

Report on Higher Education In Cambodia

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Higher Education in Cambodia

Summary

I - Institutions

Up to 1994, Higher Education in Cambodia functioned as an enormous machine that first re-trained, then trained, civil servants. But today, most 1995 graduates are no longer offered government jobs. Higher Education comprises three main sectors :

- The Phnom Penh University (or PPU) which includes six faculties (Sciences, Letters, Social Science, Pedagogy, Business, Law & Economics).

- Five institutions which stand outside the UPP and are directly under the auspices the Ministry of Education and sometimes also their respective Ministries: Medicine, the *Institut de Technologie du Cambodge* (or ITC), Agriculture, Fine Arts, *Ecole Royale d'Administration* (or ERA).

- A small private sector, represented by the Cambodia Resource Development Institute (or CDRI), Regent College and the Australian Centre for Education.

There are a significant number of places where civil servants from the Ministries can be re-trained, under the auspices of the main donor countries. NGOs play a major role already, mainly by supplying personnel - expatriates and overseas Cambodians. Although secondary school teachers are, for the time being, mostly trained outside the Higher Education system, there are plans to upgrade their training.

II - The Main Issues in Higher Education

1- **Buildings:** The situation varies greatly from one Faculty to the other. Some have undergone such drastic renovations they are as good as new (the ITC or the Foreign Language Centre); some are almost in the sorry state of disrepair the Khmer Rouge left them in when they abandoned Phnom Penh on 6th January 1979. Most are in a poor state of repair for lack of funds and poor management.

While Phnom Penh is very poorly equipped with decent laboratories, students can now have access to thousands upon thousands of books in English or French (very few are in Khmer) in the now many and renovated libraries. Unfortunately far too few students are proficient enough in the foreign languages concerned to be able to read them.

2- Teaching Staff : There are two main problems :

- Income : With the gradual disappearance of corruption (at both ends of the system: entrance examination and graduation), and with the closing down of the so-called Preparatory Year this year, the illegal and legal sources of income of lecturers are fast disappearing. Besides, official wages have not kept up with inflation and are now one tenth of what one can expect to earn to survive in Phnom Penh today. Besides, all the perks of the Heng Samrin regime (a house being the main one) have now all vanished. Some foreign countries eke out these meagre salaries.

- Qualifications : A great deal of effort is being made for in-service retraining, while a number of lecturers are being sent abroad for postgraduate studies. Lecturers trained in Phnom Penh in recent years would have to submit themselves to some form of assessment, negotiated within their respective departments, as *New Humanities* is attempting to do in the Philosophy Department.

3 - Programs & Curricula : These have been either totally revamped, or are being gradually improved year after year. There are no areas in which no change has been made in the last few years. The main problem is the lack of competent staff to teach the new syllabuses, and lack of means, particularly in sciences.

There are signs that pedagogical methods are slowly changing, with more student participation, and small research projects being produced in a number of areas (agriculture, engineering, history). However, still far too much depends of dictation of courses to be learnt by rote, with little use of manuals. A few postgraduate courses are beginning to be established.

4 - Students : With the collapse of the old regime, it has become more and more difficult for poorer students - in particular from the provinces - to study in Phnom Penh; grants are now practically non-existent, and students hostels have all been closed. The student population is now tends to being reduced with, on the one hand, the closing of the Preparatory Year, and, on the other, the very stringent pass rate at the *Baccalauréat* (5 to 6%!), in 1994, increased to about 10% in 1995. Potential students from outside Phnom Penh are further discriminated against by this new system. The overall student population (about 16,300 students, according to the Ministry), represents only a tiny percentage of age groups concerned.

Students are further demoralised by not - for the first time in 1995 - being automatically absorbed into the civil service on graduation. They are not used to looking for a job themselves. Too many could perhaps have been work-shy, particularly in the arts and social sciences area, since all students tended to be automatically admitted at exams in the past. The authorities are attempting to move back into student organisations, possibly in order toward off all potential student unrest.

5 - Language : All lectures can and should be in Khmer, it seems, but tertiary students should all be able to read fluently the now copious literature, in the several fields of study, which is now available in Phnom Penh. Intensive courses in a major international language are being given in the early stages of university training, as it is realised that only a couple of hours on a weekly basis for large groups of students is much of a waste of time and money. A lot of progress has been made in this area already. Many people are working in Phnom Penh to establish lexicons in several languages, particularly in the science area.

6 - Research & Publications : There are now a number of places in Phnom Penh where books in Khmer are produced and printed.

7 - Management & Administration : There are basically two situations: some institutions are theoretically run by Cambodians, but in fact by a single foreign donor (like the ITC, or the Foreign Language Centre) - and efficiently, it seems; institutions which are run by Cambodians themselves, but have to struggle with lack of means and human resources. Some have already achieved radical administrative improvements, though, like the Royal University of Agriculture.

8 - Inter-departmental and Institutional Relations : These are practically non-existent today.

9 - International Relations and Foreign Aid : As there is no central body in Higher Education that would centralise and co-ordinate offers of aid, these tend to be piecemeal and following the agenda of the donor. Some areas are totally taken over by an outside contributor, while others are neglected. Too many offers from individuals representing foreign Universities or organisations are not followed up precisely because of the lack of co-ordination and organisation.

III - Suggestions for Improvements

- **Teaching staff** : all lecturers who are not sufficiently qualified to teach at tertiary Education level must acquire the necessary qualification or be re-deployed. Ways must be found to make greater use of overseas qualified Khmers. Non-Khmers must also contribute to help bridge the generation gap, until there are enough competent Cambodians to staff all departments. Salaries, which have tended to fall in the new regime, only cover living expenses for a couple of days each month !

- **Students** : must be prepared to contribute financially to Higher Education. Schemes must be devised to aid the poorer students. The present significant reduction of the student population must be reviewed.

Strict proceeding for all exams at all levels must be devised urgently.

- **New role of the State** : Basically the control of the State over Higher Education should be much lighter. For instance, State diplomas could be abolished. The State should define what are the obligation of public service to which both public and private institutions should be submitted, but leave the day to day running of institutions to those in charge of them. Those should be chosen democratically, as far as it is feasible. Institutions should have financial autonomy.- and a budget ! The private sector should be encouraged to grow, provided provisions are made for poorer students.

A great deal of initiative should be left to individuals and institutions. Apart from the obvious necessity to co-ordinate foreign aid and promote multilateral rather than just bilateral aid, the State should have six priorities in Higher Education, apart from those already defined by the agreed *National Programme to Rehabilitate and Develop Cambodia*. The first three areas should be given special attention, since they constitute the core of Khmer culture :

- 1 - the promotion of the Khmer language, and the support of the *National Language Institute*;
- 2 - strong support for all the Fine Arts;
- 3 - the revamping of the teaching of History;
- 4 - promotion of rural development, not only in words, but in deeds;
- 5 - development of primary health care;
- 6 - creation of a Department at the PPU concerned with Môn-Khmer ethnic minorities, especially from the Northeast.

Report on Higher Education in Cambodia

Henri LOCARD

"If problems are really acute, rulers may be tempted to simply loot the polity before it collapses completely. There are already worrying signs of this happening in Cambodia, in a fashion hauntingly reminiscent of the last few years of the Lon Nol regime. To provide untied aid in such circumstances is pointless, but assistance with mine-clearing, rural development, primary health care and education is vital".

William Maley

A Crisis of Expectations: UN Peacekeeping in the 1990s, Westview Press 1995

Introduction:

Because of the too short time I had to carry out the field research for this report, it cannot be regarded as exhaustive - far from it. Possibly some important areas and issues have been left in the dark. What will be described in the following pages is often merely personal impressions. However, I am grateful for the help of Mr. Ouk Kimpho, from the Cabinet of the Ministry of Education, and the support of Khin Vuthy and Pin Chandararath from the UNESCO Office in Cambodia. Conclusions and recommendations are not only personal, but perhaps hasty. They represent only the views of the reporter, and not those of UNESCO.

One of the persons I interviewed very perceptively remarked that your reporter "*was no more in a position to investigate, in such a short period of time, "the quality of teaching and learning in Cambodia today in Tertiary Education" (as required by his UNESCO contract) than a bicycle repairer would be able to fix a space ship*". Still, I am under the illusion that a "*bicycle repairer*" might be of some use in this country, to help it leap into our space and computer age.

Part I - Short description of institutions

I - Public institutions:

1 - The Phnom Penh University, or the PPU which comprises:

The so-called *UPP 1*, which re-opened in 1979, has operated until 1994 as vast Teacher Training College for the Senior Secondary School Colleges - that is grades 9, 10 & 11. It has trained teachers in the subjects taught in secondary schools. Science subjects include: **Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology**, and the recently opened **Computer Centre**; Arts & Social Sciences: **Geography** (which used to be part of the Faculty of Sciences, has now been moved, by French advisors, into the Social Sciences area), **Khmer** (language & literature), **English, French and Japanese**, just now in its preliminary stages, (as part of the Language Institute) **History, Psychology-Pedagogy, Philosophy-Sociology**.

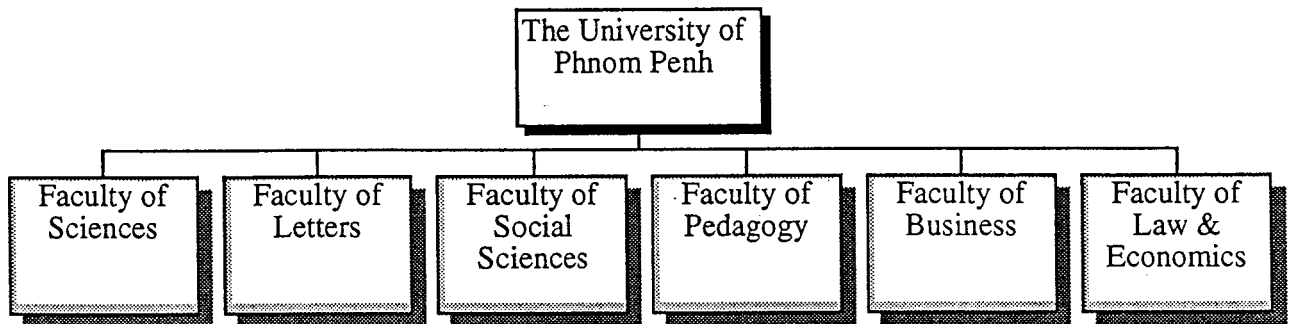
Eight departments are housed in the large single block on the Russian Federation Boulevard: **Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Khmer, Geography and French**, with the recently opened **Computer Science Department**. It should be completely renovated thanks to a loan from the Asian Development Bank. Three departments are based in and around the so-called Foreign Language Centre: **English, Japanese and Psychology-Pedagogy**.

From July 1995, most of the newly graduating students no longer automatically become senior secondary school teachers, and must therefore find a job for themselves. However, about a quarter of these graduates (except those trained in the English and French departments) will, after taking a competitive entrance examination, follow one year of training at the re-opened **Faculty of Pedagogy**. These are the plans today. Will the Ministry of Education be in a position to implement them by September-October ?

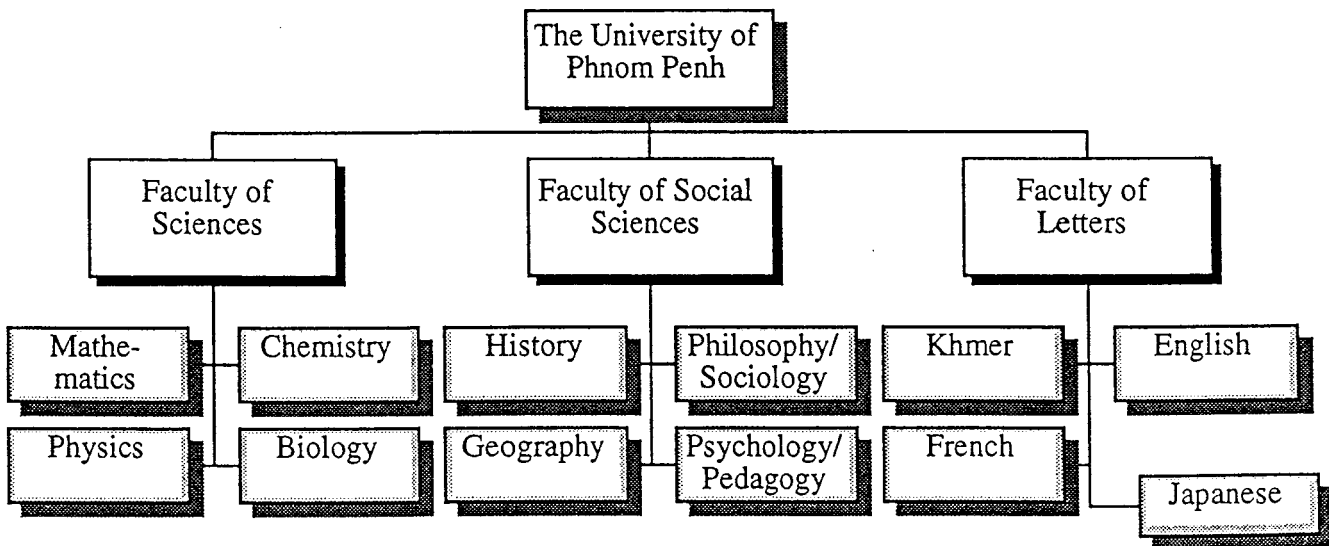
The so-called *PPU 2*, also improperly named *the Institute of Sociology*, is situated in the recently built *Central Party School* (a present from Vietnam just before it left the country in 1989), to which two departments have been moved - **History and Philosophy**. *New Humanity*, an Italian NGO has been gradually introducing **Sociology** since 1994. It has now its own library.

Organisation of the University of Phnom Penh

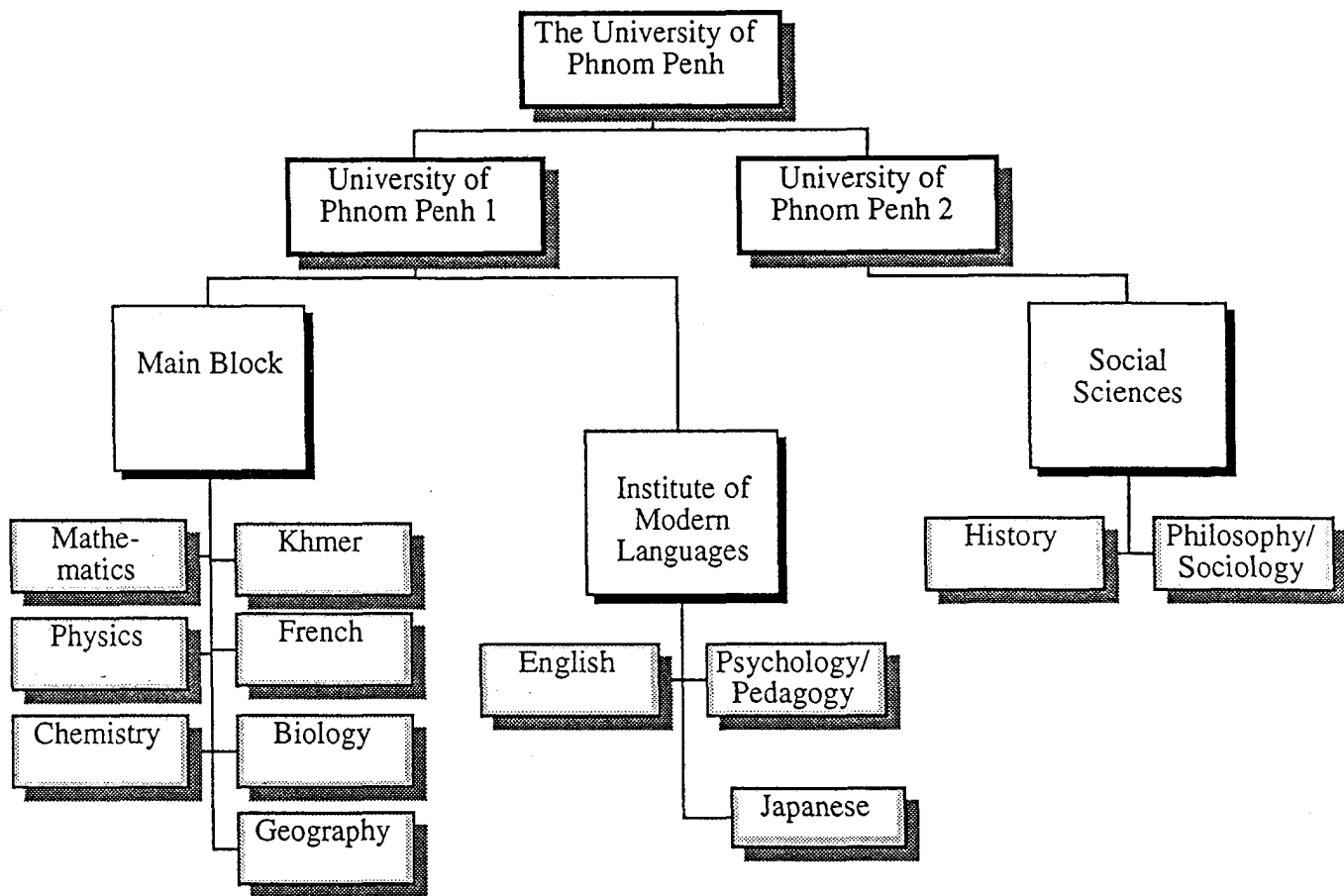
Notional



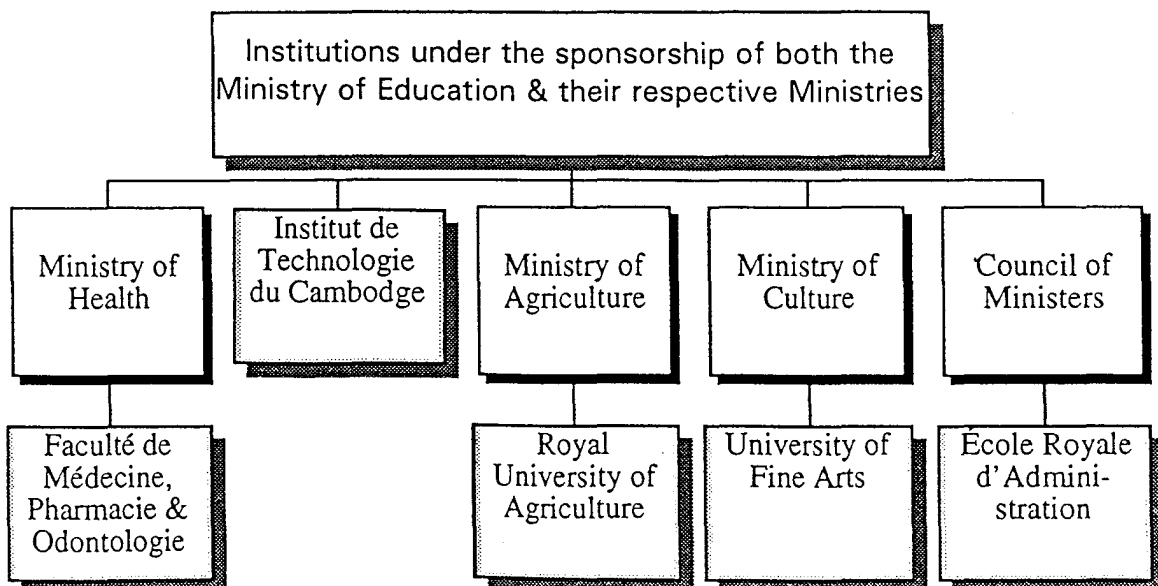
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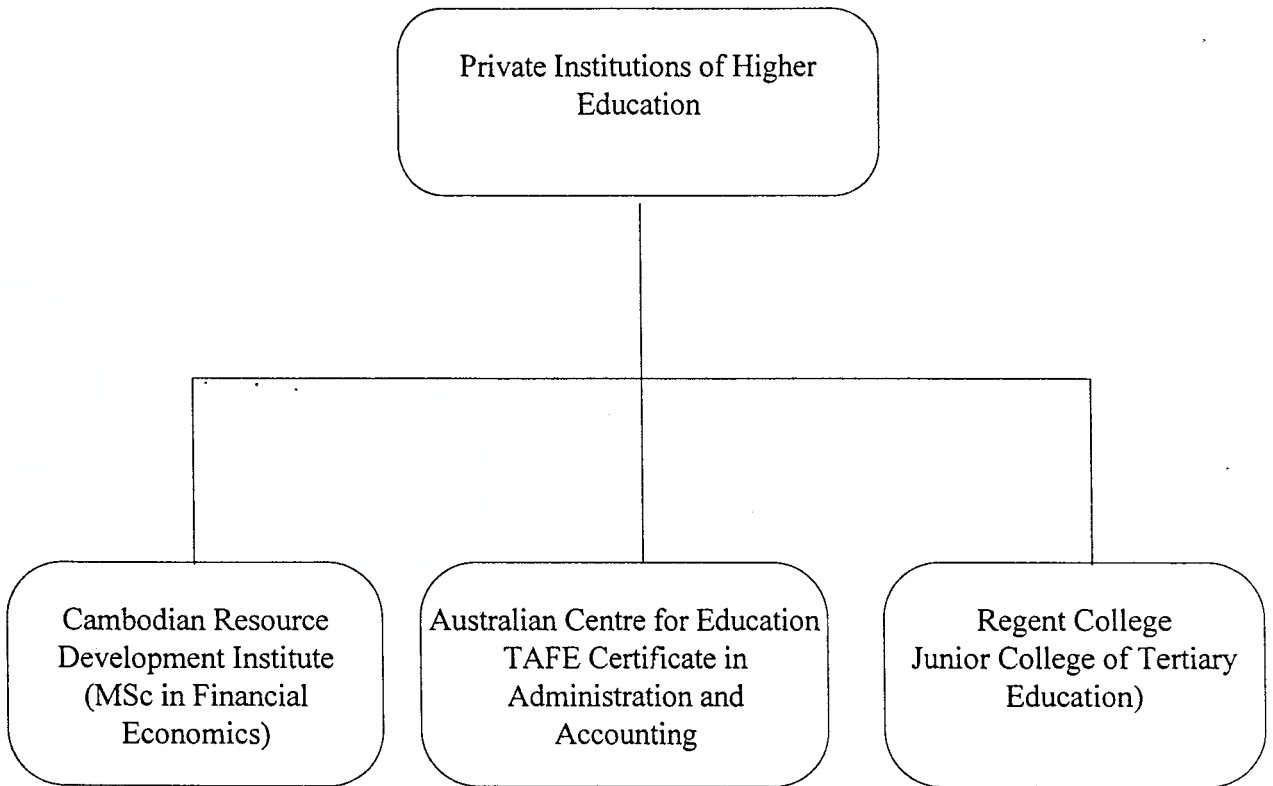
Location of the 12 Departments of the University of Phnom Penh



Higher Education Institutions *outside of* The University of Phnom Penh



Private Institutions of Higher Education



The Faculty of Pedagogy (near the Independence Monument)

Two more institutions are theoretically part of the University of Phnom Penh, although this is a mere bureaucratic fiction, since they operate under a totally separate management and different philosophies. Besides, they have, thanks to French and American aid, been fully renovated, even "re-founded". They are:

- La Faculté de Droit & des Sciences Economiques in Boeung Trabek

It is divided into two Departments: Law, which teaches essentially civil and administrative law (a three-year course for a BA, and a 5-year course for an MA); Economics offers a three-year course in accountancy (or *Brevet de Technicien Supérieur*, in which French language is compulsory); and a 5-year course for an MSc in management; banking and accountancy (French and English are taught). Some of the best students should be able to prepare a Master of Business & Administration at the Bangkok AIT, using both French and English.

- The Faculty of Business (ex- *Lycée Descartes*)

Is also divided into two Departments:

- the Faculty of Business which is running, under the auspices of Georgetown University in the US, a 4-year program in Business Administration.

- the Faculty of Business Administration and Law which, under the auspices of the University of San Francisco's School of Law, has drafted a 4-year curriculum.

2 - The next five institutions are each directly attached to MOEYS, while also being sometimes under the tutorship of their respective Ministries:

1 - La Faculté Mixte de Médecine, de Pharmacie et d'Odonto-Stomatologie, under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. In the vicinity, the newly built re-founded Institut Pasteur du Cambodge, in co-operation with Calmette Hospital, form a coherent system that will contribute to the scientific and practical training of medical doctors.

2 - Institute of Technology of Cambodia, or ITC, is directly attached to MOEYS.

3 - The Royal University of Agriculture (two separate schools: *Chamcar Daung*, for engineers, and *Prek Leap* for technicians) also falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture.

4 - The Royal University of Fine Arts, with two separate locations and five "Faculties", or Departments, is also under the tutelage of the Ministry of Culture:

* Behind the National Museum : 1 - **Archaeology**, 2 - **Architecture** & 3 - **Fine Arts** (Painting, Sculpture, Interior Decoration), for Higher Education, a five year course; after a two year course in senior high school, including modelling (earth, copper, brass, silver cement), ceramics, weaving, mask making, drawing, painting, sculpture (stone, wood).

* Near the old stadium, **Music & Choreography** (classical and folk dance, traditional and modern forms of drama, circus training), now operating at secondary school level, mostly, but planning to offer more advanced Higher Education courses.

5 - L' Ecole Royale d'Administration is directly attached to the Council of Ministers, and will recruit, from 1997, MA graduates after a competitive entrance examination, to be trained into the top ranks of the Civil Service.

II - Private Institutions in Higher Education

In the short period of my survey, I have been able to identify only **three**, private institutions which offer genuine Higher Education courses. One operates according to the rules of a market economy - *Regent College*, while the two others are non-profit organisations - the *CDRI* and *The Australian Centre for Education*. They open new pathways in their respective approaches to Higher Education and therefore must be watched with great interest. They are :

1. Regent College, operates on a commercial basis to train and re-train middle business cadres. It is opened all the year round and offers courses that last 12 to 15 months, in business, secretarial and language subjects. It prepares for the *London Chamber of Commerce and Industry*, or *LCCI*, examinations.

2. The Australian Centre for Education is now developing courses articulated into the post-secondary Technical and Further Education (*TAFE*) sector in Australia. For example, courses in Office Skills and Administration, Accounting, Hospitality and Catering. The first course that is offered is "Workplace Communications". It leads to a Certificate in Office Skills, possibly completed over six terms or two years of part-time attendance (10 hrs/week). The first class, fully sponsored by their employer, has already started.

3. The Cambodia Resource Development Institute, or CDRI, is offering the first post-graduate course in this country, a "Master in Financial Economics", a "Distance Education

Program", under the auspices of *The School of Oriental & African Studies*, at *The University of London*.

The self-styled "*Maharashi Vedic University*" of Kamchay Meas, Prey Veng Province, is run by four dedicated and generous Australian expatriates. However I am not certain that their dream of a better world through Transcendental Meditation, the learning of Sanskrit and the practice Ayur-Veda Medicine, has come true neither for their students. It does not seem that this institution can be regarded as meeting the requirements at a Tertiary Education level. The *Australian Aid for Cambodia Fund (AACF)*, the organisation that runs the "University", has not been in a position to abide by all its pledges, as committed in writing by the 27th December 1993 Agreement with the Ministry of Education, for lack of funds and qualified personnel. I suggest the institution could, in the future, develop into becoming a proper Provincial Agricultural College. There is a great demand for such training within that kind of rural environment. And this is the area where *AACF* has been doing its best work, but this needs to be considerably enlarged.

III - Some institutions where middle and higher civil servants are re-trained:

1 - Institutions supported by donor countries: France, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan & Germany:

Centre Culturel & de Coopération Linguistique, supported by the French government: in-service training of French teachers for secondary schools (957 teachers in 1995). It also gives refresher courses to cadres from the Ministries of Education, Defence, Interior (police), Agriculture (rubber specialists), Finances, and the private business and banking communities.

The French *Centre Culturel* - in particular through lectures by eminent people and its *Cercle Linguistique* - contributes to the revival and development of the Khmer Language and Culture.

L'Ecole Royale d'Administration, will really be starting pre-service training in Administration after the first competitive entry examination in September 1997 (once the first cohort of Law students have completed their Master of Law five-year-course). In the meantime, it offers in-service training one year courses, in French and Khmer languages for officials of the Ministries, in subjects which are *de rigueur* for top civil servants.

- The Australian Centre for Education, owned by the International Development Programme of Australian Universities and Colleges (IDP), offers general English courses, English language training for Ministry officials sponsored by *AusAid*, the Australian Government Aid programme, pre-departure training for postgraduate candidates, and English tailored to the needs of corporate clients.

- Cambodian-British Centre, supported by the British government: in-service and pre-service training of English teachers for Junior Secondary Schools, but plans to move into training of Senior Secondary School teachers as well. The Centre is also involved in English training for key government staff (Council of Ministers, Ministries of Commerce, Economics & Finance, Environment, Education, Foreign Affairs, Industry, Mines & Energy, Planning, and Tourism).

- The Asia Foundation, supported 80% by the US government, 20% from private funds: training or re-training of officials in business law and contract law, support of *The Faculty of Business*, supplementary course to some 150 students from *La Faculté de Droit*, in English language and business law, writing of a Khmer-English law dictionary and glossaries, and composing law courses in both Khmer and English languages. It also provides university texts in all fields, and funds a librarian.

- Although Japan is not yet much involved in re-training and Higher Education in general, at present, apart from a significant number of scholarships for Tertiary Education in Japan, it is potentially a big donor and contributor.

- Germany is offering a number of grants: on-year scholarships for young graduates; short-term research grants for young academics and study visits; scholarships in fields of music, fine arts, film and design.

- 2 - Others:

- The Cambodia Development Resource Institute, or CDRI, has seen as its main mission, for the past decade or so, to re-enforce existing government structures in Cambodia. It has therefore mainly offered high quality courses in English language, computer science and economics to officials from the various Ministries in the capital.

- Other institutions operate in the Higher Education sector such as UNDP, the *Khmer Institute for Democracy*, the *Preah Sihanouk Raj Academy*, I had not time to investigate them.

IV - NGOs in Higher Education

- Apart from the CDRI, whose mission essentially consists in training and re-training of cadres, a number of NGOs are sending teaching or administrative personnel to institutions of Higher Education: *New Humanity* (an Italian organisation, funded both by the Catholic Church, and indirectly by the Italian government) is a special case. It is developing ambitious plans to create a *Faculty of Social Sciences* at the PPU 2, with the introduction of *Sociology*, as we saw, along with some initiation to *Anthropology*. It is too early, at this stage, to see if this well-funded program will succeed.

- *CANDO* (Cambodian-American National Development Organisation), *Maryknoll Sisters*, *Jesuit Refugee Service*, *British Overseas Voluntary Service*, with similar organisations from Australia (the *Overseas Service Bureau*) and New Zealand, *Australian Catholic Relief*, the *Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-day Saints* (the Mormons), *Assemblies of God*, etc. ... (and probably others I have not had time to trace), send voluntary, and, as far as I could judge from those I met, competent staff to the various Faculties. The Royal University of Agriculture of Chamcar Daung, which can be taken as a model for having arranged a fruitful system of multilateral co-operation, is helped by no less than some twenty NGOs !

V - Teachers' Training Colleges

Up to now, the two categories of Teachers' Training in the country - both at the Provincial and the Regional levels - have operated outside the Higher Education system in Cambodia. However, one must be aware of their existence:

- first, because the trainers must come from the University of Phnom Penh themselves;

- secondly, it is to be hoped that, in the near future, the training will be upgraded, at least for the junior Secondary School personnel, and therefore be brought, if only indirectly, under the auspices of Tertiary Education.

Some useful data can be collected from the very informative report of Stephen J. Duggan on the subject: *The Management & Organisation of Teacher Education in Cambodia*,

November 1994. According to plans¹ developed in this report, "teacher training will be provided on the following models:

Teachers Completed schooling		Training
Pre-school	11 years	1 year (already in place)
Primary school	11 years	2 years (in place)
Lower Secondary	11 years	2 years
Upper Secondary	11 years	4 years, + 1 ed.
Foreign Language	11 years	4 or 5 years

There are 24 Training Colleges, the quality of which varies from extremely poor (Kratie, Prey Veng), to very good (Siem Reap, Kompong Cham, Battambang):

Regional Teacher Training Colleges:

There are regional and provincial Teacher Training Colleges, the main towns having these two distinct institutions, like Takhmau, for instance.

Phnom Penh	Kandal
Kompong Cham	Battambang
Takeo	Prey Veng

Provincial Teacher Training College

Phnom Penh	Kampot
Kandal	Kompong Thom
Kompong Cham	Sihanoukville (municipality)
Kompong Speu	Kompong Chhnang
Battambang	Takeo
Prey Veng	Siem Reap
Stung Treng	Svay Rieng
Pursat	Kep (municipality)
Kratie	Koh Kong ²⁾

VI - Main donors

It is much beyond the scope of this report to list all institutional and private donors of Higher Education in Cambodia today.

- As far as teacher training is concerned - and this, at present, is not under the auspices of Higher Education - the main institutional donors are: USAID (Working Teacher

¹ pg. 38
² pg. 32

Program), European Union (*idem*), UNICEF (*idem*), French Government (*idem* + Inspector Training), Redd Barna (Cluster School Program), AUSAID (Examinations).

- Some NGOs contribute to the primary and secondary tiers in education. Among them, we can name: *The Khmer Foundation International* (funded by the European Union and the Bavarian Ministry of Economics & Transport), *Enfants du Cambodge*, *Krousar Thmey*, *France-Liberté Ligue Francaise de l'Enseignement*, *SIPAR (Soutien Initiative Privée Aide Réfugiés)*, *The Asia Foundation*, *Voluntary Service Overseas*, *Australian People for Health, Education, & Development Abroad*, etc. ...

- As far as Higher Education is concerned, it is obvious that France is, by far, the main donor, has a special place. Training of the future elites of Cambodia is linked with her efforts to re-create a modern State apparatus in Phnom Penh today; many actions of France are connected with these two endeavours:

- Scientific & Technical Information:	2.9	Million French Francs spent in 1994	
- Institutional Development :	11.3	MFF	"
- Technical Higher Education:	12	MFF	"
- Economy & Finance:	16.1	MFF	"
- French Language	16.7	MFF	"
- Cultural Programs	18.3	MFF	"
	<u>77.3</u>	MFF	

For 1994, this represented about one third of France's global aid to Cambodia ... as far as I can interpret the figures supplied in the recently published report that fully summarises French co-operation in Cambodia. For the *Institute of Technology of Cambodia* alone, France (or rather the *AUPELF-UREF*) is committed to spend US\$ 7 million over a period of 3 years, from 1993 to 1996 !

Besides, France has the intention of moving very shortly into *Architecture* and *Fine Arts*, two sectors which have been much neglected by donors up to now. She also wants to become more involved into the *Archaeology* Department and in the *Royal University of Agriculture* : 5 French technicians are due to arrive in September.

The combined estimated spending of Australia, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States, during years (1992-94) at Phnom Penh University has been :

- Foreign Assistance Program (a pool of NGOs): 10 persons:	US \$ 500	US\$ 120,000
- Donated fax, phone, cabinets, mailboxes, etc.		4,000
- Librarian		36,000
- Materials and projects (computers, AIT seminar, follow-up, records project, etc.)		3,300

- Book purchases	85,000
donations/shipping	17,000
book centre and library improvements	8,000
- United Kingdom Interpreter-Translator Course (1990-95)	46,000
- English language training:	
Library staff: Australian Centre for Education: 2 years	6,400
English classes for PPU staff: materials	2,000
- Summer classes for staff :	6,000
- Library furnishings, computers, software	60,000
- Australian Programme in the English Department	
Renovation of building	1,880,000
Academic programme	2,500,000
- United States International Visits Program	40,000
- Scholarships:	
United States: 8 MA/Msc	300,000
Australia: 16 short-term upgrades	128,000
9 postgraduate degrees	<u>300,000</u>
Estimated total	US\$ 5,480,000

Part II - Main Issues in Higher Education

SECTION 1 - Buildings & Libraries

It is part of the *new speak* of officials to claim the Khmer Rouge period saw "the destruction of schools" ³). The Khmer Rouge did nothing of the kind. If they made *tabula rasa* of the entire educational system, and killed off a majority of educators, paradoxically they were also planning to soon re-introduce primary and the first steps of a secondary school system - on their own revolutionary agenda, of course ! Therefore they destroyed none of educational buildings. They were using them for other purposes in the meantime - such as prisons or an ammunition factory, like *the Royal University of Agriculture of Chamcar Daung*, for instance ! This is why, in 1979, the new authorities found all institutions, built in the days of Sihanouk and the Khmer Republic, in a bad state of repair, but mostly all there. Not that many books in Khmer Rouge days disappeared either: they were just abandoned to rot where they happened to be. Some books disappeared at a later date. The main difficulty has been to find the resources to thoroughly repair these structures and then see to their upkeep.

A - Buildings

The situation varies considerably from one institution to the other. There are basically four main situations:

- Buildings which are in practically the same state of disrepair as in the early 1980s: the main block of PPU 1, for example, although the long overdue renovation has at last got started.

- Physical facilities which have known some significant renovations and improvements, but do not yet meet the needs of users, like *Law, Medicine, Business*, for example.

- Facilities which are new but not properly looked after and are fast deteriorating: the PPU 2, completed in 1989, which, besides, is considerably under-used. I reckoned, in December 1993, that the rooms were used, during the entire week, only to about one third of their capacity. Not much has changed, I am told in the past eighteen months, except that two more rooms are now used for the library. The impressive lecture hall, which can accommodate some 500 people, has been exactly used five times during the last academic year - 1994-95 ! The two blocks built to house students at the back are unused and derelict.

³ "Report from Phnom Penh University to sub-regional workshop on Institutional Management in Higher Management", Bangkok, Thailand, 2-13 May 1995, p.1.

Facilities which meet the standards of Higher Education buildings in Southeast Asia: *The Institute of Foreign Languages*, restored by Australia or *l'Institut de Technologie du Cambodge*, restored by France, or the *CDRI* and *Regent College* which are private institutions.

So, it is absolutely impossible to generalise about buildings and facilities: some are Polpotian ... some are fully modernized.

On the whole this rather sorry state of affairs is due to various factors: Pol Potism, as already noted, poor management (mainly because of lack of competent people and abysmally low salaries), inability of the donor country or organization to meet all the needs of the institution they support. We can take the example of *the Faculty of Law & Economics*: France is providing everything - practically. It cannot at the same time, not only totally modernize existing structures, but also build a new teaching block, as is urgently required. The Pharmacists, on the other hand, must have new premises and laboratories, and would wish to go back to near the Faculty of Sciences where they belonged in the Sixties. I am not certain France can pay also for this move. It is true to say that, for the three Departments of the Faculty (Medicine, Pharmacology, Dentistry), the infrastructures - classes, lectures halls, laboratories and facilities in general - are somewhat inadequate to train the health specialists the country needs. The same can be said about America and the *Faculty of Business*. The *ex-Lycée Descartes* would need a drastic renovation, if this institution is to remain in the same buildings.

One final cause for this sorry state of affairs is that some institutions have tended to be overlooked by the international community - like the *Faculty of Fine Arts*. Japan has restored the fine building, paid for a new roof (it rained leaked through everywhere in 1989), re-painted the walls etc. ..., but inside some areas are pathetically derelict.

B - Libraries

This is where the area where I believe, the most spectacular progress has been achieved in the past 6 years. Thanks to the generosity of mainly France and Australia, and, to a much lesser extent, the US, one can say that there are enough books in Phnom Penh for Higher Education undergraduates, and even graduate students to collect data for their courses or even graduate or post-graduate research projects. This is obvious, not only in the subject area of the two main international languages taught in Phnom Penh - English and French - , but in areas like Law, Economics and Business, and Agriculture and Rural Development.

- Individual countries and NGOs have made a significant contribution to this. Here are some of the main ones, in alphabetic order ⁴) :

- ADHOC (*Cambodian Human Rights & Development Association*) (300 books, 80 journals: human rights, social sciences, Khmer Literature...)

- *American Friends Service Committee* (animal health)

- *Australian Centre for Education* (stock 1,000 books, mainly English teaching)

- *Australian Catholic Relief* (agriculture, hydrology)

- *Centre Culturel & de Co-operation Linguistique* ⁵

- *Cambodian-British Centre for Teacher Education* (English language teaching: 2,370 books, 19 journals/magazines)

- *Cambodia Development Resource Institute*, or *CDRI* (economics, rural development, computer sciences, English language: 2,400 books/reports; subscriptions to more than 60 magazines/journals.

- *Co-operation Committee for Cambodia*, or *CCC* (agriculture, health, education, development, current affairs: 1,500 books, 40 journals/magazines)

- *Co-operation Internationale pour le Developpement & la Solidarite*, or *CIDSE* (agriculture: books/reports/videos/slide sets: 1,500)

- *Redd Barna Cambodia* (education, children, health, English language)

- Main libraries of use to the student population:

- *The National Library of Cambodia* (100,000 books, 579 journals/magazines. Both France and Australia again have also contributed to very dramatic improvement to the working of the National Library, both in terms of the classification and the preservation of books, and in its accessibility to the general public, and to students in particular⁶ .

- *National Museum of Cambodia* (archaeology, architecture, arts, history, religion, philosophy: 1,500 books in Khmer, French, English, German; microfilms of plans and drawings of temples, MSS on palm leaves).

- *Phnom Penh University Central Library* (Central reference & research for arts, social sciences, natural & exact sciences: 5,000 books in English, 3,500 in French, 1,000 in Khmer; Vietnamese & Russian in stack). The United Board for Christian Higher Education in

⁴ Directory of Libraries published by the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia - CCC - June 1994. For reasons that I am unable to explain, the large and well-stocked library of the *Centre Culturel & de Cooperation Linguistique* (ex-Alliance Francaise), is omitted.

⁵ The full report on French Cooperation, published by the French Embassy and dated May 1995, does not mention the library, nor the number of its titles. However, we are happy to read that one of our national heroines - Patricia Kaas - sang in front of an audience of 10,000 bemused Cambodians in 1994!

⁶ For further details about this major institution, see Report of George Smith, April 1995.

Asia gives funds to purchase almost all reference books. There is a plan to build a new library west of the present main block. It would seem more judicious to try and place the new building at the back of the main block, further away from the Russian Federation Boulevard and its heavy traffic. The PPU houses three other main libraries:

- * French Department (established 1991: 7,000 books, 200 cassettes, 35 journals/magazines)

- * Foreign Languages Centre (established 1988: 2,000 books, 500 cassettes, 200 videos, 50 kits).

- * The PPU Central Library has also now an annex at PPU 2 (books in History, Philosophy & Sociology) . It also operates as "a clearing house" for books donated to the University.

- *Faculty of Business* (4,000 to 5,000 books in English).

- *Faculty of Law & Economics* (well-stocked in mostly French books on Law, Politics & Economics)

- *The Faculty of Medicine* (6,411 books: 4,771 are in French, 1,640 are in English; periodicals: 978 are in English, 6,040 are in French; in all, some 182 various magazines/journals)

- *Institute of Technology of Cambodia, or ITC* (hydro-agriculture, civil construction, roads & bridges, mines, geology, chemistry, electricity: mostly documentation in French)

- *Royal University of Agriculture* (Chamcar Daung & Prek Leap) (agriculture, horticulture, zoology, forestry, fisheries). Chamcar Daung has even student dissertations in French dating back to *Sangkum* days !

- *Buddhist Institute* (religion, culture, literature; aid from Japan and Germany: Heinrich-Boll Foundation, computerised catalogue system)

- Main documentation Centres in the Ministries

- *The Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports, MOEYS*, has three documentation centres, mainly meant for school teachers to help them write their courses in all subjects taught at primary and secondary school levels:

- * MOEYS Central Library in Ponhea Hok Primary School: 5,122 titles (43,774 copies) in Khmer, English, French, Russian, Vietnamese

- * The MOEYS Documentation Centre, Norodom Blvd., has 5,525 reports/books, teaching aids; English: 3,103; French: 1,700; Khmer: 722.

- * MOEYS National Training Secretariat (established in 1994, 23, Street 832) has reports, directories, of ministries, NGOs, government offices, private vocational schools, labour market information.

- France has constituted Documentation Centres in six Ministries.

- The National Assembly has books on Law, Politics, some newspapers and magazines, accessible to Members of the Assembly and the staff.

- International Organisations

There is a wealth of data collected at the various UN organisations in Phnom Penh. They are the UN Centre for Human Rights, Cambodia Field Office, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, which has been present in Cambodia since 1979, has a collection of approximately 3,000 books and reports.

Conclusion: I believe it was worth naming all these institutions, first in gratitude to the people, countries and NGOs who have worked so much in the past few years to make that vast amount of data available to, not only administrators and developers, but the student population as well. However, the ability to read easily, mainly documentation in both French and English, on the part of the younger generation, has lagged far behind. In other words, I am afraid these facilities tend to be underused by students. True, in Cambodia today, it is still a great luxury to have even time to spare for reading and note-taking.

SECTION 2: Teaching Staff

Education is essentially about people and personalities. Pol Pot was not interested in that - he wanted the Khmers to become automatons. So many, many of the educators have gone ... to the world beyond, overseas, to the civil service, or simply to the market place not only to survive, but also to avoid being involved in politics. The few remaining real trainers are very demoralised today. They have been bandied to and fro, through five different political regimes in quick succession; they have gone through two "revolutions", be made to learn French, then English for a short while during the Republican regime; then they had to conform to the language of Pol Potism, or rather learn to remain silent; then Vietnamese and Russian became prominent in Higher Education; then today what? "You", I was told, "have no right to criticise us or even give us advice. Just help us !." True, their overpowering preoccupation is with mere survival. We must be aware that real wages have

dropped in the past few years, not only in cash, but also all perks have vanished. And there was so much hope in UNTAC days !

- Income

The only solutions are ways of extracting payments from their students, private lessons, or any employment in the market place. All this is not conducive to promoting quality in Higher Education. Still, one must praise remarkable sense of abnegation and dedication of a number of academics, who, for many years have, for very little reward indeed, devoted most of their working hours to train a generation of young Cambodians who have had little schooling in their early childhood.

There are some quite legal ways for lecturers to eke out their meagre incomes. They are now more and more selling the lecture notes of their own courses, and the cost, together with the amount of sheets distributed, varies considerably from one Faculty to the other. It seems that the dearest is - not unsurprisingly - the *Faculty of Business*, where I reckoned a Second Year student might have to pay as much as US\$ 120 for his documentation provided throughout the year. Elsewhere, the amount is small, and lecturers tend to take no money from very poor students. So, I gather, all in all, the profit for the teaching staff cannot be all that much.

Much more profitable was the so-called *Preparatory Year* which is now disappearing from all institutions of Higher Education in Phnom Penh, 1994-95 being its last year of its existence. I feel it is a pity, because it constituted, to my mind, the first stage towards creating a 12th grade in Secondary Education, and was the first step towards having specialised *Bacc Double*. However, I am told there are plans to introduce this 12th grade into Secondary Schools quite soon. There is a single generalist *Bacc Double*, as the Cambodians call their school leaving certificate - or almost⁷. All students had to pay 25,000 riels, at the beginning of the year, on registration. Classes started about 4 weeks after the normal beginning of the academic year, and tended to end much before the end. Although there, the situation varied considerably from one institution to another, some classes being discontinued at a very early date.

⁷ In the *University of Fine Arts*, where there are Secondary School students, in applied arts, music and choreography in particular, trainees have their own specialised exam, a mix of general subjects and art subjects, and the pass rate is naturally very high.

We can take the example of the *Preparatory Year* coupled with the Department of Economics ⁸. In the last academic year - 1994-95 - some 2,000 students had registered and paid their fees, thus totalling a gross sum of about 50 million riels. It is impossible to determine for how many weeks the academic year really lasted, since, once again, some classes lasted through most of the year, while others were stopped very early. Let us say, the average was some 20 weeks, instead of the usual 32. Students were divided into 10 groups of 200 each, soon reduced to about half that number, the drop-out rate being very high.

The students had 15 hours of classes a week: Khmer Culture (3), History (3), Mathematics (3), Khmer Literature (2), Geography (2), French (2). Knowing that the 2 hours of French were paid for by the French Cultural Services, there remains 13 hours a week covered by the fees. If the academic year is only of some 20 weeks, each of the 200 students who have paid for each class - irrespective of the fact that they are present or not - pays almost 100 riels for each hour of teaching. If you add up the small profit from photocopied hand-outs, each lecturer could, in theory receive a payment of about US \$ 8 an hour, if some of this money is not lost in the pipeline. Not a large sum by most standards, but a lot compared to the US \$ 3 an hour given to teachers of French. All this source of income will now be lost to the academic staff.

The illegal sources of income are well-known, and they need not be insisted upon. The main one was under-table payments to enter the various Faculties. These have been done away with, thanks to the vigorous and efficient action of H.E. UNG Huot, from August 1993, when the first competitive entrance examination, controlled from the Ministry, was organised. This policy has been continued by his successor, H.E. TOL Lah. However, in certain institutions, and at the UPP in particular - apart from the English and the French Departments - there are no clear rules for examinations, and 4th year final ones in particular. In the recent past, there have been examples of under-table pressure on the part of students who chose to never attend courses, or very irregularly, or do very little work. I believe an end has already been put to these practices. However, one of the urgent tasks is to make sure that every department has strict regulations concerning the organisation of examinations and the composition of boards of examiners. Contrary to what was said in an earlier report ⁹, some Departments have very clear regulations concerning examinations, like *Law & Economics*, or the *Chamcar Daung Agricultural College*.

⁸ All my information on this subjects is gathered from the students concerned, not from the teaching staff. I might therefore be incomplete and/or inaccurate. Again, I had no time to check this information, and I apologize. The French advisors, to whom I asked the question, knew nothing at all about the *Preparatory Year* of the Department.

⁹ see "*Cambodia Higher Education Sector Work. Reconnaissance Mission: March 1995, AIDE-MEMOIRE*", p. 2, and p. 5

In some institutions, particularly those which now fall under French auspices, the salaries of lecturers are supplemented by the donor. For instance, at the *Institute of Technology of Cambodia*, Cambodian teaching staff receive a bonus that varies from US \$ 70-80 to 100 a month. However, most lecturers only receive their meagre US \$ 25 to 30, and I must hasten to say, however, that the vast majority of lecturers have too high an idea of their mission to ever consider yield to pressure of any kind. I personally have the greatest admiration for their sense of duty and abnegation, and their choice to live very Spartan lives. They are certainly the vast majority of the staff. But this catastrophic situation cannot be allowed to last, and honesty and competence, of which there is plenty in Higher Education in Phnom Penh must be rewarded.

- Qualifications

Some academics, like some members of the History Faculty, or the Head of the Music Department of the University of Fine Arts, are extremely competent and qualified in their fields. The international academic community can deal with such personnel as equals - except that we cannot but express our sincere admiration for having preserved not only their intellectual or artistic gifts throughout the infernal years they experienced, but also for having come out of hell as models of humanity.

Some are doing their best, with the help of the various voluntary institutions named in the first part, to gradually enlarge their knowledge of foreign languages, together with more modern methods of teaching and learning. A significant number are sent abroad, or about to go abroad for one or often several years for this.

For instance, in the English Department of the UPP, there will be for the coming academic year (1995-96) 24 Cambodians and only 3 Australian expatriates. Of the Cambodian academics, 17 will be available for teaching, for 5 are doing post-graduate courses in Australia, and 2 in America. The Department can be regarded as a model both for the qualification of its staff, and for the rapid progress of the Khmerisation of its teachers. It must be emphasised, however - and the same is true of the French Department - that the course is a TEFL one (*Teaching of English as a Foreign Language*), and not primarily concerned with discussing linguistics, literature and civilisation, but training future teachers of English for Secondary Schools. Similarly, at the *Institute of Technology of Cambodia*, out of 26 French teachers, 6 only are expatriates and 20 are Cambodians recruited locally.

Some academics were put in their positions for reasons of political expediency, or for want of better educators. Many surviving educators have preferred to desert their country - some, true to say, after unbearable political victimisation. Some, quite untrained for the job, have found themselves thrust into positions in Higher Education by circumstances not at all of their own choosing. For these, having to face the realities of a sophisticated and fast-moving technological age with which they cannot cope, will find difficulty in reconciling their situation with a normal sense of self-pride. In other words, it will be psychologically difficult to move them to another job. Absenteeism is rampant among the lecturers in general, due to a combination of factors: 1- first and foremost poor - even practically no - salary (hence the necessity to earn one's living elsewhere, as in the case of doctors), 2- poor qualification (hence probably the fear to expose one's incompetence in front of students, I presume), 3- little sense of public service (hence the forfeiting of one's teaching obligations on the most futile of pretexts. Sometimes the Ministry itself encourages that kind of attitude by summoning entire Departments to a meeting at the Ministry during lecture hours). It is not the case everywhere - far from it. Much, of course, depends on the management. At The Faculty of Business, for instance, all lecturers are said to be very punctual.

All this being said, everyone must have the courage to face reality: not all members of the teaching staff at present in Tertiary Education in Cambodia can, even with the best good will on the part of the Ministry of Education or outside donors and trainers, hope to maintain their present position, if Higher Education in Cambodia is soon to reach recognised international standards. I suggest that the procedure now implemented by *New Humanity* at the PUP 2 be followed everywhere in Tertiary institutions:

- no lecturer in Higher Education can prepare his courses, unless he can read fluently the numerous books available in Phnom Penh in English or in French (or eventually in Russian, German, Japanese or Chinese). In the short term, lecturers who cannot make this effort should be moved elsewhere.

- those with no internationally recognised degrees should follow re-training courses over a period of time, to be determined in each department - in Phnom Penh or eventually abroad. At the end of this, they should submit themselves to assessments, the forms of which must be determined by contract. It would be most desirable that this training includes a research project chosen by the candidate.

Various kinds of procedures along these lines are being implemented in many areas.

It is the intention of the Cambodian Government to slash out its estimated 147,000 Civil Service, by 20%. To do this sorting out, a special team of investigators, I understand, is asking every state employee to give all his particulars, including details about his second job, to eke out ghost personnel in the first place, but mainly to know exactly who is doing what and where. If it is found that there is a glut of personnel holding positions in schools, certainly no competent educators should be made redundant, since there is such a dearth of them. On the contrary, it is the urgent task of Tertiary Education in Cambodia to recruit massively and train good teachers.

The most detailed list of teaching staff has been established by *Economics Department of the Law and Economics Faculty*. Besides the usual pieces of information about past degrees and qualifications, the document details all the periods of re-training - when and where - past and planned in the near future. It clearly shows that most lecturers have - or will have within the next 2 or 3 years - the necessary qualifications to teach at the level they are required to teach. This action can be taken as a model.

The quality of teaching cannot be simply measured by looking at degrees and diplomas. There remains today in Higher Education in Cambodia, too many lecturers who, mainly for financial reasons (they devote too little time to their students), or lack of competence (they do not have the relevant qualifications), cannot fully perform the tasks that are ascribed to them. In the Medical Faculty, for instance, both the management of the three Departments (Medicine, Pharmacy and Odontology) and the students I interviewed roughly reckon that only some 25 to 30% of the present staff explain very clearly and efficiently the courses they have to teach. The management is fully prepared to admit this. We can read in a recent report: "*What we suffer from most is a dearth of really qualified and experienced teachers to train our trainers*"¹⁰.

At the *Institute of Technology of Cambodia*, one of the sore points, according to the students again, but the management as well, has been that some of the teaching staff were not always in a position to explain clearly the radically revised programs. Some lecturers had only been trained in Phnom Penh after 1979. But the agreement between AUPELF-UREF and the government, signed on 10 September 1993 for a three year period, required the teaching staff of the previous institution to be kept and re-trained, when necessary.

¹⁰ *Rapport de la Faculté Mixte de Médecine, Pharmacie & Odonto-Stomatologie*. Undated, probably 1994.

SECTION 3 Programs & Curricula

Once again, the contrast between institutions is striking. For instance, the *Faculty of Pedagogy* is finding it very difficult to create a sensible curriculum for the coming year's training of Secondary School teachers, for the very good reason that it has no budget at all for the time being, apart from the paltry salaries of the teaching staff. At the other end of the ladder, since April 1995, *Institute of Technology of Cambodia* is in a position to publish its full programmes: one for each of the five departments of both its 3-year course for technicians, and its 5-year course of engineers, in what is hoped should become a prestigious institute:

- 1- *Génie Chimique & Agro-alimentaire*
- 2- *Génie Civil*
- 3- *Génie Electrique & Energétique*
- 4- *Génie Rural*
- 5- *Génie Industriel & Minier*

The complete version of full syllabuses total no less than 273 pages ! It is so voluminous not only because it is detailed, but because some years have now adopted the French system fully, while others must still follow the old one, a compromise between the Soviet and the French systems. A compromise solution has also been found for the respective places of French and English), but AUP ELF-UREF, which is financing the whole of the *Institute*, is not prepared to pay for more than 3 (as a sign of good will) of the 8 English teachers which will be required for 1995-96.

In other places, the old is not quite dead, and the new is not quite born. This is the case of the Department of *Philosophy-Sociology*. The new program constitutes a mix of old and new subjects: "*Dialectical Materialism, Ancient Western Philosophy, General Biology, Micro-Economics, Chemistry, Analytical Mathematics, Computing, French, History of Ancient Economy, Aesthetics, The Nervous System 1, The Nervous System 2, World History 1, World History 2, Dialectical Logic 1, Dialectical Logic 2, Chinese Philosophy, English, Macro-Economics, Philosophy of Buddhism, Anthropology, History of Contemporary Economy, Role of Buddhism in Cambodia, etc. ...*". I am not being very fair by quoting all these subjects, extending over a four-year course, in a jumble. Taken individually, all must be of interest, but the main problem is the coherence of the whole construction. Besides, one should probably know that the programme, extending over 4 years for Philosophy, and two, for the time being, for Sociology, perhaps cannot be fully

implemented for lack of specialists, while teaching methods, as in so many departments, are sometimes antique: dictation of a course by lecturers.

This situation is not typical. Most Departments in the PPU, in particular in the Science Departments, or at the *Royal University of Agriculture*, have sensible curricula, which are gradually improved, year after year, in harmony with the limited means and the gradual re-training of their staff. In *Architecture*, for instance, which is a six-year course, the general idea is to have 50% of the curriculum centred on Khmer culture, and 50% on world architecture. A great emphasis is put by the Cambodian head of the Department on designing buildings adapted to the country's economic and social environment. *Medicine* at last offers, after the trauma of Pol Potism, some course in Psychiatry. Also a major problem in the Faculty has been that, in the past, there was too much theory, and not enough practise. That has, to a large extent been addressed, since, now, all medical students must spend their entire sixth year in a hospital. The curriculum is modelled on France: one preparatory year, plus six years of medicine proper. But, because of lack of competent trainers, students do not have to carry out any research project, as in France, neither is there as yet anything like an internship, devised to train future specialists.

In general, the syllabuses are very full - at least on paper, for in reality many courses in some areas are either not taught, or partly taught, for lack of competent teachers. The average must be of about 25-30 hours a week, which gives very little time to the students to work individually or read in the library. In fact students, apart from privileged areas, and a number of conscientious individuals, tend to do little work by themselves. There is a great dearth of competent lecturers to teach the new syllabuses. Far too much training consists in dictating courses supposed to be learnt by rote, while too little use is made of books and manuals.

Postgraduate courses: They are now in the process of being established. One must distinguish two quite different cases:

1- Those courses which are longer than the usual 3-year course to obtain a first degree in this country. They are mainly:

- The Medical Faculty which requires a total of 7 years of training (1+6 = 7)
- The *Royal University of Agriculture* requires, at the end of its 4 1/2 years of training, every students to write a substantial dissertation.
- Similarly, at the end of its 5-year engineer course, *l'Institut de Technologie du Cambodge* can boast this year to have produced its first cohort of engineers who, solemnly in front of a Board of Examiners, present their research project - is a small thesis of which they are rightly very proud.

- Architecture (6 years), and Archaeology (5 years) both require their students in their final year to write a thesis.

However, in Cambodia today, one cannot as yet equate the years of study in Tertiary Education with those in universities elsewhere in the world. The first - and sometimes second as well - year of study is devoted to catch up with the basic training young people have failed to acquire in the present still war-torn secondary school system.

2- Two projects are really post-graduate degrees:

- At the *Faculty of Law and Economics*, a first degree, or Bachelor of Law or of Economic Sciences can be obtained at the end of a 3-year course, after which two more years are required to prepare for a Master in Economics, in conjunction with the prestigious AIT of Bangkok, privileged students, who will also follow an intensive course in the English language, will do a Master in Business & Administration in Bangkok, using the two languages, English and French.

- At the *Cambodia Development Resource Institute*, or CDRI, a 3-year CDRI/ SOAS (= School of Oriental & African Studies in London) programme, leading to the MSc in Financial Economics, and supported by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), has been starting in 1995. The first year Jan-Dec 1995 is a "*Qualifying Course*, specially tailored to meet the needs of Cambodian students. " *It precedes the Master's level studies and is designed to help students strengthen their English language competency and academic study skills, and to provide a solid foundation in basic economics, maths and statistics. During the Qualifying Course, students are released from their work on a half-time basis, to attend 25 hours/week of formal classes at CDRI, taught by professors from SOAS and CDRI.*"

The course was primarily designed for lecturers at the *Faculty of Business*. They showed interest at first. But none enrolled in the end, as they had rather be sent to study in America instead ! This experiment should be watched carefully, since it is based on new and potentially extremely enriching teaching methods. Those are "*based on distance education techniques, using lectures on video cassettes, printed study texts, tutorial exercises on video cassettes, assignments and detailed advice from tutors, face-to-face teaching and structured discussion/study sessions.*"

SECTION 4 Students

A University is meant for students, after all and they constitute the essential ingredient of Higher Education institutions - that is outside the specific problems of research. According to recent figures released by the Ministry of Education, there are today some 16,300 students in Higher Education. Apart from all the institutions already named in this report, this figure also includes 19 vocational training centres. This figure represents only a very small fraction of the age group concerned. Everywhere the number of new intakes is either stable, or even drops, since Higher Education has stopped recruiting massively into the Civil Service. There never was "an exponential growth", as has been suggested - the majority of so-called "students" were only in the Preparatory Year.

It must be said clearly, at the outset, that some students in Cambodia do not take their studies very seriously. They treat the whole process of learning and training rather flippantly, think it perfectly normal to turn up at their lectures at the time it pleases them to arrive, regard it as routine procedure to cheat at exams and even corrupt their teachers. The worst failing is that far too many are outright idlers, who have never made much intellectual efforts in their lives. These lazybones would never admit being given marks below average at exams. Very bad habits have been taken in earlier school days which die-hard.

Students have very good excuses for this. Many never had a proper Secondary school training, let alone Primary school training. Too many lecturers lack authority, and are so obviously overwhelmed by the subjects they are supposed to teach and the atmosphere in the class is not conducive to learning. The main problem however is that the majority have no fathers and no substitute role models; they have no moral guidelines by which to abide. They are lost in a jungle where the dollar reigns supreme. They witnessed thousands of foreign personnel in UNTAC days, their pockets bulging with dollars for their personal gratification. The atmosphere of corruption and quick money in Phnom Penh at present is not ideal to set minimum moral standards and rules of conduct in civilised society.

This being said, it is obvious that the vast majority of students do their best to progress in this very difficult environment. They are extremely curious, and keen to learn. They overwhelm you with questions, and are amazed to discover the world is so varied, so complex, so exhilarating. They drink all you say: for a teacher they can be the most rewarding students on earth.

The main difficulties they are face with is poverty, worries over their future, examinations and corruption, and problems of numbers.

Poverty: Students who come from the privileged few are certainly not a majority in Phnom Penh. As in most countries in the world, the social origins varies considerably from one area to the other. The areas where French influence is the greatest are those where the poor are the fewest - which is logical, since France proposes to train the future elites of Cambodia in the key areas of government, law and administration, medicine, economics and engineering. These will be the jobs where the money will be. Today, teaching most subjects taught at the PPU), Agriculture, the Fine Arts are the areas where poor students are most numerous - English which is an enormously popular subject being probably an exception: one can make a lot of money in Cambodia today if one knows a lot of English.

It is precisely in this Department that an effort is being made, this academic year 1995-96, to persuade the students to begin to contribute to some of the cost of the services offered them. English is certainly a good choice for this innovation, since not only students in this Department tend to come from more affluent backgrounds, but there is such a demand for English that they can easily give private lessons. Besides, "*cost-sharing for post-basic education*", and the policy of "*introducing fees for post-basic education*" is now the official policy of the Royal Government¹¹. Students are asked US\$ 40 each semester, or US\$ 80 a year, to cover essentially the cost of books and teaching material a student usually has to acquire (use of Self-Access Centre, long term loan of textbooks, materials distributed by lecturers). Impecunious students can appeal for partial or complete waiver of the charge.

Province/Capital: In the course of the Heng Samrin regime, the geographical origin of the students was strictly regulated. Quotas from the provinces, as against the capital were established. All this system has now collapsed. The result is that recruitment is left to forces of the market. This means that for the *Faculty of Business*, for instance, the number of poorer students coming from the provinces is now very few. The cost of living in Phnom Penh is a formidable deterrent, if you do not have a close relative able to look after you. At *Chamcar Daung Agricultural College*, not unexpectedly, some 80% of the students come from the Provinces. So in *Philosophy-Sociology*, some 70% of students come from the provinces, and some 30% own a motorbike given by their parents who are functionaries, in the forestry department, for instance. Most students in *Fine Arts*, *Music* and *Choreography* are very poor, live in pagodas and come from the Provinces. In *Physics*, 50% of the

¹¹ See *Implementing the National Programme to Rehabilitate and Develop Cambodia*, February 1995, p. 35 & 37.

students come from the provinces!. In *Architecture*, leading to a job that, hopefully, is going to be profitable, some 70% of the students come from the capital. In *Medicine*, as many as 10%, among the students of the 16th cohort - that is those recruited in September 1994, - own a car ! However, some 15% are really poor.

Recruitment in Higher Education today in Phnom Penh is fast becoming socially very divisive. This is being reinforced by the drastic change in policy regarding the so-called *Bacc Double*, or the Secondary School Leaving Certificate. Percentages of passes has plummeted from 80-90% to 4-6% in 1994, but has slightly risen again again in 1995 to around 10%. It is understandable that the authorities have wished to demonstrate that, in Cambodia too, public examinations are a serious affair. Still, the change has been somewhat abrupt. Those who have taken the full brunt of the stringent policy have been the already underprivileged youngsters from the provinces. For instance, in the recent 1995 session in Kompong Thom Province, out of 775 students who took the exams in the first sitting, only 44 passed, that is less than 6%. In the meantime, at the Lycée Sisowath, the pass rate is about 30%, while, in a special Mathematics class, out of 34 candidates, 29 passed the exam for the first sitting, and 5 remain for the second sitting in August, which 4 passed successfully. So the special class pass rate at Sisowath was 33 out of 34 candidates ! Everyone will understand whose children will go to University in the future, if the present system is maintained.

Like all students throughout the world, Cambodian students wish to all pass their exams, while putting in as little work as possible. They do not like to be failed, and tend to accuse others than their own failures. In the recent past, students became automatically all civil servants on entering the University. They also automatically were promoted from one year to the next, whatever work they put into the course. Now, it tends to be no longer so. Therefore they cannot believe it possible that their name is not on the list of passes. As they are given a second chance, in the August-September period, there is plenty of opportunity to put some pressure on lecturers, including financial. There can even be veiled threats of violence.

One incident occurred at the Medical Faculty, last academic year, when, apparently, some lecturer sold for about US \$ 100, the results of Multiple Choice Questions tests to groups of students. It became known, and those who did not have the results complained to the Ministry. After the setting up of an inter-ministerial committee (It involved both the Ministries of Health and Education), a compromise solution was found at the end of which only 1 or 2% of the students failed the exam, and there was some change at the Head of the Faculty. The main point, however, from the students viewpoint, is that now future

doctors are no longer offered government jobs in the capital and the provinces, and they are not at all happy about this. The intake of new students for the coming academic year 1995-96 will be dramatically reduced to 150 for the three departments (90 in medicine, 30 in pharmacology, 30 in dentistry). This tends to be typical of what is happening in Higher Education in Cambodia today.

The 1994 & 1995 intakes: These have been drastically reduced since September 1994, in two ways: by halving the intake in many Departments, by abolishing the *Preparatory Year*, in which there were more students, at least in the five main Faculties of the University of Phnom Penh, than in the usual 4 combined years of training of real Tertiary students. In December 1993, these figures were, again for the 5 main Faculties of the University of Phnom Penh (1 Sciences, 2 Letters, 3 Social Sciences, 4 Business, 5 Law & Economics): 7,642 real Tertiary students, and about 11,000 would-be Tertiary students in the various *Preparatory Years*, attached to the 5 Faculties. Now, by the time this report is being published, all these 11,000 - although I believe they must be significantly fewer this year, because of the stringent pass requirements for *Bacc Double* - would have vanished into thin air !

Because of lack of competent personnel, lack of financial resources, because the government is now putting a stop to the indiscriminate recruitment of civil servants, new cohorts of students are being halved in many places. This is most obvious at the *PPU*. For instance, the Department of Khmer used to have cohorts of 400 students, reduced to about 200 in 1995-96. In Biology, the intake was 132 in 1991, 170 in 1992, 150 in 1993, 31 in 1994, and will be 60 in 1995. In 1994, the number of students admitted in History was more than halved (from around more than 100 to about 40). In Geography the cut was a little less drastic: from about 100 in 1992 and 1993, students were reduced to 60 in 1994. It is hoped to take 80 new students in 1995.

However, there still seems to remain a great deal of uncertainty, at the time this report is completed, as to the exact number of students the Ministry of Education, along with the *PPU* authorities, are going to take at the entrance examination. I have a feeling the *PPU* would wish to take the smallest possible number - this being one way to express the displeasure of the staff with their piteous rewards, thus working to rule, as it were, and the Ministry which is more aware of the pressure from very numerous potential candidates. Here are the figures I was given in mid-July (they might be changed at a later date):

- Khmer, 200;
- History & Geography, 80 each;
- Philosophy and Sociology, 40 for each (or a total of 80);
- Psychology-Pedagogy, 40;

- Mathematics, 200;
- Physics, Chemistry & Biology, 100 each;
- 20 for Computer, and 20 for Environment; it was not clear to me to what department these cohorts of potential students would be attached;
- English 120;
- French, 100.
- I was not given the figures for Japanese.

This constitutes a total of 1,200 new students for the 11 identified main Departments of the UPP, plus 20 + 20 for Computer and Environment. For a population of over 10 Million inhabitants, this must, of course, be a pathetically low figures in these essential subjects.

Students' Organisations: The *Association of Khmer Students, Samakum Niseth Khmer*, with branches in every institution, has been recently revived. The choice of its leaders is never made by secret ballot, but names of leaders are usually prompted by the heads of the institution. Sums of money are received, as "gifts" from the Second Prime Minister, mainly to support poor students (rice, or photocopies....), but also for special occasions, like outings or parties. Again, some of this money seems to have been lost in the pipeline - at least those are the rumours.

There are non-governmental students organisations. They seem to be quite active and well organised, like the *Neutral Students Association*; but I have not been able to assess their importance and their impact among the student population.

Accommodation: One of the main demands of the students is that the Students' Hostels in the capital be re-opened. The UPP one was closed about 1990. The two beautifully built blocks, at the back of UPP 2, which were designed to be halls of residence, are fast deteriorating (their equipment is disappearing), while a large number of very poor students, especially those from the provinces, or orphans - and they are so numerous - are crammed in the precincts of the Phnom Penh pagodas. They are provided a minimum space, rice and perhaps a little lighting; but most pagodas are not suitable places for serious and hard working modern students. I heard a lot of complaints about this very sorry of affairs. A minimum charge should be asked of the students, an association formed and the PPU 2 hostel should soon open. An inspection by competent people has shown that the rooms are quite unsuitable for teaching.

Jobs: Since manpower is so cheap, and unemployment so high in Phnom Penh, students, including those for whom it is indispensable to find an income just to eat, find it extremely difficult to find part time employment. For instance, a student in the Second

Year of the Law Faculty, spends a few hours each evening as a motor taxi driver, and he can only hope to get at best a couple of dollars each evening by doing this ! He is hoping, thanks to the help of a cousin , to feed small fishes in a pond some 15 kilometres north of the capital, and later sell the adult fish with a profit - castles in the air ?

All graduates, from the UPP to the Medical Faculty, must now find jobs for themselves, as they no longer automatically become civil servants on obtaining their degrees. They find this very unsettling, and do not realise that a job paid less than US\$ 20 a month is not much of a job at all; they only think of the status ... and the unofficial perks, perhaps....

SECTION 5: Languages

Students in Phnom Penh today tend to demand that all their lectures be in Khmer - and they may be right. Contrary to what too many people are led to believe, the Khmer language is not some bizarre primitive dialect which has not changed since Angkor days, and therefore would be quite unsuited for modern Higher Education. People who think this do not know that Khmer is a living language, and confuse language with script. True, the modern script is very close to Angkorean days, but any language can be transcribed in almost any script. What matters is what people say with a language, and the Khmer language has evolved over the centuries like any language in the world. It is therefore modern, simply because it is spoken by some 10 million people in Cambodia, irrespective of those who use it today in South Vietnam and in Thailand - and now overseas.

Since 1967, Khmerisation has been the official policy of educational authorities of all regimes, and, as far as I am aware, that policy has never been gone back on. Before the disruption of the civil war, followed by the disastrous almost four years of Khmer Rouge government, a special commission was entrusted with introducing new technical and scientific words into the language. Since about 1990, many people have been working to produce glossaries and lexicons in the various scientific fields. Cambodia is not Singapore, it has a whole culture to uphold and certainly, as far as lecturing is concerned, it appears that most of it can be in Khmer. For instance, the *Institute of Technology of Cambodia* is producing some impressive lexicons of scientific terms. For example I was given a *Lexique Français - Khmer - Anglais de Mathématiques*, under the auspices of the *Institute* and of

UNESCO. Most words exist in the Khmer language, while *cosinus* and *cube* are merely transcribed phonetically to become កូស៊ីនុស and គូប.

It is when it comes to written sources, in absolutely all fields - except perhaps Khmer literature - that no student can pretend to be in Tertiary Education if he cannot read, and quickly absorb, in English, French or another major language, some of the vast amount of documentation which is now available in Phnom Penh, as we saw, in many branches of knowledge. Cambodia will never have the resources of Japan to immediately translate into the vernacular all that is necessary to know in one's special field. Like the Dutch, or the Danes, or the Swedes, the Khmer students will have to water down some of their nationalism and accept that they must make the vast intellectual effort to learn, in the shortest possible time, a major international language. They cannot be satisfied with repeating parrot-like what their teachers dictate to them during their long hours of class.

The other thing is that it is a complete illusion is to believe that you can learn a difficult international language by attending a class of some 100 students two hours a week, taught with dubious methods, by sometimes quite incompetent teachers - as this has been the case too often for the English language. This is why the present policy, especially at the UPP, to ask the students to learn French in their first two years, and then English in the years 3 and 4 is totally unrealistic. Usually, students end up with knowing neither languages. Many people are aware of this, and significant improvements have been brought about in the last year or so.

It is sometimes the case among the English speaking community to point out that in the first year of study at the *Law and Economics Facult*, the students must do 10 to 12 hours of French every week. But the people in charge there are absolutely right: if students are soon to be able to have access to the well-stocked library. This is the only way to go about it. In fact, this is still not enough French ! A good method to follow could be the crash course over a period of one full year doing nothing but one particular language, as is practised in some Western countries for certain categories of civil servants. This is much beyond the means of Cambodia. But some effort along those lines could be made, and are already made in a number of departments.

France has introduced *les filières francophones* (or French language stream) in a few departments of the PPU in 1994: they are *Geography*, *Biology* and *Chemistry*. They are being extended to *Mathematics* and *Physics* in 1995. What does a *filière francophone* exactly mean ? Not the entire course will be taught in French - far from it. But simply that some students, on their own free choice will be doing officially 6 hours of French, but, also

unofficially 4 hours on top of those, all paid by *AUPELF*, during the first, and then their second year at the University. In *Geography*, for instance, 50% of the students chose to follow this course. They will also have 10 hours a week of French in their second year also. The reward is that, for each of the 5 departments, 3 students will obtain a two-months scholarship in a French University. *AUPELF* will also pay for longer periods of one semester also in a French-speaking university, for the teaching staff at first. It is hoped in the future, some courses in the various speciality, will be taught in French. Here lies the rationale of the whole investment, mostly in scientific subjects, as we see.

We can note, at this stage, that, unfortunately since the needs are so vast, very little attention has been given to training translation specialists - in both the French and the English Departments. The United Kingdom, with the contribution of Voluntary Service Overseas, has trained two cohorts of Interpreters and Translators. No new intake has been recruited in 1995. On the other hand, translation classes are starting in the opening academic year, 1995-96, in the French Department.

The nearest equivalent in the English side, are efforts made in the *Faculty of Business* to have students fluent in English. They are offered 180 hours of English - or some 6 hours a week - in the first year. This total will be halved in the second year. Efforts have been made by the *Asia Foundation*, since 1994, to train Law students in English, but also in business Law and international contract law. 150 students from the Law Faculty, selected after an English test, have followed a course in specialised English in 1994-95, at the *Australian Centre for Education*, and the course was paid for by the *Asia Foundation*. English is now introduced into both courses at the *Faculty of Law and Economics*. French expatriates teachers are still numerous in the Mixed Medical Faculty: the same method is used here as in Law. During the first semester of 16 weeks, students follow a total of 384 hours of French language, which means some 24 hours a week. During the second semester, students do only 6 hours of French a week.

English is being taught at *the Royal University of Agriculture of Chamcar Daung* by 3 Americans from the *Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Prek Leap Agricultural College learns English thanks to *Australian Catholic Relief*, while the language of Shakespeare is taught to medical students by the *Assembly of God*. France makes sure that French is taught by properly trained teachers, mostly Cambodians recruited locally, who are paid a standard rate of US \$ 3 an hour by the *Centre Culturel & de Coopération Linguistique* (CCCL, or *ex-Alliance Française*), along with the *Association des Universités Partiellement ou Entièrement de Langue Française (AUPELF-UREF)*. In 1994-95, France, in collaboration

with its partners in the French-speaking world, saw to the learning of the French language of 8,881 students exactly! ¹²

One must end these remarks about language by one positive note: 1- the knowledge of both French and English has risen dramatically in the past 5 years or so, and, provided the effort is pursued, soon the majority of Tertiary students will have access to the documentation that is generously offered them. 2- On the lecturers' side, major strides have been made. On that score, the authors of the *Aide-Mémoire* produced after the reconnaissance mission of March 1995 have certainly been far too pessimistic - if not plain mistaken - when they wrote that:

The language skills of teaching staff are at best mixed, with a few who are fluent either in French or in English, and virtually none who are fluent in both foreign languages in addition to the national language. ¹³

In fact, all lecturers who were at least 18-20 years of age by 1975 are fluent in French - this includes almost all those who are in position of authority today - while many are now fluent in English today as well, and a few know that language very well. As to the younger generation of lecturers, a great many are now quite fluent in English.

SECTION 6 : Research & Publications

Contrary to what most people could be led to believe, quite a few things are beginning to happen in Tertiary Education touching on research and publications. Here are some significant examples:

Research:

- As far as students are concerned, we already mentioned that, in some courses, students must produce a research project of their own. In this respect, *Chamcar Daung Agricultural College* continues a tradition which dates back to *Sangkum* days.

- On the side of the teaching staff, we can note, at the PPU, *Le Cercle de Linguistique Franco-Khmer* which is more ambitious than its title might lead us to expect. It organises seminars on more than just linguistic investigations, and publishes a review several times in the academic year. It is financed by the French *Services Culturels*.

¹² *La Coopération Civile Française au Cambodge en 1994*, mai 1995, page 22.

¹³ Annex. 2, pg. 6 of 8.

Most members of the staff who carry out research projects generally do this abroad, for the time being. However, the present head of the History Department has completed a Paris Doctorate, after carrying out most of his research among original documents in the *National Library* and the *National Archives* in Phnom Penh. He is planning to organise an *International Seminar on Khmer Culture*, at some date in 1996, if financing is found.

Publications:

Centre de Traduction de Textes Juridiques, or *CTTJ*, attached to the *Faculté de Droit*, has an ambitious program of translation of judicial documents into Khmer, since the Faculty has opted to use essentially texts in French for classes which are essentially conducted in Khmer. In the period 1992-94, the centre has translated basic law courses in Khmer aimed at 1st and 2nd year students who could not read the French documents in the library, For the period 1995-97, the program is more ambitious:

- regular translations of the *Journal Officiel* of the Kingdom of Cambodia, if the planned bi-lingual *Journal* comes into existence;
- regular translations of the new laws;
- launching of a program of translation into Khmer of French legal manuals for students;
- form a corpus of Khmer judicial and economic texts, to constitute a *Centre de Traduction des Textes Juridiques & Economiques*.

The *Institute of Technology of Cambodia* is now producing glossaries in Khmer of technical words.

The *Asia Foundation* is the American equivalent of French efforts in this field. It is well-equipped and well-staffed to produce documents in English and in Khmer in two main fields; Business and Law, with a special interest in Business Law, and in Contract Law, especially international. Apart from producing the bi-lingual courses we have mentioned earlier, its main achievement is the publication of an *English-Khmer Law Dictionary*. It is modestly sub-titled "Draft Edition", 1994, but already contains 317 pages. The organisation hopes to publish an official first edition quite soon. The *Foundation* would wish to extend its publications to other fields - History in particular.

Thanks to the computer revolution, a number of private institutions are in a position to produce and publish cheaply in Phnom Penh documents and books in Khmer. Here are a few: the *Phnom Penh Post*, the *CDRI*, the *Centre Culturel Catholique Khmer*, that wishes to expand its publication beyond Catholic books into the realm of Khmer culture, and I am sure

there must be a host of others, For instance, the *Groupe de Recherches & d'Echanges Technologiques*, or GRET, one of the longest established NGO in Cambodia, working in agriculture, has produced and published in Khmer, among many others, I presume, a 106 page document entitled *Arbres Fruitiers*, written by Mr. PHAT Muny in 1994. This, irrespective of all the publications by other NGOs and the Ministry of Education itself, aimed, for the time being, essentially at Primary and Secondary levels of education.

- A dynamic *National Language Institute* would be really indispensable to co-ordinate all these efforts.

SECTION 7 : Management & Administration

It is not the intention of the reporter to go into problems of organisation and administration. This was not the purpose of this inquiry. However, in the course of his field research, he has come across basically 2 types of situation - and those affect radically the environment and therefore the methods of teaching and learning:

1 - Institutions which are fully reformed, have clear procedures, and are run in a "market-oriented approach"- but not by the primarily by the Cambodians themselves;

2 - Institutions (or sometimes Departments) which are groping towards modernisation, while still being run by the Cambodians themselves.

I shall just give examples for each category:

1 - The *Institute of Technology of Cambodia* is a good case in point for the first category... to such an extent that, looking at its elaborate statutes - it is not quite clear who is the boss of this major institution, "*The flagship institution of the Higher Education sector in Cambodia today*" says its *Bulletin d'Informations & de Liaison* ¹⁴ (19/06/95). There are two bodies that control or manage the Institute: the first is a *Comité de Soutien* is chaired by a *Président*, who is also the *Président* of the second body, *Le Conseil d'Administration*. It does not appear that this *Président* is the one who takes the major decisions in the day to day running of the *Institute*, but a French *Chargé de fonction Direction*, appointed for renewable 3 years, and with extensive powers in all fields, according to statutes valid until 31st August 1996. The Statutes of the *École Royale d'Administration* have been signed by both Prime Ministers on 5th May 1995.

¹⁴ Quoted from the *Aide-Mémoire* produced by the March World Bank-AIDAB mission, Annex 2, pg. 4 Of 8.

Although the English Department at the PPU has a Cambodian Director, it is still very much the Australians who are in charge in reality.

2 - The *Phnom Penh University* does not seem to have much of a budget to cover its running costs, and the Rector must turn to the Ministry to meet individual expenses, as the bills arrive. I have not seen its statutes either, nor its rules governing examination procedures. I was told, at some point, they were those established by the Ministry. Whatever the real situation is, measures must be taken to ensure a real autonomy to the institution, that its management are non-political choices and that academic and administrative skills only prevail in the choice of the persons in charge. It might be advantageous to give far more autonomy and scope for initiative to the Faculties and to the Departments, which have a real existence, and can be managed as best as possible in the difficult environment of dire penury. There is no staff room - neither at the PPU 1, nor at the PPU 2 -, no pigeon holes and few means of communication, since most lecturers are not on the phone, and the postal service does not operate throughout the capital either. Since there are few regular Department meetings in some areas, lecturers have few means to communicate rapidly, except by interrupting each other's lectures.

Finally, it is certainly not true to claim that it is "*the only institution that has begun the transition to a market-oriented approach (short courses, an autonomous structure and fledgling links to the labour market)*."¹⁵ There are, fortunately, plenty of Faculties and Departments which have worked very hard to radically modernise their statutes, internal regulations, examination procedures, etc. ... One can quote the *Faculty of Law and Economics*, the *Faculty of Business*, the *French and the English Department* at the UPP, but I would like to make a special mention of *the Royal University of Agriculture of Chamcar Daung*.

The *Royal University of Agriculture* of Chamcar Daung may not have solved all problems because it lack means to achieve its ambitious plans, but it hopes to receive shortly some massive aid from Germany and Japan, and of course also from France, as we mentioned earlier. However, it is already several years since it has actively begun its "transition to a market-oriented approach" and developed "links to the labour market". We saw it already works with some twenty NGOs in agriculture. Thanks to the single-handed energy of Vice-Rector, Mr. CHAN Nareth, who is very fluent in both French and English, and his tireless efforts over the years to radically transform the administrative build-up of his institution, his Agricultural College has preserved its independence and autonomy, without

¹⁵ ibid.

falling under the auspices of single NGO, a single foreign institution of Higher Education, or a single country. Besides, since as early as 1991, Mr. Chan Nareth has been able to devise and publish a five-year plan of development that will take his institution into the coming academic year of 1995-96. Congratulations ! Still, perhaps the links with Prek Leap Agricultural College, that trains technicians, should be perhaps further developed ... and that takes us into our next item ...

SECTION 8 : Inter-Departmental Relations

We can quote the ex-Minister of Education, H. E. UNG Huot, who said, in January 1994, speaking at a meeting of University personnel:

All of our Higher Education institutes need repair, re-equipping and quality improvement. But the first task I assign them is to collaborate among themselves and to put into practice collaboration mechanisms able to create what is now missing: a coherent education system.

In the National Program to Rehabilitate and Develop Cambodia, first adopted in early 1994, one of the Priority Actions (5.1.1) was the *Reform & Restructuring of Higher Education in Cambodia*. As we saw, significant improvements have been achieved in the past few years; but the outside observer cannot but be struck by the fact that these improvements have tended to affect individual institutions, and even individual Departments inside larger institutions. Not enough attention has been given to inter-departmental relations and inter-institutional, and co-ordination. I shall just give a few examples:

- are there any links between biology and the *Faculté Mixte de Médecine* ? Or with Agriculture ?

- the Science Faculty and the ITC ?

- The *Royal University of Fine Arts* and in particular the Drama section of Choreography, with the Department of *Khmer Language & Literature* ?

- the most surprising of all is that there seems to be no link at all between the Social Sciences Faculty (mainly History, and now some anthropology will be introduced at the UPP 2, while some is also taught at the Faculty of Archaeology), and the *Université des Beaux-Arts*.

The most unfortunate example of this sorry state of affairs is the projected excavations at the Angkor Borey site in Takeo Province. Ms. Judy Ledgerwood, an anthropologists from the University of Hawaii, is hoping, with a team of archaeologists, to launching a multi-year program of research on the spot, and has spent some time there in

July. Now, both Dr. LONG Seam, from the Khmer Department at the PPU, and several colleagues from the History Department, one being a specialist of post-Angkorean history, have wanted to start also some research program on the site - in particular since there are new ancient inscriptions to be collected and translated into modern Khmer. A group from the UPP already went 3 times on the site. Now, to co-ordinate their efforts with the Faculty of Archaeology, permission has to be obtained from the Ministry of Culture, Mr. NOUTH Narang, Mr. VANN Molyvann, Minister of State, M. Michel TRANET, Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Mr. PICH Keo, Vice-Director of the Department of National Heritage.... and as everyone's territory is not clearly delineated. There are also conflicts of personalities, the representatives of the UPP and those of the *Université des Beaux-Arts* have never been able to collaborate and unite their expertise - which is impressive for some of them.

This instance demonstrates that it is urgent that every institution of Higher Education, in the present situation of penury of both competent personnel and funds, unite at the grassroots to get on with the job and revitalise Khmer research - ignoring and by-passing political conflicts in the upper spheres of the government.

SECTION 9 : International Relations

After the Pol Pot years and the massive assassination of the elite, Higher Education in Cambodia could not but be reconstructed with foreign aid and international co-operation. Unfortunately, the agenda of the "generous" donors has not necessarily represented the shortest path to rebuild Cambodia's identity and self-respect. The tendency, on the part of outside donors, has been too much to promote docility and subservience, rather than supporting genuine national identity. The whole purpose of establishing a *National Action Plan for Higher Education* would be to enable Cambodians to regain control over the training of their future elites, and hence full mastery over their country's destiny.

In the meantime, we can but praise the efforts of a number of good-willed people - Americans, Australians, Cambodians, French (to name the main countries in alphabetic order) - who have started to bridge gaps between conflicting interests. These actions of enriching collaboration must be tirelessly pursued: between the French and the English Departments at the UPP, in particular as regards translations; the ITC and the UPP; the *Faculty of Business* and the *Faculty of Law and Economics*; archaeologists, linguists, anthropologues, psychologists, scientists, medical doctors, historians and agronomists, etc.

..., from all over the world, in particular at the *PPU*, the *Royal University of Agriculture* and the *University of Fine Arts*.

Among ASEAN countries, Thailand is most willing to move into Higher Education on a significant scale¹⁶. With Burmese and Laotians, the Khmers are culturally nearest. But there could also be a danger of domination and absorption if the Thais became too prominent in Higher Education in Phnom Penh - so some people may claim. Still very interesting links are being promoted by the French between the *Economics Faculty*, the *ITC* and the *Asian Institute of Technology* in Bangkok. Singapore has not seemed to wish to get much involved so far, apart from offering scholarships to top civil servants to enable them to brush up their English in its famous Regional English Language Centre. It seems shy of committing itself further. Yet it has both the human as well as the financial resources to aid Cambodia more. It is to be hoped that, when Cambodia becomes a full member of ASEAN, greater links will be developed between Southeast Asian countries - simply because the geographical proximity will make exchanges cheaper, while cultural proximity might further strengthen and develop the identity of the Cambodian nation, together with promoting much needed peace in the area. Twinning programs with Universities in the region should be encouraged.

Co-ordination of offers of aid, in particular from smaller universities or organisations, is difficult. For instance, at the *PPU*, offers of help from good willing passing individuals, academics that represent their several institutions, NGOs, individual foreign countries or international organisations, are kindly listened to by the Rector, but there seems to be no structure that would prioritise issues and organise these generous offers into a coherent whole. This seems particularly striking in the Social Sciences area: what subjects are a priority in the present circumstances? How one should go about combining them? How could partners be made to work together? Decisions are made piecemeal, under the individual pressure of the donor, even if the latter's offer does not necessarily fit with the wider context of the development of Higher Education in the areas concerned.

In my tour of Higher Education institutions in Cambodia, (apart from the very specific situation of the so-called *Maharishi Vedic University*, which is obviously starved of funds), I found two areas which have been too neglected by foreign donors: they are Agriculture and the Fine Arts.

- I am particularly thinking of *Prek Leap Agricultural College*, which is essentially a vocational training college in an area where foreign expertise is most needed. We know the standard of living of millions of Cambodians depends on a prosperous agriculture - everyone

¹⁶ See, for instance, "*the Kasetsart University's Preparatory Programmes for Indochinese Students*" *Bangkok Post*, 25 July 1995.

says that, but who is really acting, apart from many NGOs ? The College offers a two-year course to technicians, for the time being, but is planning to offer a three-year course from 1996-97. But it should receive some massive aid to be able to expand and implement its program. It has very few books and documents, its student hostel is quite inadequate, etc., On the other hand, I also feel that *Chamcar Daung* has also been unfairly treated by the major donors - countries or international organisations - though not again by the NGOs. It is high time this should be remedied.

- The situation of the 5 Faculties of the *University of Fine Arts* is quite miserable. True, some managements are not very dynamic, neither are they terribly good organisers; but not all : see the efforts and hard work of the Dean of the Music Faculty, Mr. VAEN Phat, who has not been too much rewarded, it seems. Still, it is a sad sight to see the musicians, *and* the dancers, *and* the painters, *and* the sculptors working in such a miserable environment, with such pitiful means. Now that artistic creation has been de-politicised, it is high time all the budding Cambodian artists should be encouraged by the international community.

Part III - Suggestions for Improvements

1 - As far as the teaching staff is concerned, it must be repeated again and again that the present salary scale is outrageous. It is an irresistible encouragement to corruption or laziness - or both for in some cases. No one should produce more than a couple of days' work each month on that sort of stipend. We know there is a civil war going on ... but some solution must be found. You have no University without educators and researchers, and nobody can work for free.

- On the other hand, once salaries are nearer to normal (US \$ 150 to 200 a month is a minimum), Redeployment in some cases could be considered as a serious option. One way to go about it is: in every department, organise in-service training during the academic year or during recesses; at the end of these, some form of tests should be taken and/or a research project should be produced. Lecturers must also demonstrate some ability to write a course, and use documentation in French or English, indispensable at this level (or another international language: German Russian, Chinese...). If the lecturers concerned cannot get over this hurdle, another employment in public service must be found for them, if they are not nearing retirement age. Lecturers can also be further trained abroad, as this is happening for a number of people now.

- Much greater use should be made of overseas Khmers, in particular those with good professional and academic qualifications in law, medicine, Khmer language and literature, sciences, arts, etc. .. I know so many gifted Khmers in France who could contribute to the training of future generations. They also must be hundreds in Australia, the United States, Canada... Far too few have come back. Procedures and financing must be devised for them to come back, even temporarily, for one semester, one year, or more. They will bridge the gap, before the next generation of Cambodians is trained. And they speak Khmer !

2 - Students & the Cost of Higher Education: Because of the twin tradition of Communist Government and French Jacobinism, the Cambodians cannot imagine a State that is not the purveyor of all, treating the citizens like children. But, students will soon have to realise that they, as individuals, will be the first beneficiaries of Tertiary Education - which is not compulsory. In regard to the vast masses of children of poor peasants in the countryside, the priority for State spending cannot always be the happy few, who can stay in education until they are well into their mid-twenties - at the cost of State coffers ! Or outside donors. They must realise, at the earliest possible date, that they - or their more

affluent parents - must put in their contribution, if they want the services offered by Higher Education institutions to really improve. Justice demands this. Students must understand that there is a direct link between compulsory education and State commitment. Tuition should be free during the 6 years of Primary schools, and the next 3 years of Junior High School. After this, and as long as the Cambodian State does not decide that all children must have 12 years of education, as it is now being done, for instance, in Thailand today, the more privileged youths in the Senior High School, and in Tertiary education should be prepared not to see everything provided free by the State.

On the other hand, provisions for poor students and orphans - particularly for those coming from the provinces - must be made in form of scholarships and accommodations. The present system of giving - irregularly - 1,000 riels a month to all students is totally inadequate. The students hostels of the Heng Samrin period should be re-opened. Pagodas are bursting at the seams with impecunious students.

It would be an excellent idea to open Junior Colleges - possibly covering the first two years of post school leaving certificates, in conjunction with more vocational training - in some of the main Provincial towns. Life is easier and cheaper in those, and these institutions would be accessible to wider social groups.

- Student numbers. At present, the Cambodian Government is drastically reducing its intake of new students. It seems that it is merely for causes of political expediency: could it be that the powers that be are afraid of a large student population in Phnom Penh ? Although it might seem politic to have fewer students during the coming years, while the new system is being instituted, all people in position of authority in Cambodia today know fully well that it is not because civil servants are too many in the government services that the majority of them are unable (let alone paid) to perform the tasks they are expected to perform. A great deal of competent civil servants, educators, managers, scientists and technicians will have to be recruited in future years.

3 - Foreign Language: Most teaching and lecturing in Higher Education should and can be in the Khmer language. But since Cambodia does not have the resources to translate, like Japan, published material from throughout the world into the vernacular, which a scholar in any field must know, every student in Higher Education in Cambodia must be able to read and absorb very quickly material written in a major international language in their respective field.

- No student should be forced to learn a language that he does not wish to learn. Learning a language is an arduous and protracted process: unless you are highly motivated and put in all your undivided energy, you are not likely to learn much.

4 - Examinations: We noted that some students were prone to put unsavoury pressure on their lecturers (mainly financial, but this could go as far as some forms of blackmail) in case they achieved poorly at exams. There is one easy way out of this embarrassing situation - apart of course from paying examiners decently - and this is to have clearly defined procedures for examinations, in particular finals. Never should marking be allowed, as is too often the case today, to be a one-to-one affair. Examinations are a collective business, the concern of boards of examiners who act as a body. In that case, it is much easier to tell individual students: "*I am personally intimately convinced you'd deserve a much better mark... but my colleagues...*".

The other necessary change would be to dispense with, at the earliest possible date, the second sitting or second chance, offered to students who have failed the June session of exams. In the absence - at least in some areas - of clear examination procedures, on the one hand, and because of these widespread habits of pressure on the part of failed (and usually work-shy) candidates, this would do away with a potential source of corruption. Besides, these examinations, which usually take place in late August-early September, represent an unnecessary workload for lecturers who are, at that period of the year, very busy organising the entrance examinations. Finally, if the teaching staff is also either to go into re-training, or given spare time for research, they would need to be free to carry out these essential activities.

5 - A New Role for the State:

A - Private versus State degrees: far less should be asked from the State in general. Institutions of Higher Education should learn to stand on their own feet, and be autonomous, as they are in the region. I suggest State degrees be abolished altogether. The State could establish its own procedures for anonymous competitive examinations to recruit, and eventually re-train, some top civil servants, but it should leave Universities and institutions of Higher Education deliver their own diplomas. The market will decide of their value - not the bureaucracy.

B - On the other hand, the State must realise that certain areas of Higher Education will be neglected by pure market forces. It must, as far as the training of competent cadres is concerned, move vigorously into some areas, to preserve and develop

the cultural identity of this nation. Cambodia is not Singapore, and it has centuries of existence to uphold. State action should promote these 6 priorities:

1- The first priority is the Khmer Language and the launching of *the National Language Institute* which, as far as I know, has not yet really got started. It must be constituted immediately, and work actively to form a team of experts from Cambodia and abroad. Their main task would be to write a new modern Khmer Dictionary, devise a transliteration in Roman script that could become the norm, enrich the vocabulary, contribute to establishing new glossaries for the various modern technologies, in collaboration with everyone working today in this field in Phnom Penh, promote the writing and the printing of books in Khmer in all fields, co-ordinating all the efforts which are already made in this field, etc. ...

2- The next priority should be all the Fine Arts - so neglected in Higher Education today ! I believe the Khmers are natural artists, - only watch the village painters who restore the pagodas in the countryside. And these talents must be encouraged at all costs. Not only will they boost the tourist industry, but their creations will boost the morale of disenchanting Khmers, and enrich the patrimony of humanity.

3- Khmer culture is also its History. Why is this sector so neglected today ? Rumours and prejudices replace sound historical data. Ignorance and chauvinism - the parents of racialism - prevail. All specialists of Khmer history should combine their efforts to revitalise this most war-torn discipline.

4- For the time being, the majority of Cambodians are farmers, and live in the countryside: the next priority should be rural development, and the protection of its exceptionally rich natural environment, which is fast deteriorating today. Not paying lip service to this - but taking very concrete decisions toward this aim.

5 - Primary health care: all the professions in that area must be regarded as a first duty by the national community. The market can only look after the welfare of the already privileged.

6 - Ethnic Minorities: by ethnic minorities, I do not mean Vietnamese, Chinese or even Thais - they are large majority groups in the Indochinese Peninsula. I am referring to the ethnic groups at the periphery of the country, and the Northeast in particular, who have been suffering and been singularly exploited in the last 25 years of civil war. Their very way of existence is being threatened now. A special Department, dealing with minority cultures, should be set up in a renovated *Social Sciences Institute* at the *UPP 2*.

C -- *The Private Sector*: This must be encouraged to grow, in particular in areas connected with the business and financial communities:

Business, commerce, banking, the market will take care of this. The duty of the State is to set the rules of the game - not necessarily to dictate how every business man, every banker, every tradesman should be trained. Employers can look to this, provided the State ensures they act within the Rule of Law. On the one hand, an institution like *the Regent College*, or *the Australian Centre for Education* could serve as a models, in this respect. On the other hand, MSc at the *CDRI* might be a model of the type of courses a future private University could give. I believe those are numerous in the Philippines. These three experiments, although at their initial stages, are extremely important, and should be watched carefully. They are models, on the one hand, of the more market-oriented and vocational approach to Higher training, and, on the other, to a more intellectually ambitious approach. They also demonstrate that high quality training can be provided in Cambodia itself, without having to go abroad for this, and they are less costly, while distance education programmes must have a great future in a country like Cambodia.

However opening such institutions should be, of course, subject to official permission. Tertiary private training institutions should not be merely commercial concerns, but abide by some obligation of public service. These could include:

- the obligation to use a minimum percentage of the Khmer language in some of their courses, at least at vocational or graduate levels;
- obligation to make provisions for impecunious students, who are the vast majority in Cambodia today;
- respect freedom of thought by not inflicting compulsory training in a specific religious or sectarian beliefs. If such courses exist, attendance should be strictly voluntary.