

Quality Enhancement of Higher Education: A Case Study of Private Higher Educational Institutions in Provinces of Cambodia

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the quality of higher educational enhancement for sustainable development in North-Eastern region, Cambodia. The research design: quantitative approach was the main supplemented by the qualitative method and survey interview was chosen because it best met the study objectives. Three research questions: RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 were developed from an extensive literature review related to the study. 384 panelists (Cochran, 1963) with heterogeneous characteristics: sex, nationality, qualification, working seniority/ position, specialization, were invited to join the interviews. To understand the situation analysis of educational quality enhancement in North-East region, SWOT Interplay was also used. The research design was analyzed by SPSS version 28.0. The 59-item questionnaire reported a reliability of $\alpha = .982$ (N=59). If a reliability of scale is more than .80, the internal consistency within a scale is very good (Malley & George, 2000). The result of testing has shown that the validity and reliability of the scales used to measure the independence variables consisting of Educational Management (N=5 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .866$, Academic Curriculum (N=7 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .855$, Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs (N=7 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .844$, Facilities and Supporting Staff (N=7 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .882$, Student Assessment (N=6 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .903$, Collaborations (N=6 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .909$, Financial Management (N=5 items), reported a reliability of $\alpha = .905$, Internal Quality Assessment (N=6 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .913$, External Quality Assessment (N=5 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .913$ as the results of the research study. Data analysis: Descriptive (mean, mode, median, SD), Qualitative methods....thematic analysis/narrative/constant.

Keywords: Educational Quality, Enhancement, and Sustainable Development in North-East Region.

I. INTRODUCTION

North-East region is considered as a rural area which hasn't settled as much as in the city for both educational sectors and job labor markets (Heng, 2023). It's subsequently; the education system has been concerning as the vital feature to the learners, or educators, specifically the whole community developments in that area (Local villagers). The study aims to seek the resolution how the higher quality education is a must to those institutions. Higher education plays a vital role in determining the quality and availability of a labor force needed to drive socioeconomic growth (Heng, 2023a). Low-quality higher education would lead to (over) reliance on an imported workforce or local low-skilled workers, as low-quality University graduates tend to be unable to meet the needs of the changing labor market. This situation requires relevant stakeholders, particularly the government, to find ways to ensure that university graduates are equipped with the necessary knowledge and

skills to meaningfully contribute to national development. In Cambodia, higher education has made positive and impressive progress despite the many challenges facing the sector (Heng, 2023b; Heng & Sol, 2022). In the context of the global knowledge-based economy, the role of higher education could not be more essential. According to Heng (2022, 2023a), given the global trend toward building a knowledge-based society and developing world-class universities, the role of universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) has received considerable attention, particularly in terms of producing, distributing, and using knowledge to drive development and innovation. Heng (2023a) added that "universities are the key engine of knowledge production and dissemination" (p. 5) and their roles are central to the development of a knowledge-based society. The quality of education is an intangible (things that cannot be touched), namely the quality of education that is difficult to touch and difficult to measure standards except by quantifying everything. The educational system is invested with the responsibility

of absorbing, assimilating and delivering the new knowledge to its incumbents. In depth information and insight are taught in higher education advancing pupils to new areas of knowledge in various fields.

➤ *Statement of Problem*

The study is conducted to realize that how the North-east region challenges and contributes their quality education providers to those students such as lecturing, environments and materials supported that are used to quality enhancement for sustainable development the same as the city in Cambodia.

➤ *Research Objectives*

- To define the challenges of education quality enhancement in higher education institutions;
- To determine the roles of QECs in education quality enhancement in the higher education institution;
- To determine the effective strategies of Education Quality Enhancement of the HEIs

➤ *Research Questions*

- What challenges do Quality Enhancement Cells of the Higher Education Institutions face in the education quality enhancement?

- How do Quality Enhancement Cells contribute to Promote Education Quality Enhancement of the Higher Education Institutions?
- What are the effective factors of Educational Quality Enhancement Cells of the HEIs?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the 1990s, education systems have gone through a range of phases. Systems have moved away from central management of education inputs by ministries of education. There was a shift towards decentralization and greater school autonomy in a search for school improvement. Decentralization was coupled with an increased focus on accountability and results in education (Fullan, 2009; Hattie, 2015; Malone, 2013; OECD, 2014; Sahlberg, 2010). This gave way to school leaders adopting a more managerial role, focusing on delivering on school objectives more directly, especially in English speaking countries. This was followed with the introduction of more national and international evaluations at the student and system level at the beginning of the 21st century, in line with trends towards of increased public accountability and decentralization. The introduction of evaluations also reflected a shift from inputs to outcomes. At this time, the school leader role shifted towards instructional leadership, focusing more directly on school outcomes.



Fig 1 Literature Map (Theoretical Framework)

III. METHODOLOGY

The research design: quantitative approach was the main supplemented by the qualitative method and survey interview was chosen because it best met the study objectives. To understand the situation analysis of educational quality enhancement in North-East region, SWOT Interplay was also used. The research design was analyzed by SPSS version 28.0. The 59-item questionnaire reported a reliability of $\alpha = .982$ (N=59). If a reliability of scale is more than .80, the internal consistency within a scale is very good (Malley & George, 2000). The result of testing has shown that the validity and reliability of the scales used to measure the independence variables

consisting of Educational Management (N=5 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .866$, Academic Curriculum(N=7 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .855$, Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs (N=7 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .844$, Facilities and Supporting Staff (N=7 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .882$, Student Assessment (N=6 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .903$, Collaborations (N=6 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .909$, Financial Management (N=5 items), reported a reliability of $\alpha = .905$, Internal Quality Assessment (N=6 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .913$, External Quality Assessment (N=5 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .913$ as the results of the research study.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency	Percent
Age	20-29	33	47.1
	30-39	13	18.6
	40-49	23	32.9
	50-59	1	1.4
	Total	70	100.0
Gender	Male	46	65.7
	Female	24	34.3
	Total	70	100.0
Education Institution	Public	21	30.0
	Private	49	70.0
	Total	70	100.0
Education Level	Bachelor	35	50.0
	Masters	25	35.7
	PhD	10	14.3
	Total	70	100.0
Academic working experience	Below Five years	25	35.7
	Five years	8	11.4
	Ten years	9	12.9
	Over ten years	28	40.0
	Total	70	100.0
Position	Rector	3	4.3
	Vice Rector	2	2.9
	Dean	2	2.9
	Vice Dean	1	1.4
	Head of Academic department/Office	4	5.8
	Lecturer	26	37.1
	Others	32	45.7
	Total	70	100.0

➤ *Validity & Reliability*

The quantitative data was analyzed by SPSS version 28.0. The 59-item questionnaire reported a reliability of $\alpha = .982$ (N=59). If a reliability of scale is more than .80, the internal consistency within a scale is very good (Malley & George, 2000).

Table 2 Internal Consistency – Cronbach’s Alpha

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach’s alpha
Educational Management (Administration and Supervision)	52	.979
Academic Curriculum		
Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs		
Facilities and Supporting Staff		
Student Assessment		
Collaborations		
Financial Management		
Internal Quality Assessment		
External Quality Assessment		

Table 2 show the result of testing the validity and reliability of the scales used to measure the independence variables consisting of Educational Management (N=5 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .866$, Academic Curriculum(N=7 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .855$, Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs (N=7 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .844$, Facilities and Supporting Staff (N=7 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha =$

$.882$, Student Assessment (N=6 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .903$, Collaborations (N=6 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .909$, Financial Management (N=5 items), reported a reliability of $\alpha = .905$, Internal Quality Assessment (N=6 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .913$, External Quality Assessment (N=5 items) reported a reliability of $\alpha = .913$ as the results of the research study.

Table 3 Cronbach's Alpha

	Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha
HE1	Educational Management (Administration and Supervision)	5	.865
HE2	Academic Curriculum	5	.855
HE3	Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs	7	.874
HE4	Facilities and Supporting Staff	7	.882
HE5	Student Assessment	6	.903
HE6	Collaborations	6	.909
HE7	Financial Management	5	.905
HE1	Internal Quality Assessment	6	.913
HE2	External Quality Assessment	5	.918

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 4 Educational Management

Descriptive Statistics						
		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
H 1.1	The faculty has defined vision, missions and actions and operational plan following the University's strategic plan.	70	2	5	4.26	.863
H 1.2	The faculty has widely disseminated widely the Vision, Missions and some regulations to teachers, students and the relevant others.	70	2	5	4.14	.804
H 1.3	The faculty arranged both ordinary and extraordinary meetings for promoting the principle policies, strengthening technical learning and teaching methods and curriculum and so on.	70	2	5	3.97	.722
H 1.4	The faculty members facilitate the teachers in solving the problems such as major consultation on rooms, facilities, administration, and others relevant to their teaching.	70	1	5	3.96	.711
H 1.5	The faculty members solve the students' problems like changing class schedules and majors, and helping students do internship, find part time job and deal with other issues involved in quality specialization.	70	1	5	3.96	.788
	Valid N (listwise)	70				
	Mean Average				4.580	

Table 5 Academic Curriculum

Descriptive Statistics						
		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
H2.1	The HEI Curriculum is designed based on the outcomes of the study on the market's labor needs.	70	3	5	3.87	.635
H2.2	The HEI's Curriculum design is prepared based on the outcomes from the domains of the employers' traits and national qualification framework (the soft skills and the hard skills) to meet the market's labor needs.	70	2	5	3.96	.669
H2.3	The HEI's Curriculum design is prepared based on the outcomes of the research by orienting to knowledge, skills, and attitude.	70	2	5	4.03	.701
H2.4	The HEI's Curriculum courses are designed based on the students' learning outcomes, teaching activities, and student assessment methods.	70	3	5	4.04	.600
H2.5	HEI's Curriculum is evaluated for revising and developing to be on schedule set in the strategic plan.	70	3	5	3.97	.701
	Valid N (listwise)	70				
	Average Mean				3.974	

Table 6 Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs

		Descriptive Statistics				
		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
H3.1	Teachers are clearly selected with the qualified specialization and specification.	70	2	5	4.37	.765
H3.2	Teachers are encouraged for their achievement with financial and promoting incentives and credentials.	70	1	5	3.81	.856
H3.3	HEI has planned and implemented teacher development plan to improve their ability and capability in teaching	70	2	5	4.09	.794
H3.4	The teachers showed the clear course syllabus to the students and faculty, including : learning objectives or student learning outcomes, course content, course outlines, teaching methods (software or video clips, pictures, or laboratory) , assessment meth	70	3	5	4.00	.702
H3.5	The teachers have followed many methods in teaching in line with the course plan which had shown earlier.	70	2	5	4.10	.617
H3.6	Course Syllabus was written by aligning between the student learning outcomes, teaching methods, and the student assessment methods for effective outcomes.	70	2	5	4.03	.538
H3.7	Teachers are evaluated from both faculty and students on teaching at the end of the semester.	70	2	5	4.20	.734
Valid N (listwise)		70				
Mean Average					4.085	

Table 7 Facilities and Supporting Staff

		Descriptive Statistics				
		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
H4.1	HEI has the lecturing facilities (lecturing halls, both small and big) are adequate	70	3	5	4.09	.676
H4.2	The institution has enough computer and language lab and laboratory facilities for practicum	70	2	5	3.96	.647
H4.3	Internet operates well for the students in the institution.	70	2	5	3.67	.812
H4.4	The institution has a library with relevant books arranged orderly and up-to-date (e-book).	70	2	5	3.91	.756
H4.5	Supporting Staffs are selected according to qualification and competent for computer and language lab and laboratory.	70	2	5	3.84	.773
H4.6	Supporting Staff is encouraged for their achievement with financial and nonfinancial incentives.	70	1	5	3.69	.894
H4.7	HEI has planned and implemented supporting staff's development plans to improve their ability and capability in teaching	69	1	5	3.87	.726
Valid N (listwise)		69				
Mean Average					3.861	

Table 8 Student Assessment

		Descriptive Statistics				
		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
H5.1	The faculties have strictly administered entrance tests for the student candidates' selection.	70	1	5	3.91	.897
H5.2	In the class process, the assessment methods (quiz, homework , assignment, presentation and / or writing test for Midterm and Final Exam) were conducted, covering the course objectives of the curriculum which were disseminated when the classes had started	70	2	5	4.23	.726
H5.3	Teachers have conducted the student's formative assessment, and summative tests strictly	70	2	5	4.29	.801
H5.4	All exam assessments (midterm and final exams) in the class are conducted with transparency	70	2	5	4.17	.851
H5.5	The student assessment methods are always consistent with the student learning outcomes and teaching methods.	70	2	5	4.06	.814
H5.6	Teachers allow the students to protest their results of assessment.	70	2	5	4.30	.768
Valid N (listwise)		70				
Mean Average					4.160	

Table 9 Collaborations

Descriptive Statistics		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
H6.1	HEI has cooperated widely with external and internal relevant sectors.	70	2	5	3.74	.755
H6.2	HEI widely exchange the students with outside institutional partners to give the experiences of learning and teaching in their specialization	69	1	5	3.64	.939
H6.3	HEI compiled and disseminated networks with public, private and NGOs sectors (phone number, e-mail) for market researches and internship.	70	1	5	3.79	.797
H6.4	The students often outreach the internship at the real workplaces of partners.	70	1	5	4.00	.868
H6.5	The students are often invited to listen to guest speakers' experimental speeches from partners.	70	1	5	3.89	.925
H6.6	HEI always receives comments or feedbacks from the organization partners to correct curriculum, teaching, and learning toward improving the student learning outcomes for the labor market needs.	70	2	5	3.84	.754
Valid N (listwise)		69				
Mean Average					3.816	

Table10 Financial Management

Descriptive Statistics		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
H7.1	HEI has enough budget plans along with HEI's strategic plan, such as along with an action plan, and operational plan.	70	2	5	4.09	.794
H7.2	HEI has enough budget to ensure academic quality mechanism	70	1	5	4.03	.868
H7.3	HEI has sufficient finance to expense appropriate wage and salary for staffs and human resources development.	70	2	5	4.19	.804
H7.4	HEI has sufficient finance to allocate for equipping and maintaining the facilities, such as building, halls, rooms, laboratories, computer lab, and library.	70	2	5	4.06	.832
H7.5	HEI has sufficient finance to support for research, internship or project for the student achievement.	70	2	5	3.93	.873
Valid N (listwise)		70				
Mean Average					4.060	

Table 11 Internal Quality Assessment

Descriptive Statistics		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
HE1.1	Internal Quality Assessment oriented the curriculum design and development towards high quality based on learning outcomes in order to meet with the national qualification and labor market skills.	70	1	5	3.90	.783
HE1.2	Internal Quality Assessment ensures that the programs are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the student-centered approach, and conducting the assessment of students accordingly.	70	2	5	3.94	.740
HE1.3	Internal Quality Assessment evaluates the academic staff on qualifications, motivation policy and staff development to enhance his or her teaching effectiveness	70	2	5	4.01	.752
HE1.4	Internal Quality Assessment shares ideas about the consistence of using a sufficient infrastructure and facilities for strengthening the quality of teaching and learning toward effective student learning outcomes.	70	2	5	4.10	.745
HE1.5	Internal Quality Assessment checks HEI's collaboration with other public, private and NGOs sectors for the students' internship and field trips to practice their classes' theories.	70	1	5	3.81	.873
HE1.6	Internal Quality Assessment urges the HEI to understand her strengths and weaknesses to change in improvement and also prepare external assessment requirement.	70	2	5	3.89	.733
Valid N (listwise)		70				
Mean Average					3.941	

Table 12 External Quality Assessment

Descriptive Statistics						
		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
HE2.1	External Quality Assessment provides external validity and confirmation of quality in HEI and ensures that its academic program exhibits the characteristics of excellence in professional skills. Both graduates and their employers benefit from external quale	70	2	5	3.97	.742
HE2.2	External Quality Assessment supports and promotes innovation and creativity in teaching and learning through the sharing of best practices in professional education through conducting yearly conferences and workshops to assist in the professional development	70	2	5	4.00	.702
HE2.3	External Quality Assessment helps to fulfill the demand for public accountability in higher education institution is increasing rapidly. Specialized accreditation by the external authority body who provides external accreditation for the quality of an ins	70	2	5	4.00	.722
HE2.4	External Quality Assessment provides opportunities to partners and engages in student/faculty exchanges with any external quality accreditation body member schools around the world.	70	1	5	4.10	.783
HE2.5	External Quality Assessment helps colleges and universities offering bachelor's or graduate degrees in business had their programs accredited. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important for an institution's reputation and standing to have achieved	70	2	5	4.11	.692
	Valid N (listwise)	70				
	Mean Average				4.036	

- *RQ1. What challenges do Quality Enhancement Cells of the 5 private higher institutions face to assure program quality and development of graduates' attributes?*

Table 13 Mean Average Comparing of all Variables

	Variables	Number of Items	Mean Average Value
HE1	Educational Management (Administration and Supervision)	5	4.580
HE2	Academic Curriculum	5	3.974
HE3	Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs	7	4.085
HE4	Facilities and Supporting Staff	7	3.861
HE5	Student Assessment	6	4.160
HE6	Collaborations	6	3.816
HE7	Financial Management	5	4.060
HE1	Internal Quality Assessment	6	3.941
HE2	External Quality Assessment	5	4.036

- *RQ2. How do Quality Enhancement Cells of the 5 private higher institutions contribute to promote quality enhancement?*

Table 14 Mean Average Comparing of all Variables

	Variables	Number of Items	Mean Average Value
HE1	Educational Management (Administration and Supervision)	5	4.580
HE2	Academic Curriculum	5	3.974
HE3	Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs	7	4.085
HE4	Facilities and Supporting Staff	7	3.861
HE5	Student Assessment	6	4.160
HE6	Collaborations	6	3.816
HE7	Financial Management	5	4.060
HE1	Internal Quality Assessment	6	3.941
HE2	External Quality Assessment	5	4.036

- *RQ3. What are the effective factors of Education Quality Enhancement Cells of the 5 HEIs?*

Table15 The Most Effective Items in all the Education Quality Enhancement Cells of the 5 HEIs

No	Variables			N	Mean	Std. Deviation
HE1	Educational Management (Administration and Supervision)	H 1.1	The faculty has defined vision, missions and actions and operational plan following the University's strategic plan.	70	4.26	.863
HE2	Academic Curriculum	H2.4	The HEI's Curriculum courses are designed based on the students' learning outcomes, teaching activities, and student assessment methods.	70	4.04	.600
HE3	Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs	H3.1	Teachers are clearly selected with the qualified specialization and specification.	70	4.37	.765
HE4	Facilities and Supporting Staff	H4.1	HEI has the lecturing facilities (lecturing halls, both small and big) are adequate	70	4.09	.676
HE5	Student Assessment	H5.3	Teachers have conducted the student's formative assessment, and summative tests strictly	70	4.29	.801
HE6	Collaborations	H6.4	The students often outreach the internship at the real workplaces of partners.	70	4.00	.868
HE7	Financial Management		HEI has sufficient finance to expense appropriate wage and salary for staffs and human resources development.	70	4.19	.804
HE1	Internal Quality Assessment	HE1.4	Internal Quality Assessment shares ideas about the consistence of using a sufficient infrastructure and facilities for strengthening the quality of teaching and learning toward effective student learning outcomes.	70	4.10	.745
HE2	External Quality Assessment	HE2.5	External Quality Assessment helps colleges and universities offering bachelor's or graduate degrees in business had their programs accredited. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important for an institution's reputation and standing to have achieved a	70	4.11	.692

VI. CONCLUSION

Higher Education in Cambodia continues to grow in terms of quantity and quality (Lee, 2002). The Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) is committed to promote educational quality and excellence across higher education institutions in the country. North-eastern is a part of Cambodia that Government has recognized the importance of private higher education and has taken a number of steps to expand access and enhanced as the city (Un Leang, 2018). Public and Private universities have grown drastically for the last ten years. There are many Universities in Cambodia but among of private University recently, there has been up 40 private universities. Quality accreditation to all higher private education institutions to ensure and promote the quality of higher education in Cambodia to meet the national and international standards, and to develop its standards, policies, procedures, management structures, roles, functions, and responsibilities in order to provide institutional accreditation to HEIs, offering degree programs ranging from Bachelor to Doctoral degrees in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Based on the results, it can be seen that most universities appeared to have negligible focus on academic collaborations, facilities and supporting staff, internal quality assessment, and academic curriculum, but they seem to have been working so well on other factors, namely: educational management (on item H1.1), student assessment (on item H5.3), academic staff and teaching strategies at HEIs (on item H3.1),

financial management (H7.3), and external quality assessment (on item H9.5). Other items in these independent variables H1, H3, H5, H7 and H8 need more attention to be as well as H1.1, H3.1, H5.3, H7.3 and H9.5

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