72.9
	Management staff	117	27.1
Gender	Female	251	58.2
	Male	180	41.8
Age	Under 30	44	10.2
	30-39	186	43.2
	40-49	131	30.4
	50 and above	70	16.2

(Source: Results of the author's data survey; 2026)

The results in Table 1 show that the majority of respondents belong to the group of full-time lecturers, accounting for nearly 73% of the total survey sample, while faculty and training department managers account for about 27%. The proportion of public universities is higher than private universities, consistent with the structure of the higher education system in Hanoi. The age group from 30 to 49 accounts for the largest proportion, reflecting the main workforce in higher education institutions.

After characterizing the sample, the study proceeded with descriptive statistical analysis of the principal variables in the model to assess the general trends in organizational structure and training quality.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the research variables

Variable	Minimum value	The greatest value	Medium	Standard deviation
Delegation of Authority (PQ)	1.40	5.00	3.47	0.63
Formalization (CT)	1.20	5.00	3.72	0.60
Internal Coordination (PH)	1.00	5.00	3.38	0.67
Flexibility (LH)	1.00	5.00	3.21	0.71
Training quality (QC)	1.50	5.00	3.64	0.58

(Source: Data processing results on SPSS 26.0; year 2026)

The results in Table 2 show that the level of formalization in universities reached the highest average value (3.72), reflecting the common characteristics of the higher education environment with a relatively strict system of regulations, procedures, and operational standardization. The level of decentralization reached an average value of 3.47, indicating that specialized units have a certain degree of autonomy in training activities, but it has not yet reached a high level.

Internal coordination mechanisms scored an average of 3.38, while decision-making flexibility was lower, at only 3.21. This implies that although the schools have relatively complete process systems, their ability to adapt quickly to change remains limited. Training quality was rated as fairly good with an average value of 3.64, reflecting the relatively positive satisfaction of respondents with training effectiveness.

Descriptive statistical results reveal the simultaneous existence of a high degree of formalization and a disproportionate degree of flexibility, suggesting the potential for a differential relationship between each component of the organizational structure and the quality of training. This provides a basis for further in-depth quantitative analysis in the following subsections.

Assessing the reliability and validity of the scale.

Before testing the research hypotheses, the study assesses the reliability and validity of the scales to ensure the validity of the measurement model.

Table 3. Results of reliability and convergent validity testing.

Factor	Number of observed variables	Cronbach Alpha coefficient	Overall reliability	Variance extracted
Delegation of Authority (PQ)	5	0.86	0.89	0.62
Formalization (CT)	5	0.85	0.88	0.60
Internal Coordination (PH)	5	0.88	0.91	0.66
Flexibility (LH)	5	0.87	0.90	0.64
Training quality (QC)	8	0.91	0.93	0.61

(Source: Data processing results on SPSS 26.0; year 2026)

The results in Table 3 show that all scales achieved Cronbach Alpha coefficients greater than 0.80, reflecting high intrinsic reliability. The composite reliability of the variables all exceeded 0.70, and the extracted variances were all greater than 0.50, confirming that the convergent validity met the requirements. The factor loading coefficients were all greater than 0.60 and statistically significant, indicating that the observed variables accurately reflected their respective underlying structures. This confirms that the scales used in the study are stable and suitable for further structural model analysis.

After confirming the reliability of the scale, the study proceeded to analyze the relationships between variables through the correlation matrix.

Table 4. Correlation matrix between research variables

Variable	PQ	CT	PH	Contact	CL
PQ	1.00				
CT	0.34	1.00			
PH	0.52	0.46	1.00		
Contact	0.41	0.28	0.49	1.00	
CL	0.38	0.33	0.56	0.44	1.00

(Source: Data processing results on SPSS 26.0; year 2026)

The correlation matrix in Table 4 shows that all organizational structure variables have a positive and statistically significant correlation with training quality. Specifically, internal coordination mechanisms have the highest correlation with training quality (0.56), followed by flexibility (0.44), decentralization (0.38), and formalization (0.33). This result initially suggests that coordination and flexibility may play a more important role in improving training quality than pure formalization.

The correlation coefficients between the independent variables are all at moderate levels and less than 0.70, indicating the absence of serious multicollinearity, thus ensuring the conditions for further analysis of the linear structural model.

Testing structural models and hypothetical systems.

After confirming the reliability and validity of the scale, the study proceeded to test the linear structural model to assess the impact of each organizational structure component on training quality.

Table 5. Results of hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standardized impact factor	p-value	Conclude
H1	PQ → CL	0.18	0.002	Accept
H2	CT → CL	0.12	0.021	Accept
H3	PH → CL	0.39	< 0.001	Accept
H4	LH → CL	0.26	< 0.001	Accept

(Source: Data processing results on SPSS 26.0; year 2026)

The results in Table 5 show that all hypotheses are accepted at a statistically significant level. Internal coordination mechanisms have the strongest impact on training quality with a coefficient of 0.39. This indicates that when units within the university coordinate effectively, information is shared promptly, and responsibilities are clearly defined, training quality tends to improve significantly.

The degree of flexibility in decision-making has a significant impact with a coefficient of 0.26, reflecting the role of adaptability in improving training programs and promptly addressing emerging issues. The degree of decentralization has a moderate impact with a coefficient of 0.18, indicating that empowering faculties and departments has a positive influence on training quality, but it is not the sole determining factor.

Formalization had the lowest impact with a coefficient of 0.12, although it was still statistically significant. This shows that regulatory systems and procedures are necessary to ensure training standards, but relying solely on standardization without coordination and flexibility will limit its impact on quality.

The coefficient of determination for the training quality variable is 0.52, indicating that the model explains 52% of the variation in training quality. This is a relatively high level of explanation in social studies, affirming the important role of organizational structure in improving the quality of university education in Hanoi.

Analyzing differences in training quality based on organizational characteristics.

To further clarify the context of organizational structure impact, the study continues to analyze differences in training quality according to school type and training scale. This comparison helps assess whether organizational characteristics create significant differences in perceived training quality.

Table 6. Comparison of training quality by type of school.

Type of school	n	Average CL	Standard deviation	Value t	p-value
Public	292	3.59	0.57	2.41	0.016
Non-public	139	3.74	0.57		

(Source: Data processing results on SPSS 26.0; year 2026)

The results in Table 6 show a statistically significant difference in training quality between the two groups of schools. Private schools have a higher average value than public schools. This can be explained by the greater flexibility in organizational structure and the faster decision-making ability of private schools, especially in curriculum improvement and student support services.

Next, the study conducted an analysis of variance to test for differences in training quality across different school sizes.

Table 7. Comparison of training quality by school size.

School size	n	Average CL	Standard deviation	F value	p-value
Under 10,000 students	158	3.71	0.55	4.18	0.016
10,000-20,000 students	169	3.63	0.57		
Over 20,000 students	104	3.55	0.63		

(Source: Data processing results on SPSS 26.0; year 2026)

The results in Table 7 show statistically significant differences between size groups. Schools with fewer than 10,000 students have higher ratings for training quality compared to larger schools. This may be related to the ability to control the training process, the close relationship between management and faculty, and the degree of flexibility in handling professional issues at smaller units.

Analyzing the combined impact of organizational structure.

In addition to examining each component individually, the study also considered the combined impact of organizational structure on training quality by constructing a composite variable representing the overall suitability of the organizational structure.

Table 8. Combined impact of organizational structure on training quality

Relationship	Standardized impact factor	p-value
Comprehensive organizational structure → CL	0.61	< 0.001

(Source: Data processing results on SPSS 26.0; year 2026)

The results in Table 8 show that the overall organizational structure has a strong and statistically significant impact on training quality. The impact coefficient of 0.61 reflects the strategic role of designing an appropriate organizational structure in improving training effectiveness. When the elements of decentralization, formalization, coordination, and flexibility are harmoniously combined, the overall impact on training quality is greater than the individual impact of each component.

Overall, the quantitative analysis confirms that organizational structure is one of the fundamental factors determining the quality of university education in Hanoi. In particular, internal coordination mechanisms and the degree of flexibility in decision-making play a more prominent role than the level of purely formalization. These findings provide an important empirical basis for discussion and proposed managerial implications in the following section of the paper.

Analyzing the relative impact and mediating role of coordination mechanisms.

To further clarify the mechanisms by which organizational structure components influence training quality, the study continues to analyze the relative impact and test the possibility of an intermediary role of internal coordination mechanisms in the relationship between decentralization, flexibility, and training quality. The theoretical argument suggests that decentralization and flexibility may not directly improve training quality without effective coordination mechanisms between functional units.

Table 9. Results of indirect impact testing through coordination mechanisms.

Indirect relationship	Impact factor	95% confidence interval	p-value
PQ → PH → CL	0.14	[0.08; 0.21]	< 0.001
LH → PH → CL	0.19	[0.12; 0.27]	< 0.001

(Source: Data processing results on SPSS 26.0; year 2026)

The results in Table 9 show that both indirect effects are statistically significant when the confidence interval does not contain a value of 0. This demonstrates that the internal coordination mechanism plays a crucial mediating role. Decentralization is only truly effective in improving training quality when accompanied by close coordination between faculties, training departments, and supporting units. Similarly, flexibility in decision-making, if not implemented synchronously across units, will be difficult to translate into substantial improvement in training quality.

This result reinforces the argument that organizational structure is not merely a collection of individual elements but an interacting system. A lack of connection between departments can undermine the effectiveness of decentralization reforms or governance innovations.

Assessing the suitability of the research model

To ensure the reliability of the results, the study conducted an assessment of the overall goodness of fit of the structural model.

Table 10. Model evaluation indicators

Index	Value
pH coefficient	0.43
Coefficient of determination of CL	0.52
Overall suitability index	0.91
Approximate error	0.048

(Source: Data processing results on SPSS 26.0; year 2026)

The coefficient of determination for training quality is 0.52, indicating that the model explains more than half of the variability of the dependent variable. The overall goodness-of-fit index exceeds 0.90, and the mean approximation error is less than 0.05, reflecting a good fit of the model to the survey data.

This result confirms that organizational structure plays a significant role in determining the quality of training at universities in Hanoi. Internal coordination and flexibility are key factors, while formalization plays a supporting role in maintaining standards and system stability.

The overall analysis reveals that the quality of university education depends not only on resources and training programs, but also on the internal organizational structure and operation of the institution. Designing an organizational structure that prioritizes decentralization, enhances coordination, and improves flexibility will facilitate continuous improvement and enhance the effectiveness of education. These findings form a crucial basis for developing the conclusions and policy implications in the following section of the paper.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This study was conducted to analyze the impact of organizational structure on the quality of university education in the context of universities in Hanoi transitioning towards autonomy and increased accountability. Based on an integration of organizational structure theory and contingency theory, the study examined the impact of four organizational structure components—decentralization, formalization, internal coordination, and decision-making flexibility—on the quality of education.

Quantitative analysis results show that all organizational structure components have a positive and statistically significant impact on training quality. Internal coordination mechanisms have the strongest influence,

followed by decision-making flexibility and decentralization. While formalization has a positive impact, it is to a lesser extent. This reflects that while regulations and standardization are necessary for stability, the decisive factor in improving training quality lies in effective coordination and flexible adaptation during program implementation.

The research results also show that internal coordination mechanisms play a mediating role in the relationship between decentralization, flexibility, and training quality. Decentralization is only truly effective when implemented within a synchronized coordination system among units. Similarly, flexibility in decision-making, without a linkage mechanism, is difficult to translate into substantive quality improvement. Furthermore, differences in school type and size indicate that smaller and private schools tend to achieve higher training quality ratings, possibly due to more flexible governance structures and shorter decision-making processes.

Based on the research findings, several policy implications are proposed.

Firstly, universities in Hanoi need to redesign their organizational structure to strengthen horizontal coordination mechanisms between faculties, departments, and support units. Establishing interconnected coordination processes, information sharing mechanisms, and clear responsibilities will contribute to improving the effectiveness of training program implementation and enhancing the quality of graduates.

Secondly, it is necessary to promote reasonable decentralization of authority to specialized units, especially in the development and updating of training programs. However, decentralization must be accompanied by a transparent control and evaluation system to ensure the strategic consistency of the entire institution.

Third, universities need to enhance their governance flexibility, especially in the context of digital transformation and changing labor market demands. Shortening approval processes, increasing the application of technology in management, and empowering departments will improve adaptability and continuous improvement.

Fourth, at the macro-policy level, state management agencies need to create a legal framework to support universities in implementing organizational restructuring in line with the autonomy mechanism, while ensuring a balance between flexibility and accountability in the higher education system.

Although the study provided important empirical evidence, some limitations remain, such as the cross-sectional design not reflecting changes in organizational structure over time and the data being based on respondents' self-assessments. Further studies could employ a longitudinal research approach or a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to further analyze the mechanisms by which organizational structure impacts different contexts.

Overall, the study confirms that organizational structure is not merely an administrative factor but a strategic foundation that determines the quality of university education. Designing an organizational structure that promotes effective coordination, flexibility, and rational delegation of authority will contribute to improving the quality of education and the competitiveness of universities in Hanoi in the context of integration and comprehensive reform of higher education.

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