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## Communication of Higher Education Institutions in Vietnam

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### Abstract:

Communication of higher education institutions are significant in implementing strategic goals and improving institutional governance efficiency; 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. Communication tools used in higher education institutions are diverse in forms and contents. This study focuses on two key points, which are policy communications and internal communications implemented by higher education institutions. The theoretical framework has been developed and a survey was conducted to collect opinions of 300 senior students from 3 universities under Hanoi National University, including: University of Foreign Languages; University of Economics; University of Social Sciences and Humanities. The results show that the policy communications of these higher education institutions are not effectively implemented. The findings suggest innovations for managers to improve communication effectiveness to achieve strategic goals and improve governance efficiency in these higher education institutions.

**Key words:** Communication; Policy communications; Internal communications; Higher education institutions; Vietnam.

### 1. Introduction

Vietnam is a developing country. The population reached 100.3 million people in 2023 (PN, 2023), which is an opportunity to expand and improve the higher education system to develop human resources to serve the national development. According to the law, Vietnamese higher education system includes universities and academies - collectively named as universities (VNA, 2012).

There are currently 224 universities with majors belonging to the fields of economics, engineering (over 50%), social sciences (over 20%), and some other fields (MOET, 2024).

The quality of higher education institutions in Vietnam is generally recognized to be less competitive in comparison with that of other Asian countries. There are about 10% of Vietnamese

workers who could meet the requirements of businesses in the context of international integration; 22.6% of workers who have technical qualifications (Nhat, H., 2022). Vietnamese higher education is not in the high rank in the world and still has not attracted the attention of learners and foreign workers to participate in studying. The reasons come from not only the not – highly – ranked quality but also the ineffective communications of higher education institutions (universities, academies). Hence, the research on communications of higher education institutions is significant to the higher education development in Vietnam.

In this study, on the basis of the theoretical framework on communication of higher education institutions, a survey was conducted to collect opinions of 300 senior students (course 2020 – 2024) from 3 universities under Hanoi National University, including: University of Foreign Languages; University of Economics; University of Social Sciences and Humanities. 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:**

The term "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. The purpose of communication is to transmit information (news, ideas, values, etc.) from one person to others via different forms, including words, articles, images, videos, sounds, etc. According to PACE (2024), communication is significant in spreading information about social and political events and issues, enabling organizations and people to get essential information to make appropriate decisions and actions. 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.

In terms of educational management, 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 (Minh, L., 2022; VJA, 2023). Sharing the same viewpoint, BrainTalent (2024) emphasizes that communication activities of higher education institutions are significant in developing and improving the education and training quality; effectively make institutional policies, teaching methods, institutional achievements of education and training well – known to learners and others related to learners. Performing the function of transmitting educational information, communication also helps higher education institutions promote their images to interested audiences; helps students, parents and the community update the latest information about educational and training programs, education policies and other related activities. The above approaches and perspectives on communication of higher education are all practical and applicable to specific researches. Accordingly, the main objects of communication process implemented by higher education institutions are information sender - higher education institution; information receiver - students, others related to students; communication content - education and training policies and related activities, etc.; communication goals and some related issues.

These research approaches support this study to define communication of higher education institutions as the process of transmitting information from the institutions to other entities such as organizations and individuals to promote their brand images; policy information, professional activities and other related activities. communication of higher education institutions

plays an important role in improving education and training quality; assists students, parents, and employers' access to up-to-date information to make appropriate choices and decisions for their own purposes or provide feedback to develop a better educational and training environment. In terms of management, communication of higher education institutions is a mean for institutional managers' desired results to be obtained. According to An, H. (2019), communication of higher education institutions is to aim at promoting their brand images to their customers, drawing attention from students, parents, employers, sponsors so that a better educational and training environment could be developed. Sharing the same opinion, Nhung, H. (2023) emphasizes the goals of communication activities in higher education institutions are 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 promptly grasp 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. Based on the preceding researches, this study has developed the research scale "communication results of higher education institutions" (CR) with observed variables, including: Higher education institutions promote their image and attract the attention of parents, students, employers, sponsors, etc. and develop a better educational and training environment (CR1); Higher education institutions informs and propagates educational and training policies and their activities promptly and accurately, which positively contributes to improving their educational and training quality (CR2); Students update the accurate and latest information about educational and training policies, job, learning opportunities and professional and social activities of the higher education institutions in appropriate and specific form and thematic content (CR3).

Regarding communication content, the preceding studies all emphasize the main aspects of policy

communications and internal communications about activities of higher education institution. According to VJA (2023), policy communications are related to macro issues, which communicates state policies in the field of higher education with clearly formulated contents, such as: development policies of educational and training levels and types, employment policies on specific and professional fields; incentive policies for student, etc. If communication of macro policies is paid attention to and the important issues of higher education institutions are oriented under the macro policies, the development of the higher education institutions will follow the strategic direction and their set goals will be more conveniently achieved. Regarding to internal communications, BrainTalent (2024) summarizes communication content about important activities of higher education institutions, including: enrollment, educational and training programs, new teaching methods, new educational technology and the latest educational materials, participation in community activities of the higher education institutions to promote their image to public. That the issues are effectively communicated will help students promptly update and better understand educational and training policies and policy orientations associated with their future careers; enable students promptly and better understand professional and social activities carried out by the higher education institutions to appropriately participate in, which brings development opportunities for their study, practice and for themselves. These findings provide the basis to build a theoretical framework on communication content in higher education institutions, including two scales: Policy communications; internal communications.

Firstly, the scale "Policy Communication" (PC) focuses on policy communication activities to increase students' perception, attitudes and understanding of related policies in their studying process at higher education institutions: Higher education institutions communicates higher education policies to help students promptly update

and understand the policies to orient the development of their future training levels (PC1); Higher education institutions communicates higher education policies to help students promptly update and understand employment policies on training majors and professional fields to orient their future career development (PC2); Higher education institutions communicates higher education policies to help students promptly update and understand incentive policies for them to orient their studies and strive to achieve good academic results (PC3).

Secondly, the scale "Internal Communications" (IC) focuses on internal communication activities to increase students' perception, attitudes and understanding of students in their studying process at universities: Higher education institutions carry out internal communication activities to help students to be informed and updated 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); Higher education institutions carry out internal communication activities to help students to be informed and updated the latest information about teaching methods, educational technology and new educational materials, which enables students to perform their learning tasks with good results (IC2); Higher education institutions carry out internal communication activities to help students to be informed and updated the latest information about the institutions' community activities so that students can actively participate in, which helps them in learning, practicing and developing

themselves as well as promotes the institutions' image (IC3).

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 so that students can update the latest information and orient their career and future academic development; attract the attention of parents, employers, sponsors, etc. to promote the institutions' image to contribute to the development and implementation of their strategic goals. Therefore, the research hypothesis of this study are: *Policy communications (H1), and Internal communications (H2), which are well implemented, have a positive influence on communication goals/results of higher education institutions, supporting the institutions promote their image and complete their development target.*

Based on the preceding researches, this study has developed the theoretical framework on influence of policy communications and internal communications on communication goals/ results of higher education institutions. The research model includes 3 scales: 02 scales - independent variables, including "Policy communications" (PC) and "Internal communications" (IC); 01 scale - dependent variable "Communication results of higher education institutions" (CR). 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, Figure 1).

**Table 1. Theoretical framework**

No	Scales	Code	5-level Likert scale				
			1	2	3	4	5
<b>I</b>	<b>Policy communication</b>	<b>PC</b>					
1	Higher education institutions communicate higher education policies to help students promptly update and understand the policies to orient the development of their future training levels.	PC1					
2	Higher education institutions communicate higher education policies to help students promptly update and understand employment policies on training majors and professional fields to orient their future career development.	PC2					
3	Higher education institutions communicate higher education policies to help students promptly update and understand incentive policies for them to orient their studies and strive to achieve good academic results.	PC3					
<b>II</b>	<b>Internal communications</b>	<b>IC</b>					
1	Higher education institutions carry out internal communication activities to help students to be informed and updated 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					
2	Higher education institutions carry out internal communication activities to help students to be informed and updated the latest information about teaching methods, educational technology and new educational materials, which enables students to perform their learning tasks with good results.	IC2					
3	Higher education institutions carry out internal communication activities to help students to be informed and updated the latest information about the institutions' community activities so that students can actively participate in, which helps them in learning, practicing and developing themselves as well as promotes the institutions' image.	IC3					
<b>III</b>	<b>Communication results of higher education institutions</b>	<b>CR</b>					
1	Higher education institutions promote their image and attract the attention of parents, students, employers, sponsors, etc. and develop a better educational and training environment.	CR1					
2	Higher education institutions inform and propagates educational and training policies and their activities promptly and accurately, which positively contributes to improving their educational and training quality.	CR2					
3	Students update the accurate and latest information about educational and training policies, job, learning opportunities and professional and social activities of the higher education institutions in appropriate and specific form and thematic content.	CR3					

Source: Compiled by the authors from the literature review

### Research model

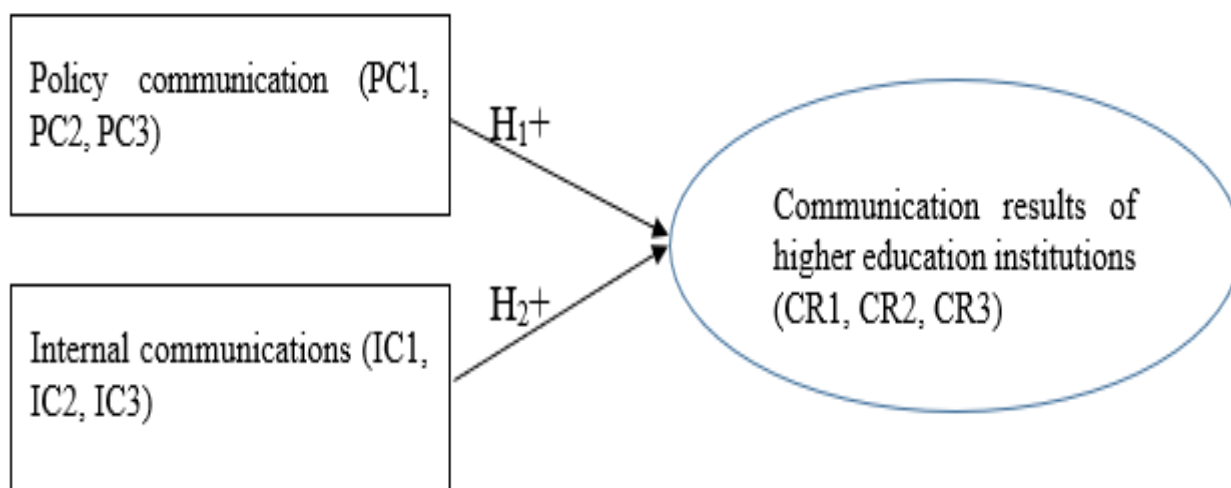


Figure 1. Research model

### 3. Methodology:

#### a) Qualitative method

Qualitative methods are mainly used for literature review. The collection and analysis of secondary data was carried out to make the initial findings of the theoretical research on communication of higher education institutions. 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 communications" (PC); "Internal Communications" (IC); "Communication results in higher education institutions" (CR) [Table 1, Figure 1].

#### b) Quantitative methods

Quantitative methods are mainly used in practical research. The primary data was collected and analyzed by directly surveying opinions of 300 senior students (course 2020-2024) from 3 universities affiliated with Hanoi National University, including: Foreign University language; University of Economics; University of Social Sciences and Humanities. The survey content follows the developed theoretical framework. 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, D.H. (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  $N = 300 > 45$ , ensuring the reliability of data collection. The survey results are: 300/300 students agreed to answer and 300/300 valid answer sheets, reaching a valid response rate of 100%.

### 4. Findings:

Based on the theoretical framework, the survey of opinions of 300 senior students (course 2020-2024) from 3 universities affiliated with Hanoi National University, including: Foreign University language; University of Economics; University of Social Sciences and Humanities was conducted. 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 scale and observed variables are reliable when they meet the standard conditions: Cronbach' alpha  $> 0.6$ ; Corrected Item-Total Correlation  $> 0.3$  (Hai, D.H., 2019). The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable (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	300	1	5	3.64	.619	.655	PC1 = .423
	PC2	300	1	5	3.66	.622		PC2 = .441
	PC3	300	1	5	3.69	.645		PC3 = .439
2. Internal communications (IC)	IC1	300	1	5	3.97	.548	.668	IC1 = .577
	IC2	300	1	5	4.09	.529		IC2 = .563
	IC3	300	1	5	4.01	.644		IC3 = .552
3. Communication results of higher education institutions (CR)	CR1	300	1	5	3.98	.591	.681	CR1 = .561
	CR2	300	1	5	4.02	.584		CR2 = .559
	CR3	300	1	5	4.04	.603		CR3 = .570
Valid N (listwise)		300						

Source: Authors' survey results

The data in table 2 shows that:

+ Observations on the scales "Policy communications" (PC), "Internal communications" (IC), "Communication results of higher education institutions" (CR) are all rated at an average level Mean > 3.6, statistically significant according to the determined Likert scale (1-5). However, the observed variables of the scale "Policy Communications" (PC) are rated at the lowest level with Mean (PC1) = 3.64, Mean (PC2) = 3.66, Mean (PC3) = 3.69, showing that policy communications

of the higher education institutions are rated at a low level.

+ All 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the model have standard test values: Cronbach' alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. These scales continue to be used to perform regression analysis to examine the relationship of the independent variables "Policy Communications" (PC), "Internal Communications" (IC) with the dependent variable "Communication results of higher education institutions" (CR) [Table 3].

**Table 3. Multivariate regression results**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.721	.322		3.168	.000	
	Policy communication (PC)	.433	.189	.372	4.518	.000	1.711
	Internal communications (IC)	.567	.178	.513	7.943	.000	1.711

a. Dependent Variable: Communication results of higher education institutions (CR)  
R Square = .712; Durbin-Watson = 2.101

Source: Authors' survey results

The data in table 3 reveals that:

+ R Square = .712, confirming that the scales "Policy communications" (PC), "Internal communication" (IC) can explain 71.2% of the variation in the scale "Communication results of higher education institutions" (CR).

+ VIF = 1.711 ( $1 < VIF < 2$ ), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.101 ( $1 < d < 3$ ), showing that the regression model has no autocorrelation phenomenon, confirming the scales "Policy communications" (PC), "Internal communications" (IC) are independent in nature and have the same influence on the scale "Communication results of higher education institutions" (CR).

+ The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Policy communications" (PC), "Internal communications" (IC) are both statistically significant Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and has a positive value: B (PC) = 0.433, B (IC) = 0.567, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Policy Communications" (PC), "Internal communications" (IC) and 01 dependent variable "Communication results of higher education institutions" (CR); Hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted.

Applying the generalized regression model of Hai, D.H. (2019):  $Y = B_0 + B_1 * X_1 + B_2 * X_2 + \dots + B_i * X_i$ , the multivariate regression model of this study are determined as follows:

$$CR = 0.721 + 0.433 * PC + 0.567 * IC$$

From the above regression model, the basis to evaluate the correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable according to the regression coefficients can be set up. Based on the regression coefficients of the scales as independent variables: B (PC) = 0.433, B (IC) = 0.567, it can be confirmed that the degree of correlation of the independent and dependent variables is in increasing order: "Policy communications" (PC), "Internal communications" (IC), respectively.

## 5. Conclusion:

The analysis and testing results of the study helps to confirm that: Students of 3 universities under Hanoi National University find their universities' policy communications ineffectively implemented, which reveals that these universities do not pay much attention to implementation of higher education policy communications, affecting the communication goals/ results of the higher education institutions. It is suggested that the managers of Hanoi National University and other universities should pay more attention to this issue and develop the content programs of policy communications in an appropriate way so that policy communications can be together carried out with internal communications to attract students' attention to higher education policies, related to the institutions' professional and social activities, supporting students to update the latest information for career orientation and future academic development orientation; attract the attention of parents, employers, sponsors, etc. to promote the institutions' image to serve the development and implementation of their strategic goals.

There are some recommendations suggested: communication strategy of higher education institutions should be implemented, of which the roles of policy communications and internal communications are clearly defined; a synchronous communication plans should be carried out to both propagate and implement common policies, general development orientations in higher education, and disseminate information about professional and social activities of higher education institutions. These recommendations can be specifically explained as follows: (1) Firstly, it is necessary for higher education institutions to adopt a logical approach to policy communications; attach importance to policy communications as a measure to guide the implementation of the institutions' strategic goals; correctly define policy communications to direct resources for the development and breakthroughs of higher education, serving for the national benefit; (2) Secondly, policy communications



should be well implemented so that lecturers, students and related entities understand and appreciate the goals and missions of professional fields in higher education; understand the value and benefits of higher education, helping to build trust in professional training programs of higher education institutions in the society.

Because of its significance, communication of higher education institutions plays an important part in their development and training quality improvement. That policy communications combined with internal communications is carried out synchronously and scientifically will help higher education institutions promote their images; attract the attention of parents, students and related entities to realize the higher education institutions' strategic goals. By building the theoretical framework and conducting a practical survey, this study has contributed to providing empirical information about the communication implementation of Vietnamese higher education institutions in today.

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