



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



## Characteristics of preschool teacher training quality at pedagogical universities according to the AUN-QA approach

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2026, 18(03), 808-814

Publication history: Received on 20 December 2025; revised on 20 February 2026; accepted on 06 March 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2026.18.3.0525>

### Abstract

Preschool teacher training quality according to the quality assurance approach of the ASEAN University Network - Quality Assurance (AUN-QA). In the context of educational innovation and international integration, improving the quality of preschool teacher training is significantly important for the development of the educational system. The research uses methods of analyzing and synthesizing scientific documents related to higher education quality, teacher training, and the AUN-QA quality assurance framework to clarify the concepts and characteristics of preschool teacher training quality. The research results show that preschool teacher training quality according to the AUN-QA approach is expressed through several basic characteristics such as: being oriented by expected learning outcomes; systemic nature and the alignment between components of the training program; student-centered teaching methods; competency-based student assessment systems; internal quality assurance linked to continuous improvement; and alignment with regional and international integration trends. Applying the AUN-QA quality assurance framework contributes to orienting the development of preschool teacher training programs toward modernity, meeting the requirements of educational innovation and improving the quality of educational human resources.

**Keywords:** Training quality; Preschool teacher; AUN-QA; Learning outcomes; Educational quality assurance; Higher education

### 1. Introduction

Training quality is always the central issue in higher education management. For teacher training institutions, the quality of training not only affects the prestige of the university but also directly impacts the quality of the national education system. The products of teacher training institutions are the team of teachers – the force that determines the educational quality at all levels.

In the context of globalization and international educational integration, models of higher education quality assurance have received increasing attention, most notably the quality assurance system of the ASEAN University Network (AUN-QA). Approaching AUN-QA helps training institutions build training programs, management systems, and teaching activities according to regional and international standards.

For preschool teacher training, quality requirements become even more urgent due to the professional nature of preschool teachers, which is linked to forming the very first foundations of personality, intellect, and physical health for children. Therefore, researching the characteristics of preschool teacher training quality according to the AUN-QA

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approach is significantly important in improving training quality and meeting current educational innovation requirements.

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## 2. Research content

### 2.1. Research methods

The research uses primary theoretical research methods such as: Analyzing and synthesizing scientific documents on higher education quality and teacher training; Generalizing and systematizing the theory regarding the characteristics of teacher training quality; Approaching the AUN-QA quality assurance framework to determine the characteristics of preschool teacher training quality in the current educational context.

### 2.2. Research results

#### 2.2.1. *Concepts of training quality and preschool teacher training quality*

##### Training quality

In higher education, training quality is often understood as the extent to which training goals, programs, teaching-learning activities, teaching staff, assurance conditions, and output results meet defined standards and the requirements of stakeholders [7]; [5]. According to a modern approach, training quality is not just a final result but a continuous improvement process linked to the internal management and quality assurance system of the higher education institution.

In the Vietnamese context, the concepts of quality and training quality are approached primarily through the system of state management documents and higher education quality accreditation activities. The Law on Higher Education (amended and supplemented in 2018) emphasizes that training quality is linked to training goals, program standards, expected learning outcomes, and human resource development requirements. However, many domestic studies point out that the implementation of training quality assurance in higher education institutions still tends toward meeting regulatory requirements and formal evidence, while the evaluation of training effectiveness through the actual capacity of learners, the satisfaction level of stakeholders, and the added value of the training process has not been sufficiently emphasized [1]; [2]. This difference shows a certain gap between the approach to training quality management in Vietnam and advanced quality assurance models in the world.

Training quality also encompasses many meanings; here, it is understood as the achievement of training goals and the satisfaction of all customers' requirements. In education, customers include many components: internal customers are leaders, managers, lecturers, and staff; external customers include learners, parents, employers, the state, and the labor market [8]. This study limits the term "customers" to the scope of learners - students.

Based on general approaches to quality, the concept of training quality in higher education has been developed toward emphasizing the organic relationship between training goals, programs, teaching-assessment methods, teaching staff, assurance conditions, and output results. According to the outcome-based education approach, training quality is expressed first in the extent to which learners achieve the announced competency standards, and also in their professional adaptability and lifelong learning ability after graduation [5]. This approach considers training quality as a dynamic process linked to total quality management and continuous improvement, rather than viewing quality as a static state to be reached [8].

Within the scope of this topic, training quality is understood as: the responsiveness of the training product to the labor market needs of employers. To evaluate training quality, besides the subjective opinions of training institutions, it is necessary to rely on the opinions of students, alumni, and other stakeholders. From a market-oriented perspective, training quality is understood as the level achieved compared to the training goals set out to satisfy customer requirements.

Training goals are set by the university, but those goals must be suitable for domestic and regional development requirements and satisfy the needs and expectations of stakeholders (customers). In a university, improving training quality is synonymous with raising training goals and managing to increase the level of goal achievement. However, this is not to be done at any cost; rather, every issue needs to be considered between the costs incurred and the effectiveness brought back.

### Preschool teacher training quality

Preschool teacher training quality is a specific expression of training quality in the field of pedagogy, reflecting the extent to which the training process meets the professional requirements of preschool teachers and the goals of preschool education development.

In essence, preschool teacher training quality is expressed in the degree of formation and development of the learner's professional capacity, including the capacity to care for and educate children; the capacity to organize the educational environment; the capacity to evaluate and support children's development; the capacity to coordinate with families and the community; along with moral qualities and professional responsibility [6].

From a systemic perspective, preschool teacher training quality is reflected through the alignment between program learning outcomes and professional standards, the effectiveness of the training program, teaching-assessment methods, the capacity of the teaching staff, practice-internship conditions, and the extent to which graduates meet professional requirements.

Preschool teacher training quality includes: The quality of the training program; The quality of training activities; The quality of the teaching staff and management staff; The quality of research, application of educational sciences, and international cooperation; The quality of school organization and management; The quality of infrastructure and supporting equipment; financial resources; and the ability to meet the requirements of students and educational institutions serving preschool teacher training.

In other words, preschool teacher training quality is the full compliance with quality standards in preschool teacher training.

#### *2.2.2. Characteristics of preschool teacher training quality at pedagogical universities according to the AUN-QA approach*

Preschool teacher training quality is reflected and built based on the vision and mission of the university. The mission of pedagogical universities is to train high-quality human resources for the entire national education system, including the team of teachers and managers for the preschool education sector. The training quality of pedagogical universities is clearly reflected through the quality of the teaching staff and educational management staff in the preschool education sector.

An important characteristic of preschool teacher training quality is meeting expected learning outcomes. Based on the output orientation of preschool teacher training, pedagogical universities select appropriate training forms. The training plan built by pedagogical universities is based on the training form and simultaneously serves as the basis for calculating the economic efficiency of training activities. The training products of pedagogical universities are preschool teachers and managers who have sufficient personality and quality to teach and manage the preschool level. Therefore, the preschool teacher training quality of pedagogical universities is always in a "dynamic" state. Thus, the requirements for the qualities and capacities of Early Childhood Education students frequently change to meet the development of the education sector, in line with the role of teachers in modern society and the trends of globalization and deep international integration as seen today.

To meet the requirements for preschool teacher training quality as mentioned above, pedagogical universities are forced to not only care about the quality of current preschool teachers but also pay attention to the quality of potential preschool teachers. Therefore, pedagogical universities need to have strategies so that graduating preschool teachers have the ability to self-perfect and create their own quality in the future through their own teaching and educational process at kindergartens.

From the above analysis, preschool teacher training quality according to the AUN-QA approach carries the following basic characteristics:

#### Training quality is oriented by expected learning outcomes (Outcome-based quality)

In the modern higher education quality assurance approach, especially according to the AUN-QA 4.0 framework, the Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) of the training program are considered the central factor orienting the entire process of designing, organizing, and evaluating the training program. According to AUN-QA, expected learning outcomes must clearly describe the knowledge, skills, and competencies that learners need to achieve after completing the training program, and they must also be suitable for the needs of society, the labor market, and stakeholders [4].

In preschool teacher training, the expected learning outcomes of the training program need to fully reflect the requirements for professional qualities and capacities of teachers according to the teacher professional standards issued by the Ministry of Education and Training. Learning outcomes usually include three basic competency groups: (1) professional capacity in preschool education; (2) pedagogical capacity in organizing childcare, nutrition, and educational activities for children; (3) the capacity for professional development and adaptation to the modern educational context. Clearly identifying the learning outcomes helps preschool teacher training institutions orient the construction of training programs, select teaching methods, and design student assessment systems appropriately.

The Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach emphasizes shifting the focus from the lecturer's teaching process to the learner's learning results. According to Spady (1994), outcome-based education is an educational model in which every element of the training program is designed to ensure learners achieve specific competencies after graduation. In the context of preschool teacher training, this approach helps ensure that graduates not only master theoretical knowledge but also have the ability to apply that knowledge to practical child education.

Besides, learning outcomes play an important role in ensuring the transparency and accountability of the training program. When learning outcomes are clearly announced, stakeholders such as students, employers, and educational management agencies can evaluate the extent to which the training program meets practical needs. This is consistent with the requirements of higher education quality accreditation systems in the region and the world, in which AUN-QA considers expected learning outcomes as the first criterion in evaluating training program quality [4].

Thus, in the AUN-QA approach, preschool teacher training quality is determined first by the extent to which learners achieve the expected learning outcomes. This is the basis for training institutions to design training programs toward professional capacity development and meeting educational innovation requirements.

Training quality is systemic and linked between the components of the training program

An important characteristic of training program quality assurance according to the AUN-QA framework is the requirement for linkage and consistency between the components of the training program. According to AUN-QA, the quality of a training program is not only determined by the learning outcomes but also depends on the compatibility between learning outcomes, program structure, teaching methods, assessment methods, and supporting resources [4].

In preschool teacher training, the linkage between program components is expressed in how learning outcomes are specified within the program structure and the content of modules. Each module in the training program must contribute to forming one or more learning outcomes of the program. Simultaneously, teaching methods and assessment methods need to be designed to suit the goals of each module and the overall goals of the training program.

According to Biggs (1996), the principle of "constructive alignment" is an important basis for ensuring the consistency of the training program. This principle requires a close link between three elements: learning objectives, teaching activities, and assessment methods. When these elements are designed uniformly, learners will have the opportunity to develop necessary competencies effectively.

For preschool teacher training programs, the systemic linkage of the program is also expressed in the combination of theoretical training and professional practice. Modules on psychology, pedagogy, and preschool education methods need to be linked with pedagogical practice activities and internships at preschool education institutions. Through these activities, students have the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to practice and develop necessary professional skills.

In addition, the training program quality assurance system also needs to be built on the basis of stakeholder participation, such as students, alumni, employers, and educational management agencies. Collecting and analyzing feedback from stakeholders helps training institutions adjust training programs to suit practical needs, thereby improving the quality of preschool teacher training.

Thus, training quality according to the AUN-QA approach is systemic, in which every component of the training program is designed and operated uniformly to ensure learners achieve the defined learning outcomes.

Training quality is linked to student-centered teaching methods

One of the important principles of quality assurance according to AUN-QA is the application of student-centered learning methods. According to this perspective, the teaching process needs to create conditions for learners to participate actively in learning activities, developing thinking capacity and self-study ability. Being student-centered is

based on learning results. AUN-QA requires that expected learning outcomes be clearly defined, measurable, and suitable for the level of study, in which Early Childhood Education students are considered active subjects in the learning and professional experience process.

In preschool teacher training, applying student-centered teaching methods is particularly important. This is because preschool teachers not only need to master professional knowledge but also need the ability to organize educational activities suitable for children's developmental characteristics. This requires students to experience active learning methods right during their training process.

According to UNESCO (2015), student-centered education emphasizes the active role of learners in the process of constructing knowledge. Learners do not just receive knowledge but also participate in discovery activities, discussions, problem-solving, and cooperative learning. Active teaching methods such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, case studies, and experiential learning are considered effective methods for developing learner capacity.

In preschool teacher training, applying active teaching methods helps students develop many important professional competencies such as the capacity to design educational activities, the capacity to observe and evaluate children's development, the capacity for pedagogical communication, and the capacity to solve situations in the educational environment. Simultaneously, these methods also help students form a positive learning attitude and lifelong learning ability.

In addition, the student-centered teaching method is linked to using diverse forms of evaluating student learning processes, such as evaluation through projects, learning portfolios, professional practice, and feedback from internship institutions. These evaluation forms help reflect students' competencies comprehensively and encourage learners to participate actively in the learning process.

Thus, in the AUN-QA approach, preschool teacher training quality depends not only on the content of the training program but also on the way teaching activities are organized. Applying student-centered teaching methods contributes to improving training efficiency and developing students' professional capacity.

Training quality is linked to a competency-based student assessment system

One of the important factors reflecting training quality in modern higher education is the degree of alignment between the training program and the competency-based student assessment system. According to the AUN-QA approach, evaluating learners is not just to check the level of knowledge memorization but must also measure the extent to which the Expected Learning Outcomes of the training program are achieved [4].

In the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) model, learner competency standards are determined right from the program design stage and are specified into learning outcomes for each module. Based on that, assessment methods are built to measure the achievement level of competencies such as professional knowledge, professional skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills, and lifelong learning ability. Designing the assessment system according to competency standards helps ensure a close link between training goals, program content, teaching methods, and assessment methods [5].

Besides, competency-based assessment systems usually apply many different evaluation forms to reflect learners' competencies comprehensively. In addition to traditional test forms like written exams or multiple-choice tests, many training programs have applied diverse assessment methods such as project assignments, group assignments, presentations, practice reports, learning portfolios, or evaluation of internships at businesses. These assessment forms help reflect more accurately the learners' ability to apply knowledge into practice.

Furthermore, the competency-based assessment system must ensure principles of transparency, fairness, and reliability. Assessment criteria need to be clearly announced to learners right from the beginning of the module, and assessment results must be provided as timely feedback so that learners can improve their learning process. According to AUN-QA, an effective assessment system does not just measure learning results but also plays a role in supporting and promoting the learner's learning process [4].

Thus, linking training quality with a competency-based student assessment system contributes to ensuring that graduating students can meet professional and social requirements, while also improving the practicality and efficiency of the training program.

Training quality is linked to the internal quality assurance system and continuous improvement

The Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system is an important component in maintaining and improving the training quality of higher education institutions. According to the AUN-QA perspective, quality assurance is not a single activity but a continuous process aimed at monitoring, evaluating, and improving training activities [4].

An effective internal quality assurance system usually includes activities such as building quality assurance policies and procedures, collecting and analyzing data on training activities, periodic evaluation of training programs, as well as collecting feedback from stakeholders such as students, lecturers, alumni, and employers. This information plays a key role in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the training program and proposing appropriate improvement solutions.

In many higher education quality assurance models, the continuous improvement cycle PDCA (Plan - Do - Check - Act) is considered an effective management tool. According to this cycle, educational institutions need to Plan the training activities, implement them (Do), evaluate the results (Check), and implement improvement measures (Act). This process is repeated regularly to ensure that the training program is always updated and improved over time (Deming, 1986).

In addition, the internal quality assurance system contributes to improving the transparency and accountability of the educational institution toward society. When quality assurance procedures are built and implemented systematically, educational institutions can demonstrate the extent to which they meet national and international quality standards.

Thus, linking training quality with the internal quality assurance system and the continuous improvement mechanism helps higher education institutions constantly improve training efficiency, while adapting to changes in the educational environment and societal needs.

Training quality is linked to regional and international integration

In the context of globalization and the development of the knowledge economy, regional and international integration has become an inevitable trend of higher education. Training quality is not only evaluated within the national scope but must also meet international standards and practices to enhance the competitiveness and prestige of educational institutions.

According to the orientation of AUN-QA, linking training quality with regional and international integration is expressed through many activities such as building training programs suitable for international standards, participating in regional quality accreditation networks, promoting student and lecturer exchange, as well as scientific research cooperation with foreign universities [4].

One of the important benefits of the international integration process in higher education is creating opportunities for students to access multicultural learning environments and advanced training methods. Through joint training programs, student exchanges, or international internships, learners can develop necessary competencies such as intercultural communication skills, the ability to use foreign languages, and global thinking.

Besides, international integration also motivates higher education institutions to improve training quality to meet regional and international accreditation standards. Participating in accreditation systems like AUN-QA not only helps universities improve the quality of training programs but also creates favorable conditions for the recognition of degrees and labor mobility between countries in the region.

Thus, linking training quality with regional and international integration is an important factor helping higher education institutions enhance their position, expand cooperation opportunities, and contribute to training human resources capable of competing in a global environment.

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### 3. Conclusion

Preschool teacher training quality is one of the factors of decisive significance for the development of preschool education and the quality of educational human resources in the national education system. In the context of fundamental, comprehensive educational innovation and international integration, approaching advanced quality assurance models, including the AUN-QA quality assurance framework, has become an inevitable requirement for teacher training institutions.

Based on the analysis of perspectives on training quality and the specific nature of preschool teacher training, the paper has clarified the basic characteristics of preschool teacher training quality according to the AUN-QA approach. These characteristics include: training quality oriented by learning outcomes; systemic nature and linkage between training program components; student-centered teaching methods; competency-based student assessment systems; internal quality assurance systems linked to continuous improvement; and alignment with regional and international integration trends. These characteristics reflect modern approaches in higher education management and quality assurance, while also being suitable for the professional capacity development requirements of preschool teachers in the current educational context.

The research results show that applying the AUN-QA quality assurance framework not only helps preschool teacher training institutions clearly orient training goals but also contributes to improving the systemic nature, transparency, and efficiency of the training process. This is also an important basis for training institutions to continue perfecting training programs, innovating teaching methods, improving student evaluation efficiency, and building internal quality assurance systems toward continuous improvement.

In the coming time, preschool teacher training institutions need to continue researching and flexibly applying AUN-QA standards in the design and implementation of training programs, while also strengthening academic cooperation and international integration to improve training quality, meeting the development requirements of preschool education and society.

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### **Compliance with ethical standards**

#### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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