

# **Regional Seminar**

*Quality Assurance on Higher Education in Southeast  
Asian Countries*

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*Country Paper:*  
**Quality Assurance on Higher Education in Cambodia**

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## **QUALITY ASSURANCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA**

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### **1. Introduction**

For nearly a hundred years, Cambodia was colonized by France (1863-1953). After the colonial period, Cambodia, as other colonial countries, established its own independent education system for the needs of society. Specifically, in order to meet the needs of social and economic growth, a higher education system in this country was formed in the 1940s and developed remarkably in the 1960s.

Tragically, the development of Cambodian higher education had declined since 1970 when the civil war started. All schools and universities were closed during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979). However, higher education institutions were opened to serve the needs of the country after the genocidal regime. Moreover, in the late 1990s, the privatization in higher education sub-sector has arisen. A number of the private higher education institutions has grown rapidly since 2002.

### **2. Current Higher Education System**

At present, there are 57 universities and HE institutes in Cambodia. They are located in 14 provinces/cities (of a total of 24 provinces/cities). Twenty one of them are public HEIs. By international comparison, most HEIs are very small, with narrow academic and resource bases, highlighting issues of efficiency, quality, and coherent system development. These universities and institutes are supervised by ten different Ministries. Total enrolment (undergraduate students) in both public and private HEIs has increased dramatically from 25,080 in 2000/2001 to 75,523 in 2004/2005. Females make up 33% of all students. In addition, there are 15,744 of Associate degree's students and above 5,100 of Postgraduate students (DoHE, 2006).

### **3. Background of Quality Assurance**

There is a concern for quality in higher education of Cambodia since the privatization in the higher education has been introduced. The quality of education is a key policy among other keys that have been emphasized in the Educational Strategic Plan (2005-2010). The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport had played a significant role in creating a legal framework (Reach Kret) regarding Cambodian higher education accreditation which was approved in March 2003 as policy guidelines for the development of quality assurance and accreditation system in Cambodia.

The purpose of this Law is to establish a legal mechanism for administering the accreditation of higher education for all HEIs to ensure and promote academic quality for greater effectiveness and quality consistent with international standards, and to determine the organization of structure, roles, functions, and duties regarding the administration of the accreditation process of higher education for all HEIs which grant degrees in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Accreditation of higher education in Cambodia is a must. All degree granting institutions of higher learning must undergo accreditation process, whether they are state-funded or founded by private individuals. Accreditation granted is divided into two features: 1) Provisional Accreditation which is offered to the current existing higher education institutions, and 2) Accreditation which is granted to any university or institute that meets the minimum standard of quality set by Accreditation Committee of Cambodia.

#### **4. Organization and Procedures**

Based on this law, the first quality assurance body called the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) was founded in June 2003. ACC is an external quality assurance body. It is supervised by the Office of the Council of Ministers. Roles and duties of ACC are as follows:

- Determining accreditation policy and measures to assure academic quality for all HEIs in the Kingdom of Cambodia,
- Determining the accreditation status of HEIs,
- Approving curriculums for the foundation course for first-year university students in HEIs,
- Maintaining records of institutional and program evaluation and quality assurance activities in each HEI,
- Making evaluations on the basis of visits to the HEIs,
- Cooperating with other national and international institutions involved with accreditation and quality assurance,
- Ensuring proper participation of stakeholders concerned with the outcomes of each academic institution that applies for accreditation, e.g. concerned ministries, professional associations, etc,
- Making broad announcement to the public of the results of the ACC findings in relation to its task of accreditation.

#### **5. Basic Standards of Quality Assurance and Accreditation**

The following constitute basic standards to the quality of an institution of higher education. These standards have been adapted to include the provisions for Cambodian higher education as outlined in the Law regarding Accreditation of Higher Education. These basic standards are as follows:

##### **Standard One: Mission**

The key aspects of this Standard for evaluation include:

- Clear statement of mission of each academic institution
- Engagement with the development of Cambodian society
- Dissemination of goals among constituencies
- Periodic review of goals
- Proper use of institutional classification ( as a University or Institute)

##### **Standard Two: Governing Structure, Management and Planning**

The key aspects of this Standard for evaluation include:

- Accountability, management structure, and membership of Governing Board
- Strategic planning process
- Roles and duties of Rector/Director
- Internal organizational structure

- Internal management committees
- Evaluation of institutional effectiveness

### **Standard Three: Academic Program**

The key aspects of this Standard for evaluation include:

- Compatibility of the academic program with the mission and goals of the institution
- Clarity in content and organization of the academic program
- Program planning and program review
- Provision of a course credits and credit transfer system
- Quality of program delivery through teaching effectiveness
- Principles for student assessment
- Maintenance of academic records
- Accountability arrangements and modes of stakeholder feedback
- Provision of Research
- Effective internal quality assurance system

### **Standard Four: Teaching Staff**

The key aspects of this Standard for evaluation include:

- Staff qualifications and experience
- Terms and conditions of employment and promotion
- Provision of Staff development
- Academic freedom
- Teaching staff voice in academic decisions

### **Standard Five: Students and Student Services**

The key aspects of this Standard for evaluation include:

- Student admission requirements
- Clarity of degree requirements
- Determination of academic fees for students
- Process for awarding scholarships
- Institutional services for students
- Provision of community services

### **Standard Six: Learning Resources**

The key aspects of this Standard for evaluation include:

- Adequacy, quality, dept, diversity and currency of learning resources such as Library and laboratories
- Adequate and competent personnel to provide technical support
- Provision of information technology
- Learning resources facilitate scholarship and research
- Optimal utilization

### **Standard Seven: Physical Facilities**

The key aspects of this Standard for evaluation include:

- Adequacy of physical facilities and equipment to support the institution's mission
- Planning and Management of the physical facilities
- Regard to health, safety and security

- Optimum utilization of facilities

### **Standard Eight: Financial Management and Planning**

The key aspects of this Standard for evaluation include:

- Adequacy of financial resources
- Budgeting and auditing procedures
- Resource mobilization
- Effective utilization
- Financial reporting

### **Standard Nine: Dissemination of Information**

All HEIs in Cambodia will provide regular and public dissemination of information regarding the following as noted in the preceding standards:

- Institutional mission and goals
- Governance arrangements
- Information regarding tuition and other fees
- Information regarding student scholarships
- Managerial decisions
- Documents and information regarding academic curriculum and educational policy
- Annual strategic plans for the development of the institution which will set the contribution of the institution of higher education to the improvement of higher education in Cambodia (for public HEIs)
- Annual financial reports (for public HEIs)
- Annual reports setting out the institution's activities and financial statement (for private HEIs)
- The institution's accreditation status.

## **6. Conclusion**

The quality assurance in Cambodia is a new feature. It is in the process of developing minimum standard requirements. It is challenging inadequacy of resources and experience to proceed with the development of minimum standard of quality and the accreditation process. However, I do hope we will learn more about quality assurance and accreditation procedures from this important Seminar.

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