Some Theoretical Issues on the Collection of Student Feedback on Teaching Activities at Universities in Vietnam

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ABTRACT
The training quality is always one of the issues that is of particular concern to universities in general. Which, investigating and evaluating the quality of education and training is a necessary and useful tool to maintain and develop a quality assurance system and build a quality culture. Collecting student feedback on teaching activities of teachers and training support activities is one of the useful information channels to ensure and continuously improve the quality of training. The content of this article only aims to systematize the basic theories: (i) Student feedback on teaching activities of teachers; (ii) The relationship between teachers and students in teaching activities; (iii) Objectives, and roles of collecting student feedback on teaching activities; (iv) The relationship between student feedback and training management activities. Based on that, the article proposes some solutions to improve the effectiveness of collecting student feedback and support for improving the quality of teaching activities in universities in VietNam.
Keywords: Feedback, teaching activities, higher education.

I. INTRODUCE THE ISSUE

Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW of the 11th Party Central Committee of the Communist Party of VietNam on Fundamental and Comprehensive innovation in education and training to meet the requirements of industrialization, modernization in the context of a socialist-oriented market economy and international integration has clearly defined the objectives of education and training: "Create fundamental and strong transformation in the quality, efficiency of education and training; better meet the requirements of building and protecting the Fatherland and the learning needs of the people. Comprehensive development of Vietnamese people and best utilization of the potential and creativity of each individual... Building an open, practical, vocational education, good teaching, good learning, and good management; rational education structure and methods, linked to building a learning society; ensuring conditions to improve quality; standardization, modernization, democratization, socialization, and international integration of the education and training system; maintaining the socialist orientation and national identity. Striving for VietNam's education system to reach an advanced level in the region by 2030."[1].

To achieve this goal, the education sector needs to fundamentally and comprehensively innovate, particularly in quality management, and education innovation should be closely linked to receiving and utilizing feedback from relevant stakeholders, including student feedback on the training process in general and the teaching activities of lecturers in particular at universities.

In each university, training management activities play a leading role, directly affecting the quality of training. Therefore, all activities related to the training process in the university will have a significant impact on training management activities. Students and lecturers are the main subjects of the training process, with students being the center of educational activities, so student feedback on teaching activities is very important for school administration in general and training management activities in particular.

Training quality is always a matter of special concern for universities in general. In this regard, surveying and evaluating the quality of education and training is a necessary and useful tool to maintain and develop a quality assurance system and build a quality culture. Collecting student feedback on the teaching activities of lecturers and training support activities is one of the useful information channels to ensure and continuously improve the quality of training [2].

Student feedback is essential for improving teaching and meeting the needs of learners. It helps university leaders have a more comprehensive and objective view of the established goals and the implementation of training plans. Student feedback on teaching activities helps instructors adjust content and teaching methods to align with the objectives of the field of study, ultimately improving teaching quality and enhancing the instructors' sense of responsibility in achieving training objectives. Providing feedback on teaching activities enhances students' sense of responsibility for their learning rights and obligations, allowing them to express their thoughts on instructors' teaching activities. Student feedback also assists education managers in developing appropriate management policies to improve faculty and modify training programs and resources. Teaching activities are crucial in training management, and changes in teaching activities resulting from student feedback evaluations will lead to changes in training management.

The assessment of teaching quality through student feedback has been implemented by Vietnamese universities since 2010[2]. Several research results on student feedback about teaching activities have been published by Vietnamese scientists[3], [4], [5], [6].

II. RESEARCH CONTENT

1.1. Concept of feedback

There are various definitions of feedback, depending on fields such as economics, engineering, medicine, education... Feedback in English is called "feedback." According to En. Oxforddictionaties.com, feedback is information about reactions to a product or the effectiveness of someone's work and is used as a basis for improvement. According to businessdictionary.com, feedback is information sent to an entity (individual or group) about previous behavior, so that the entity can adjust current and future behavior to achieve desired results.

According to author Pham Dinh Van (2012), feedback is the impact of a learner's learning outcomes on the pedagogical impact of the teacher, the manager, and the learners themselves. The author also defines feedback information as information about the results of a process impacting an object, in the relationship of the impact back to the input factor of the process. In the teaching and learning process, feedback is understood as information received from learners, which impacts both the learners and the teachers,

making the teaching and learning process more effective [7].

In summary, feedback is information provided by an individual or group about aspects of an issue or specific activities previously presented by an organization or individual, with the purpose of improving and enhancing the effectiveness of those activities.

1.2. Concept of teaching activities

Currently, there are many perspectives from educators and psychologists on teaching activities.

According to Pham Viet Vuong (1996), "Teaching activity is characteristic of any type of school and teaching is the most typical and effective educational path. With its content and nature, teaching is always considered the most reasonable and convenient path to help learners as cognitive subjects to grasp a system of knowledge and skills, to transform qualities, and develop their own intellectual abilities" and "individual learners are both the subject and the ultimate goal of the process". With this perspective, teaching is one of the main functions of every school, aiming to produce products (learners) with knowledge, skills, and intellect [8].

According to author Lam Quang Thiep (2000), "Teaching is about helping learners to independently acquire knowledge, skills, and form or change emotions and attitudes". This perspective shows that teaching is not just about imparting knowledge or providing information, but helping learners to independently acquire knowledge, and skills, change emotions, and form attitudes [9].

Author Vu Van Tao (2000) has presented 2 approaches to traditional and modern teaching: (1) The first approach views teaching as a one-way process of imparting teaching content from teacher to student, which can be considered a traditional approach. (2) The second approach is a two-way cooperative approach, and the teaching process supports learning, creating conditions for learners to actively seek and process information, with the teacher acting as a referee and advisor. This perspective shows that the teaching process has two dual functions: imparting information and controlling the cognitive process for learners, leading to a more general perspective on teaching: "Teaching is the two sides of a process that always interact, complement each other, regulate each other, and penetrate each other through cooperative activities to develop learners' intellectual abilities and contribute to the improvement of personality" [10].

From the perspectives of teaching

activities from these authors, we can see that teaching is a dual process consisting of 3 elements: the teacher, the teaching content, and the learner, with close relationships and interactions to produce the final product, which is learners with knowledge, skills, and intellect, as shown in the model below:
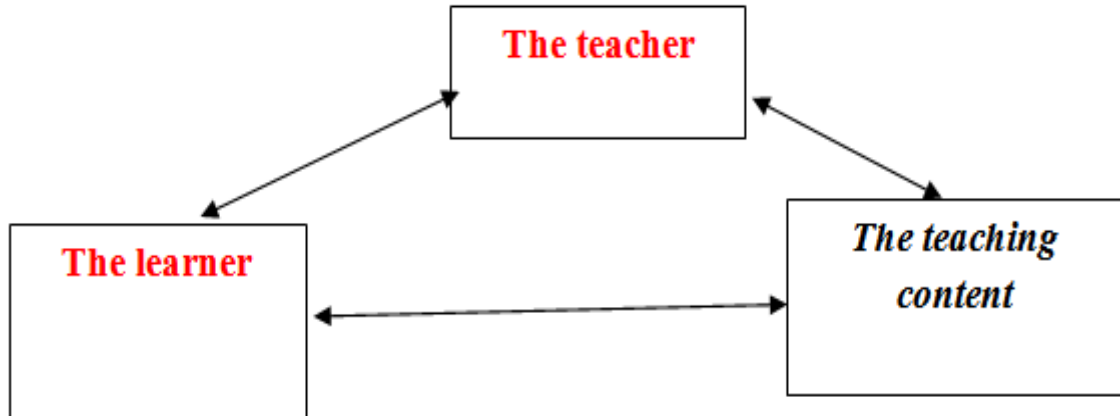

Figure 1. Basic structure model of teaching activities

The teaching activity structure model above is shown in its simplest form, but when considering each element, there are many other factors involved in the teaching process such as teaching objectives, teaching methods, teaching aids, teaching assessment, and teaching results.

On the other hand, teaching objectives in particular and other factors stem from the needs of society and are influenced by the conditions of the economic, cultural, social, and scientific environment... It can be said that these factors create a "social environment", in which teaching activities take place. Therefore, from the model in Figure 1, the detailed relationship between the elements of teaching activities can be described in the diagram in Figure 2 below:
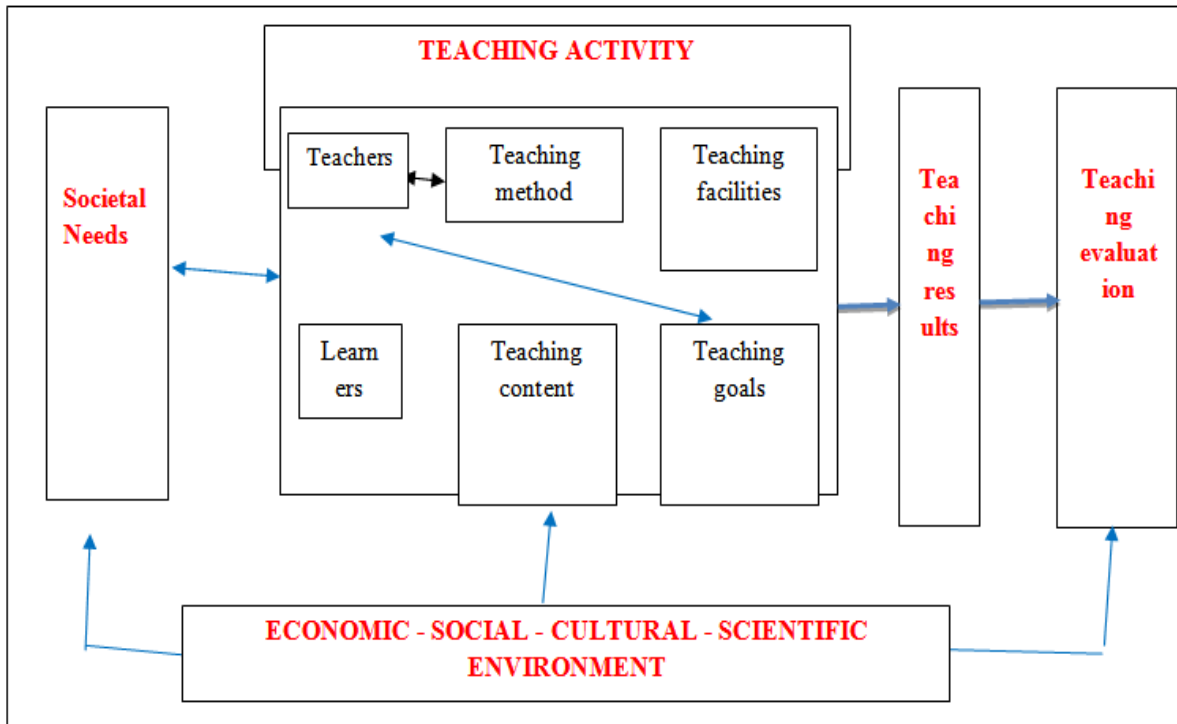

Figure 2. Diagram of the structure of teaching activities

In summary, the teaching activity is a process involving many elements: teaching objectives, teaching content, instructor (teacher), learners, teaching methods, teaching aids, teaching assessment (testing, evaluation), and the conditions of the economic, cultural, social, and scientific environment... These elements have an organic relationship with each other, mutually influencing, where teaching objectives (teaching goals) determine the other elements.

1.3. The relationship between the instructor and the learners in teaching activities

From the basic teaching activity structure model (Figure 1), we can clearly see that the instructor and the learners have a close relationship and interaction with each other in the process of imparting and acquiring teaching content. In this context, the instructor is the agent, the learners are the subjects, and the teaching content is the object of the teaching activity.

During the teaching process, the instructor imparts knowledge, including organizing the learners' learning activities. The instructor plays a role in controlling and guiding the learners' cognition, guiding the learners in learning methods, developing skills, and educating the learners' motivation and mindset to achieve high learning outcomes. Learning is the learners' activity, and they need to complete their learning tasks, acquire knowledge, practice, and prepare skills and competencies to independently apply the knowledge learned in the working and social environments.

According to the author Nguyen Thi My Loc (2003), there is interaction between the teacher and the learner in the teaching process to supplement and support each other in imparting, controlling, acquiring, and self-regulating knowledge to develop the learners' intelligence and enhance their personality[11]. The interaction between the teacher and the students in the teaching activity is illustrated in diagram 3 as follows:
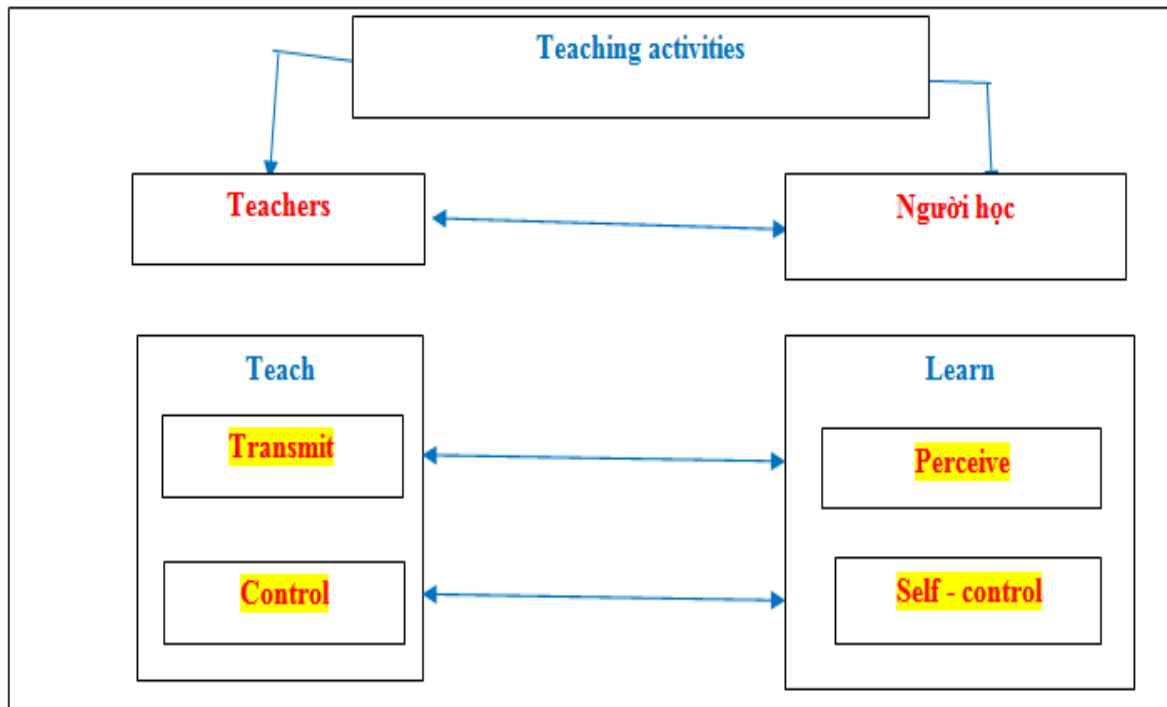

Figure 3. Diagram of interaction between instructor and learners in teaching activities

During the teaching process, the instructor influences the learners through pedagogical methods, and the learners receive the instructor's influence. If the instructor uses good teaching methods, it will unleash the learners' creativity and lead to good learning outcomes. At the same time, the learners are also active participants. The more the learners' role as active participants is emphasized, and the higher their learning outcomes are, the more effective the teaching process becomes. The unity of teaching and learning requires that the teaching activities play a leading role in organizing and guiding learning activities. The instructor must awaken the potential to

develop the learners' independent and creative thinking. The instructor must truly have pedagogical expertise, and be creative and sensitive in order to play the role of facilitator, helper, guide, advisor, and referee in the teaching process

In higher education institutions, teaching and learning are dialectically related activities, and teaching and learning are the two components of the teaching process. The dialectical relationship between teaching and learning is also reflected in the fact that the results of one activity depend on the other and vice versa.

According to the author Nguyen Trong Thuyet (2009), the dialectical unity between teaching and learning is one of the laws of the teaching process. The relationship between the instructor as an organizer and leader and the learner as a self-organizer and self-regulator of cognitive activities has created a new essence. The teaching process is not just the independent activities of the instructor or the learners, but it also involves interaction and coordination to create an effective teaching activity, producing training outcomes that meet the constantly changing demands of society. In this context, the instructor-learner relationship in the teaching process is represented in diagram 4 as follows[12]:
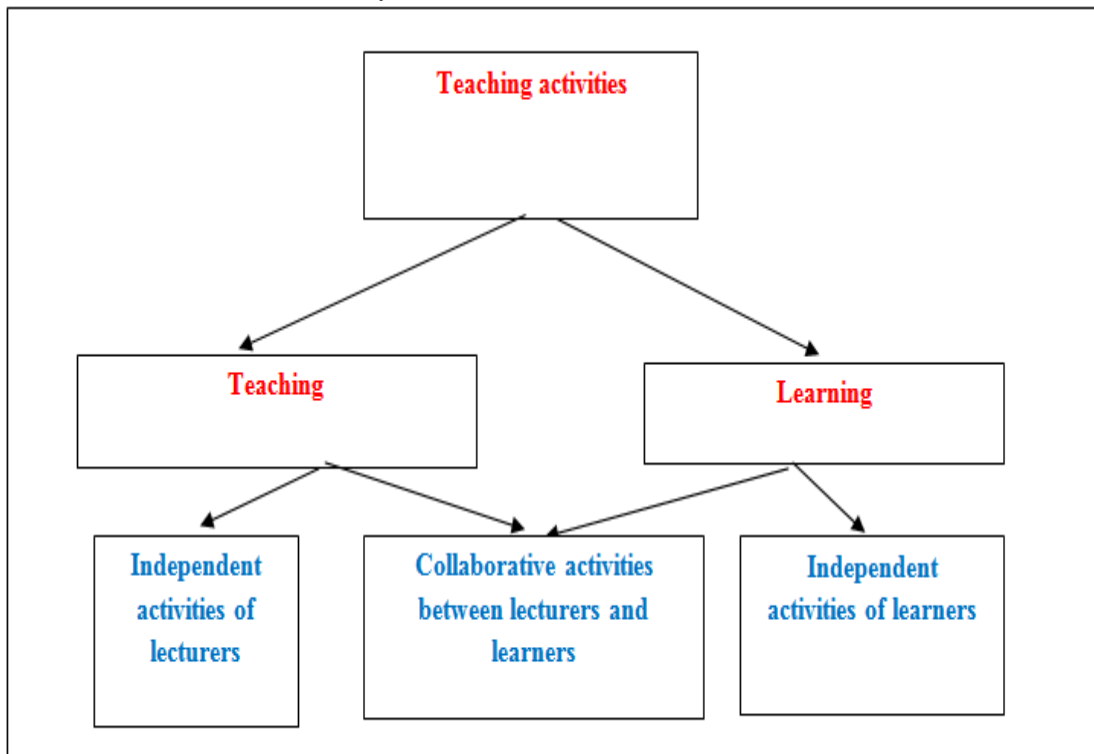

Figure 4. The relationship between the instructor and the learner in the teaching process

1.4. The activity gathers feedback from the learners about the instructor's teaching activities.

Gathering feedback from students has been widely used by universities around the world since the early 20th century. In advanced countries, student feedback is considered an important part of the education process. The evaluation results from students are used as a basis for deciding whether to continue inviting instructors to teach and can also be used for public recognition or providing feedback to help instructors improve.

Although it all serves the same purpose of gathering feedback from students about the teaching activities of instructors, there are various terms used for it. Universities around the world may call it "Student ratings of teaching," "Student ratings of instruction," "Teacher evaluation by students," "Students' evaluation of teaching," "Student feedback," or "Getting feedback from students."

Domestic higher education institutions may refer to it as "student evaluation of instructors," "student evaluation of teaching effectiveness," "student evaluation of courses," or "gathering feedback from students about teaching activities." The term "Gathering feedback from students about the teaching activities of instructors"

has been officially used and guided by the Ministry of Education and Training for universities to implement since 2008[13].

Gathering feedback from students about teaching activities is a way to collect opinions from students about the teaching activities of instructors after each course, semester, or academic year. Students can provide their evaluations on all aspects of teaching activities such as teaching content, teaching methods, teaching aids, assessment, and the conditions that support the learning and teaching process.

1.5. The goal of collecting feedback from learners about teaching activities

Research has shown that student feedback is used primarily to improve the effectiveness of teaching.

According to Seldin (1997), student feedback is increasingly being widely used in many cases, but using student feedback to provide information for evaluating and improving the quality of teaching is effective [14].

Authors Husain M and Khan S. (2016) also argue that the main purpose of collecting student feedback is to help instructors identify strengths and weaknesses in their teaching methods and assessments [15].

While universities around the world have been using student feedback since the 1920s primarily to improve the quality of teaching, in Vietnam, in 2008, higher education institutions officially began implementing the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Training [13], [2]. However, there are many objectives such as: (1) Enhancing the quality of the school's training activities; ensuring good evaluation work, ensuring the quality of the university and contributing to the implementation of democratic regulations in educational institutions; (2) Contributing to enhancing the sense of responsibility of teachers in implementing the school's training objectives; creating additional information channels to help teachers adjust their teaching activities; (3) Assisting the school leadership with additional feedback and evaluations of instructors; (4) Contributing to quality assurance work within the school; (5) Contributing to preventing negative aspects in teaching activities; detecting and replicating good examples within the teaching staff.

1.6. The role of collecting learners' feedback on teaching activities

University education is considered a special type of service, and university educational institutions are the service providers. In this case, the main customers of university educational institutions are the students. They are important customers because they are directly involved in the entire service process and are also the products of education and training.

One of the determining factors for the existence and development of a business unit is the satisfaction of customers with the quality of the service or product provided by the supplying unit. In education, the development or reputation of each educational institution will depend greatly on the satisfaction of students with the quality of education and the support conditions for the training process that students receive.

Therefore, evaluating the quality of educational services through customer feedback - the students' feedback is extremely necessary for each university educational institution. Through this, university educational institutions can have an objective assessment of the quality of the services they have provided, whether they have achieved the desired goals, and then develop strategies and policies to improve and enhance the quality of the training products.

On the other hand, students also play an important role in ensuring the quality and quality assurance of education at each university educational institution. This role has been affirmed in the Higher Education Law as "Contributing opinions, participating in the management and supervision of educational activities and conditions to ensure the quality of education" [16]; in the Ministry's standards for quality assurance of university education. Students exercise their rights and obligations in ensuring the quality and quality assurance of education through participating in feedback, contributing opinions on teaching and training activities, as well as training programs, teaching contents of courses, infrastructure, examination and evaluation activities, and the quality of support activities for students...

The feedback from students plays an important role in contributing to transparency, democracy, and public participation in education. Through their feedback, students express their views on issues related to training activities. Students' feedback is also one of the important bases for providing information to the teaching staff, department, faculty, and university-level management to adjust, remedy, and contribute to ensuring and improving the quality of the university's education. In addition, university educational institutions also use feedback results as one of the databases to evaluate, classify, or

propose rewards and disciplinary actions for staff and officials.

1.7. The relationship between student feedback and education management activities

With the development of the economy and society, higher education now focuses more on meeting the expectations and needs of all parties involved, including students. It is necessary to re-evaluate the provision of training services by emphasizing feedback from students about the quality of the university's education.

At the European Ministers of Education Conference in May 2001 in the Czech Republic, the role of students in university was analyzed and noted by education experts: "Students are an official part of the university community and they need to be involved and have an impact on the organization and content of teaching at universities. Students play a very important role: they are both a product of the market and the direct beneficiaries throughout the entire training process of a university, so it is reasonable for students to participate in the management of training activities. In addition, viewing education as a service and students as customers and partners, students play a role in improving the quality of higher education" [17].

Student evaluations play an important role in the training activities of university educational institutions. The feedback collected from students is valuable in helping lecturers and the university find specific and feasible solutions to improve the quality of teaching. Thanks to student evaluations of teaching activities, the teaching sessions of lecturers are given more attention, from lesson preparation to classroom teaching, providing students with comprehensive knowledge according to the curriculum, combined with advanced teaching methods to stimulate the interest and passion for learning, creating a comfortable learning environment for students to unleash their creativity. Evaluating teaching activities will help lecturers develop a professional and dedicated working style, guide students to absorb and master knowledge, and continuously improve their professional skills to meet the demands of innovative teaching methods and modern teaching forms in the current digital transformation context.

Also, through the "reverse evaluation" of students, the university and management levels understand the desires and expectations of students regarding training programs, lecturers' teaching activities, or training support factors.

On the other hand, the content mentioned above about teaching and university education management shows that teaching consists of 3 elements: lecturers, teaching content, and students. Teaching is also a major factor in university education management; in which university education management encompasses all activities of each university. This shows that these elements are closely related to each other, creating a complete system in the educational environment.

To improve the quality of education in universities, feedback from students is an essential and indispensable activity in education management, especially the feedback on teaching activities from the lecturers.

III. CONCLUSION AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The research results have shown that gathering feedback from students about the teaching activities of lecturers is a very meaningful and necessary activity in every university. Student feedback has a strong impact on training management, contributing to improving the quality of education. To improve the quality of education as well as to make the process of gathering student feedback more effective and supportive for enhancing the quality of teaching activities, the research team proposes some solutions for universities:

(1).To make the process of gathering student feedback on teaching activities truly effective, universities need to enhance communication and raise awareness among students about the importance, role, and responsibility of students when participating in providing feedback on teaching activities and other school activities right from the beginning of the course. For example, during the "Freshmen Orientation Week," students should clearly see the benefits of their feedback, so that they will take responsibility and participate consciously.

(2).To gather useful, accurate, objective, and effective information, based on the guidance of the Ministry of Education and Training, universities need to develop a survey toolkit with evaluation criteria tailored to their specific training characteristics, especially focusing on open-ended questions for students to express their opinions. Through the open-ended questions, the university will receive multidimensional information that may not be captured by closed questions.

(3).Implementing the gathering of student feedback on teaching activities should be done at least twice for each course: mid-course to make timely adjustments if there are many limitations,

and at the end of the course to learn from the experience and make improvements for better classes in the future.

(4). In addition to using survey software, universities should combine various forms of gathering feedback such as email, dialogue with students, student forums, ...

(5). The use of student feedback should be taken seriously, with evaluation and comparison between semesters and academic years to see changes in all related activities; the results of the changes need to be publicly announced for students to know.

(6). Universities also need specific measures and sanctions for staff and lecturers to pay attention to and absorb student feedback, leading to positive adjustments and changes in management and teaching activities.

(7). For specialized units in quality assurance in universities, it is necessary to regularly review the collection of student feedback to adjust any unreasonable points, especially in guiding evaluation criteria and using evaluation results through student feedback. This task requires the participation of functional units such as the Training Management Department, Student Affairs Department, General Administration Department, Financial Accounting Department, etc., to provide more comprehensive contributions to related content. Specific, quantitative regulations are needed for clear and transparent implementation. The evaluation results from students need to be publicly announced for students to know about adjustments and changes in management.

(8). Annually, universities need a separate evaluation and summary of this activity, not just a small part of the overall quality assurance report.

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