American Research Journal of Humanities Social Science (ARJHSS)
E-ISSN: 2378-702X
Volume-06, Issue-06, PP-34-43
www.arjhss.com

Research Paper Open Access

Factors Influencing Autonomy in Management in Member Higher Education Institutions of Thai Nguyen University

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ABSTRACT: Universities are granted autonomy and borne responsibility according to the regulations of the law regarding the planning, development and implementation of educational, scientific, technological, financial, international relations, organizational, and personnel activities. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing autonomy in management among member educational institutions affiliated with Thai Nguyen University. The data of the study were collected from a survey of 821 managers, faculty members, and students at educational institutions affiliated with Thai Nguyen University. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient method, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) were employed to test the theoretical model and hypotheses while data analysis was conducted by using statistical software SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 20. The results evaluated the groups of factors influencing autonomy in management for member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.

Keywords: Autonomy, Educational institutions, Thai Nguyen, influencing factors.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of profound changes through reforms in the international higher education, Thai Nguyen University in Vietnam is a regional university that provides multidisciplinary and diverse training in various fields. It aims to conduct high-quality scientific research and technology transfer to serve the national industrialization and modernization, contributing to the economic, cultural, and social development of the Northern Midland and Mountainous Region and the whole country. In recent years, there have been significant developments in granting autonomy to member institutions of Thai Nguyen University. However, there are still lingering issues that need to be examined and addressed. To provide guidance for solutions, policies, and directions for autonomous management in the educational institutions affiliated with Thai Nguyen University, it is crucial to establish a scientific and context-specific model of the influencing factors. This study was conducted upon collecting data and utilizing testing and evaluation models to ensure the efficiency and sustainability of autonomy in management among educational institutions affiliated with Thai Nguyen University.

1. Theoretical foundations and research methods

1.1 Theoretical foundations and proposed research model

Based on preliminary research findings, literature review, and measurement scale researchers such as organization of management system, human resource management, teaching organizations for learners, enrollment activities, training evaluation methods, organization of scientific and technological activities, evaluation of scientific and technological activities, international cooperation development, evaluation of international cooperation, quality assurance in education, quality assessment in education, financial activity management, and asset management [1-5; 7; 10-15].,

Drawing on relevant theories of autonomy in management in educational institutions, considering the developmental characteristics of Thai Nguyen University, this study aims to confirm that the research scale is suitable for the research task and the questions are clear and unambiguous. The study was also consulted with experts, and the suggestions and useful comments received during this stage helped the author develop and refine the evaluation criteria for the influencing factors of autonomy in management among member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University. The author used a Likert scale with 5 levels, in which 1 indicates completely disagree and 5 indicates completely agree. The specific results are as follows:

1.2 Research hypotheses

H1: The organization of management system has a positive impact on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H2: Human resource management has a positive impact on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H3: Autonomy in organizing activities for learners has a positive impact on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H4: Autonomy in enrollment activities has a positive influence on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H5: Autonomy in training activity evaluation methods has a positive effect on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in the member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H6: There is a positive correlation between autonomy in organizing scientific and technological activities and the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H7: The results of scientific and technological activities at the University have a positive impact on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H8: International cooperation development has a positive effect on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H9: There is a positive relationship between international cooperation results and the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H10: Quality assurance in education has a positive influence on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H11: Training quality assessment has a positive effect on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H12: Financial activity management has a positive impact on the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.
H13: There is a positive relationship between asset management and the outcomes of autonomy assessment in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.

1.3. Research Methodology

The research employed a in-depth interviews and 825 structured questionnaires surveys targeting management leaders, faculty members, and students in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University. Data were collected from 825 participants, in which 821 were valid, 3 were invalid, and 1 was incompleted. The 821 valid responses which met the criteria were evaluated by using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the theoretical model and hypotheses. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 20 statistical software.

II. RESEARCH RESULTS

2.1. Reliability Testing Results using Cronbach's Alpha

The study utilized Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Ca) to assess the reliability of the measurements and as a criterion for retaining adequately conditioned observations while excluding observations that did not meet the criteria from the measurement scale. Previous studies have indicated that a reliable scale typically exhibits a Ca coefficient ranging from 0.8 to almost 1, and scales with Ca coefficients greater than 0.7 is considered acceptable. Recent literature suggests that, in certain cases, scales with Ca coefficients above 0.6 can be deemed acceptable when measuring newly introduced concepts or concepts believed to be new among survey respondents within the context of the conducted study (Nunally, 1978; Peterdon, 1994; Slater, 1995).
In addition to the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, this study also utilized the correlation coefficient with the total score of observations within the measurement scale as a criterion for excluding observations that did not meet the reliability criteria. A higher correlation coefficient indicates a stronger relationship between variables and vice versa. Observations with correlation coefficients above 0.3 were considered to meet the reliability criterion. And observations with correlation coefficients lower than 0.3 in relation to the total score variable were excluded from the measurement scale since they did not correlate with the measurement scale used in the study.

In this study, the observations included in subsequent analysis steps met both criteria that a general Ca coefficient greater than 0.6 and correlation coefficients between observations greater than 0.3. Observations that did not meet these two criteria were excluded from the measurement scale before proceeding to the next analysis steps.

The detailed results of the reliability evaluation for all measurement scales used in the study are presented in the following table:

Table 1: Reliability Testing Results of the Measurement Scales

Variables	Mean	Variance	Total variable correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Overall relibility of management system (BMQL) scale: 0.874				
BMQL_01	13.0484	8.046	0.727	0.841
BMQL_02	13.0581	8.450	0.632	0.864
BMQL_03	12.9871	8.317	0.715	0.844
BMQL_04	13.0452	8.257	0.713	0.844
BMQL_05	12.9968	8.540	0.728	0.842
Overall relibility of human resource management (QLNS) scale: 0.876				
QLNS_01	14.0871	19.167	0.405	0.900
QLNS_02	14.5323	16.127	0.812	0.832
QLNS_03	14.2806	18.940	0.495	0.884
QLNS_04	14.5774	15.494	0.834	0.827
QLNS_05	14.5710	16.494	0.827	0.831
QLNS_06	15.5484	16.550	0.750	0.843
Overall relibility of scale for teaching organizations for learners (TCDH): 0.869				
TCDH_01	6.1061	3.747	0.752	0.814
TCDH_02	6.1061	3.753	0.778	0.791
TCDH_03	6.0707	3.543	0.723	0.843
Overall relibility of scale for enrollment activities (HDTS): 0.904				
HDTS_01	10.4548	9.860	0.763	0.885
HDTS_02	10.6097	10.394	0.766	0.883
HDTS_03	10.8571	9.758	0.821	0.863
HDTS_04	10.6194	9.868	0.791	0.874
Overall relibility of scale for training evaluation methods (DGDH): 0.858				
DGDH_01	11.0806	6.780	0.698	0.820
DGDH_02	11.0161	6.787	0.675	0.830
DGDH_03	11.0332	6.782	0.691	0.823
DGDH_04	10.9903	6.508	0.743	0.801
Overall relibility of scale for organization of scientific and technological activities (KHCN): 0.862				
KHCN_01	6.5290	2.710	0.781	0.769
KHCN_02	6.5548	3.245	0.758	0.796
KHCN_03	6.4710	3.130	0.690	0.851
Overall relibility of scale for evaluation of scientific and technological activities (DGCN): 0.824				
DGCN_01	6.7381	3.456	0.654	0.783
DGCN_02	6.8194	3.411	0.678	0.760
DGCN_03	6.6871	3.167	0.709	0.727
Overall relibility of international cooperation development scale (HDQT): 0.723				
HDQT_01	6.4290	3.301	0.559	0.619
HDQT_02	6.4548	3.097	0.566	0.607
HDQT_03	6.2581	3.241	0.508	0.679
Overall relibility of evaluation scale of international cooperation (DGQT): 0.867				
DGQT_01	10.4161	8.250	0.668	0.850
DGQT_02	10.5161	8.160	0.687	0.843
DGQT_03	10.1194	7.180	0.783	0.803
DGQT_04	10.2613	7.378	0.739	0.822
Overall relibility of scale for quality assurance in education (DBGD): 0.838				
DBGD_01	7.2097	1.888	0.620	0.869
DBGD_02	7.2419	1.970	0.749	0.732
DBGD_03	7.2065	1.990	0.753	0.731
Overall relibility of scale for quality assessment in education (KDGD): 0.917				
KDGD_01	6.2355	4.071	0.860	0.858
KDGD_02	6.2774	4.104	0.864	0.855

KDGD_03	6.2355	4.142	0.777	0.928
Overall relibility of financial activity management (HDTC) scale: 0.887				
HDTC_01	14.1677	9.279	0.709	0.867
HDTC_02	14.1129	9.110	0.804	0.845
HDTC_03	14.1645	9.329	0.720	0.645
HDTC_04	14.1710	9.127	0.687	0.721
HDTC_05	14.0935	9.674	0.716	0.865
Overall relibility of asset management scale (QLTS): 0.882				
QLTS_01	6.1710	3.670	0.752	0.851
QLTS_02	6.2839	3.803	0.715	0.795
QLTS_03	6.3581	3.875	0.748	0.852
Overall relibility of autonomy scale in higher education (DR): 0.942				
DR_01	14.6194	25.145	0.802	0.935
DR_02	14.7387	25.514	0.859	0.928
DR_03	14.7032	25.323	0.814	0.933
DR_04	14.8677	26.160	0.809	0.933
DR_05	14.7323	25.265	0.860	0.927
DR_06	14.7903	25.642	0.812	0.933

Source: Analysis based on survey results

The author examined the reliability coefficient of each measurement scale utilized in the model. The results revealed that the inclusion of the observation KHCN_04 exhibited a Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.862) higher than the overall Cronbach's alpha (0.731), while the correlation coefficient between the observation (0.109) and the general measurement scale was below 0.3. Consequently, the author excluded the observation from the measurement scale and conducted a second reliability assessment for the scale of organizing scientific and technological activities. The obtained results demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.862 for the overall measurement scale, with no observation exhibiting a correlation coefficient with the scale below 0.3. Thus, after the second assessment, it was concluded that the measurement scale of organizing scientific and technological activities met the required reliability level for factor analysis in the exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

Similarly, the reliability assessment indicated that the inclusion of the observation QLNS_01 yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.900) higher than the overall Cronbach's alpha (0.876). However, this observation had a correlation coefficient with the measurement scale (0.405) exceeding 0.3, indicating its significance as a variable. Therefore, the author retained this variable for further analysis without excluding it from the measurement scale.

Consequently, after excluding two observations from the scales of organizing scientific and technological activities and human resource management, it was observed that all measurement scales utilized in this study met the necessary reliability criteria for inclusion in the exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

2.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient in this analysis should ensure a value of ≥ 0.5, with a significance level of the Bartlett test ≤ 0.05. It is critical to note that the KMO measure is used to evaluate the adequacy of the EFA. According to Kaiser (1974), KMO values of ≥ 0.9 are excellent, ≥ 0.8 are good, ≥ 0.7 are acceptable, KMO ≥ 0.6 is mediocre, KMO ≥ 0.5 is poor, and KMO ≤ 0.5 is unacceptable.

When analyzing EFA, attention should be given to the factor loading coefficients of the factors used in the research measurement scale. These coefficients ensure the significance of the EFA analysis. In this study, the factor loading coefficient threshold used by the author was > 0.5, indicating the practical significance of the factor loading coefficients.

This research also considers the extracted variance and eigenvalue indicators during the EFA analysis. An extracted variance $\geq 50\%$ and eigenvalue coefficients > 1 are considered appropriate for the EFA.

Finally, this study examines the differences in factor loading coefficients for the same observation. Observations with a difference in factor loading coefficients ≥ 0.3 are considered to demonstrate differentiation between factors.

In this study, the author employed Principal Axis Factoring extraction method along with Promax rotation to conduct Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The results of this analysis revealed 14 factors extracted from the initial 55 variables. The total extracted variance accounted for 67.857%. The outcomes of the analysis

met the criteria set forth in this study. All observed variables exhibited factor loadings exceeding 0.5, with no observed variables loading on more than two factors simultaneously. Thus, the EFA analysis was deemed appropriate. The utilized measurement scales ensured discriminant and convergent validity, with no cross-loading among factors. The factors employed in the study remained consistent, without any addition or reduction in factor groups. The initial 55 observations were reduced to 14 factor groups, which are presented in detail in the following:

Table 2: Factor loadings of the observed variables.

	Factors													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
HDTC_02	.888													
HDTC_03	.838													
HDTC_04	.760													
HDTC_05	.736													
HDTC_01	.683													
BMQL_05		.881												
BMQL_04		.770												
BMQL_01		.753												
BMQL_03		.729												
BMQL_02		.657												
HDTS_03			.927											
HDTS_04			.827											
HDTS_02			.797											
HDTS_01			.766											
QLNS_02				.918										
QLNS_05				.883										
QLNS_04				.796										
QLNS_06				.738										
QLNS_03				.711										
DGDH_04					.831									
DGDH_03					.753									
DGDH_01					.682									
DGDH_02					.615									
DGQT_03						.862								
DGQT_04						.839								
DGQT_02						.748								
DGQT_01						.701								
DR_02							.921							
DR_05							.865							
DR_06							.828							
DR_04							.740							
DR_03							.696							
DR_01							.651							
KHCN_01								.906						

KHCN_02								.843						
KHCN_03								.714						
QLTS_02									.897					
QLTS_03									.833					
QLTS_01									.806					
DBGD_03										.903				
DBGD_02										.878				
DBGD_01										.633				
KDGD_02											.924			
KDGD_01											.852			
KDGD_03											.726			
TCDH_02												.881		
TCDH_01												.807		
TCDH_03												.688		
DGCN_03													.821	
DGCN_01													.760	
DGCN_02													.711	
HDQT_02														.741
HDQT_01														.697
HDQT_03														.623

Source: Analysis based on survey results

Through the analysis of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), it affirms that the measurement scales employed in this study exhibit satisfactory reliability and suitability for factor analysis confirmation (CFA) and subsequent analytical procedures.

2.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

In this study, the author proceeded with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the measurement scales employed. This method presents several advantages over traditional approaches. CFA enables a more rigorous assessment of the relationships between variables while minimizing statistical errors compared to exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

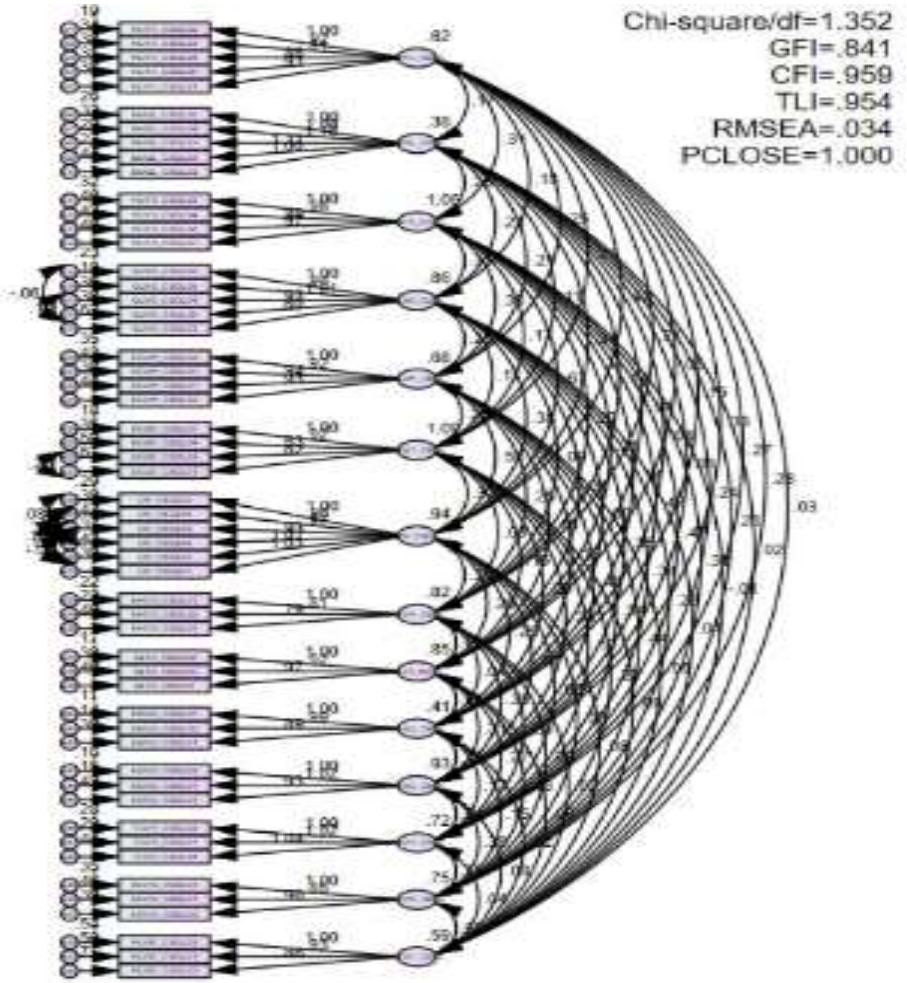

Figure 1: First-order measurement model
Source: Analysis based on survey results

The table above illustrates the indices employed by the authors to evaluate the unidimensionality and appropriateness of the model with market data. It is observed that the CMIN/df index of 1.352 < 3 meets the specified criterion, CFI of 0.959 > 0.9 aligns with the evaluation standard, TLI of 0.939 > 0.9 satisfies the stipulated condition, RMSEA of 0.034 fulfills the requirement of being less than 0.06, PCLOSE of 1.000 > 0.01, and the P-value of 0.000 < 0.05. It can be seen that the indices employed in this study to assess the unidimensionality of the measurement scale conform to all the established criteria. Thus, the definitions utilized by the authors ensure unidimensionality, and the research model is deemed appropriate with market data. In addition to assessing the unidimensionality of the measurement scale, the study also conducts tests to assess convergence, discrimination, and reliability of the measurement scales employed, in order to mitigate potential errors and contribute to both theory and practice. Furthermore, through the examination, it is found that the regression weights of all observations exceed 0.5, with a P-value less than 0.05. Consequently, it is concluded that all the observations used in this study satisfy the convergence criteria, the correlation coefficients of the concepts employed in the study differ from 1, specifically the correlation coefficients among the measurement scales are all less than 1. Thus, the measurement scale employed by the authors demonstrates unidimensionality, with no correlation among the measurement scales, and the research model is congruent with market data.

2.4. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a widely utilized method for testing research models. Employing this method allows scholars to integrate latent concepts with measurement scales and test them independently or in conjunction with the research model used. The model fit results from the SEM linear structural equation modeling test are presented below:

Table 3: Model Fit Test

Indicator	P	CMIN/df	CFI	GFI	TLI	PCLOSE	RMSEA
Result	0.000	1.352	0.959	0.841	0. 954	1.000	0.034
Criterion	<0.5	<3	> 0.9	>0.8	>0.9	>0.6	<0.08

Source: Analysis based on survey results

The table above presents important findings from the verification of the linear structural equation modeling (SEM) model. The results demonstrate that the theoretical model used by the author is suitable for the market data. The obtained coefficients for the verification of the linear structural equation modeling SEM satisfy the evaluation criteria and are consistent with the context of this study. Specifically, the obtained p-value is 0.000<0.05, meeting the set criterion. The indices CMIN/df, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and PCLOSE are 1.352, 0.959, 0.954, 0.034, and 1.000, respectively, satisfying the criterion for measuring the model fit coefficient. The GFI coefficient of 0.841 is acceptable considering the context and small sample size of the study. Therefore, the model used in this study is appropriate for the actual data in the surveyed area. The results of the analysis of the linear structural equation modeling SEM model are as follows:

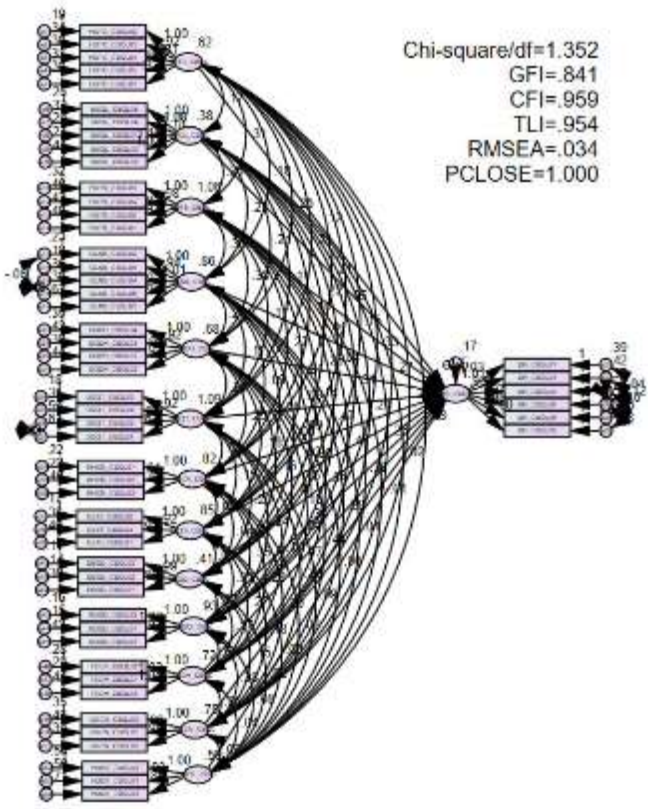

Figure 2: Second-order measurement model
Source: Analysis based on survey results

The model incorporates 14 concepts to examine the adequacy of the hypothesis. The evaluation criteria for the model's adequacy are all met, indicating that the model employed in this study is appropriate. After assessing the model's adequacy, hypothesis testing was conducted using regression analysis. The unstandardized regression coefficients are presented in the table below:

Table 4: Unstandardized Regression Results

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
DR_	<---	HDTC	.118	.051	2.296	.022
DR_	<---	BMQL	.172	.072	2.379	.017
DR_	<---	HDTS	.224	.042	5.283	***
DR_	<---	QLNS	-.014	.041	-.339	.734
DR_	<---	DGDH	.247	.063	3.930	***

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
DR_	<---	DGQT	.033	.034	.983	.325
DR_	<---	KHCN	.088	.042	2.094	.036
DR_	<---	QLTS	.133	.040	2.820	.012
DR_	<---	DBGD	.154	.059	2.621	.009
DR_	<---	KHGD	.150	.053	2.845	.004
DR_	<---	TCDH	.239	.064	3.707	***
DR_	<---	DGCN	.174	.059	1.242	.014
DR_	<---	HDQT	.041	.047	.867	.386

Source: Analysis based on survey results

From the following table, it can be concluded that the variables of QLNS, DGQT and HDQT do not have statistically significant relationships with the output variable, as indicated by the P-values greater than 0.05. The P-values of the remaining variables are all less than 0.05, and they have positive standardized regression coefficients. Therefore, the following conclusions can be drawn: variable HDTC has a positive impact on variable DR. Variable BMQL has a positive relationship with the variable DR. There is a positive relationship between variable HDTS and variable DR. Variable DGDH has a positive effect on variable DR. There is a positive relationship between variable KHCN and variable DR. As variable QLTS increases, variable DR also increases. Variable DBGD has a positive influence on variable DR. There is a proportional relationship between variable KHGD and variable DR. Variable TCDH has a positive impact on variable DR. There is a proportional relationship between variable DGCN and variable DR.

The table below presents the standardized regression coefficients, which indicate the extent of the independent variables' impact on the dependent variable.

Table 5: Results of standardized regression.

			Estimate
DR_	<---	HDTC_	.096
DR_	<---	BMQL_	.110
DR_	<---	HDTS_	.237
DR_	<---	DGDH_	.210
DR_	<---	KHCN_	.082
DR_	<---	QLTS_	.031
DR_	<---	DBGD_	.102
DR_	<---	KDGD_	.149
DR_	<---	TCDH_	.208
DR_	<---	DGCN_	.066

Source: Analysis based on survey results

The table above illustrates the degree of impact of independent variables on the dependent variable of enrollment activities, with the strongest influencing factor on autonomy in higher education (DR), and followed by the factors of training evaluation methods, teaching organizations for learners, quality assessment in education, management system, financial activity management, organization of scientific and technological activities, evaluation of scientific and technological activities, and asset management.

III. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The research findings indicate that the factors influencing the assessment of autonomy at Thai Nguyen University are enrollment activities, and followed by training evaluation methods, teaching organizations for learners, quality assessment in education, management system, financial activity management, organization of scientific and technological activities, evaluation of scientific and technological activities, and asset management. The results demonstrate that all independent variables have positive impacts on the output of autonomy assessment at Thai Nguyen University. In other words, investing in the enhancement of the factors including enrollment activities, training evaluation methods, teaching organizations for learners, quality assessment in education, management system, financial activity management, organization of scientific and technological activities, evaluation of scientific and technological activities, and asset management will promote the strengthening of autonomy in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.

Based on the results of the SEM model, it is evident that the greatest impact is from HDTS - Improving enrollment activities will have the most significant influence on enhancing autonomy in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University. The subsequent impacts, from high to low, are enrollment activities, and followed by training evaluation methods, teaching organizations for learners, quality assessment in education, management system, financial activity management, organization of scientific and technological activities, evaluation of scientific and technological activities, and asset management. The results obtained from this study can serve as a scientific basis for policy makers to develop sustainable solutions in strengthening autonomy in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University.

Specifically, administrators can utilize some suggestions from this study to propose solutions for enhancing autonomy in member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University, such as determining the quantity and methods of enrollment and developing short-term, medium-term, and long-term enrollment plans that align with the development orientation and mission of the university. The university should focus on reputation development to enhance competitiveness and attract students, since all activities of the university aim to produce talented graduates for the society. Therefore, enrollment activities need to be emphasized even more, as they have the greatest impact on the autonomy assessment of the university.

In addition, attention should also be given to activities such as recruitment, training, and development of personnel; planning and appointment of management officials that align with the objectives, functions, and specific conditions of the university. There should be policies and measures to create opportunities for management officials and lecturers to participate in professional activities both domestically and internationally. Diversification of training methods in various fields should also be considered to meet the learning requirements of students as stipulated. The results obtained from this study can serve as a scientific basis for administrators to propose fundamental solutions when implementing autonomy in management for member educational institutions of Thai Nguyen University in a sustainable and developmental manner.

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