Cambodia Education Research Forum at National Institute of Education

Topic: Baseline study on Graduate Programs in Cambodia

14th – 15th February, 2014

Dr. Rath Chhang
Director of Graduate Program Accreditation, ACC
Table of Content

1. Background
2. Objectives of the study
3. Significance of the study
4. Method of data collection
5. Target of the study
6. Limitations
7. Data description and Discussion
8. Conclusions
9. References
10. Q & A
1. Background

Despite the creation of the ACC and the SNCE and the establishment of quality assurance units within universities and colleges, the Prime Minister of Cambodia has recently urged the MoEYS to enhance the quality of higher education as most of the students who graduate with Bachelor and Master’s degrees do not seem to have received legitimate qualifications;
In the closing ceremony of the annual convention on education he said: ‘it is now very easy to get a Master and PhD degree in Cambodia, so the MoEYS and the ACC have to enhance the quality of education, and must formulate a policy for plagiarism.’ He added that some PhD students have graduated by hiring someone to write a thesis or dissertation, and some PhD students had never attended any class, or studied anywhere, but when he was invited to preside over a graduation ceremony, he saw these students being awarded a PhD degree. He also agreed with the fact that some graduates were really qualified. He agreed that quality is affected by quantity; however, we must enhance the quality of education in order to ensure that our human resources are qualified. Ironically, no country can produce as many students with PhD or Master’s degrees as Cambodia (News Digest 2009).
• Sub-decree on the National Commission on the Development of Guidelines and Procedures for thesis/dissertation supervision and Defense, No. 79, dated on 27\textsuperscript{th} May 2009;

• Sub-decree on Doctoral Degree Training, No. 151, date on 6\textsuperscript{th} December 2010;

• Sub-decree on the establishment of the Department of Graduate Program Accreditation under the ACC Secretariat, No. 97, dated 26 May 2011;
• Prokah on Requirements and Criteria for Doctoral Degree Training Program by MoEYS, No. 2914, dated 23 July 2012;
• Based on the Sub-decree, graduate programs are supposed to be assessed and accredited since 2012;
• However, Sub-decree on Master’s degree training program is still pending;
• The department is still in the process of developing policies, guidelines, and minimum standards for accreditation of graduate schools. In order to ensure the development of evidence-based policies, guidelines, and minimum standards for accreditation of graduate schools, there is need for a baseline study on the current state of graduate training programs in higher education in Cambodia.
2. Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

• To seek an understanding of the perceptions of the participants involved in graduate schools in relation to key features of quality assurance that they think are suitable and workable for the Cambodian higher education sector. This will allow the ACC to determine what aspects of quality assurance processes are perceived as locally relevant and suitable for graduate schools in Cambodia;

• To capture the current status, and nature of graduate training in higher education in Cambodia.
3. Significance of the study

The findings of this study will provide a valuable contribution to the development of a suitable guidelines and minimum standards for the accreditation of graduate schools, as well as contributing to the understanding of the nature of quality assurance of graduate schools in Cambodian higher education. These baseline data will be used to compare with the result of the evaluation when the impact of the accreditation process is conducted in the future.
4. Method of data collection

• To complement each other, both quantitative and some limited qualitative approaches were employed;

• The quantitative method of data collection were conducted by asking heads/deans of graduate schools of higher education institutions to complete the survey questionnaire and providing necessary documents with respect to graduate schools. In addition, the participants were interviewed by using an unstructured interview.
5. Target of the study

In Phnom Penh there were 13 higher education institutions and there were 29 higher education institutions in 10 provinces, including Kampot (2 universities), Takeo (3), Preah Sihanouk (3), Kampong Cham (4), Siem Reap (4), Batambang (5), Pursat (1), BanteayMeanchey (4), SvayRieng (2), and Prey Veng (1).
6. Limitations

The Royal Academy of Cambodia (RAC) was not included in the study, as it is outside the jurisdiction of the ACC. So there is a lack of clear understanding of the nature of the graduate program delivered by RAC which, because it is large, would have provided a significant source of information for comparison with that of other graduate schools in the country. It was established as a research institute for the Royal Government, but has changed its mandate to include training at the graduate level. It is countable for finance and standards to the Council of ministers.
7. Data description and Discussion

Figure 1: Management Structure of Graduate Schools

Source: Analysis of survey data (August 2011)
Figure 2: Cross-tabulation of Management Structure of Graduate Schools between Public and Private HEIs
Figure 3: Medium of language instruction

- Khmer, 20%
- English, 5.70%
- Khmer+English, 71.40%
- Khmer+English+French, 2.90%
Figure 4: Graduate programs
Figure 5: Qualifications of academic staff in all graduate programs/departments

PhDs, 21%

Masters, 57%

Cambodian

PhDs, 10%
Masters, 12%

Foreigners
Figure 6: Experience of supervisors and academic staff

- 1-4 years: 31%
- 4-9 years: 45%
- 10 years and more: 24%
Figure 7: Number of Master students

- Bus. Admin: 6706
- Management: 281
- Public Health: 0
- Tourism: 67
- English Language (TESOL): 319
- Agriculture: 32
- Finance & Banking: 1343
- Sci & Technology: 430
- Rural Dev & Proj Mgt: 1225
- Maths, Sci. & Engi: 69
- Arts & Humanities: 64
- Commu & Media: 1
- Law & Pub Admin: 4627
- Education: 1056
- Social Sci & IR: 240
- Economics: 19

Axes:
- Economics
- Social Sci & IR
- Education
- Commu & Media
- Sci & Technology
- Rural Dev & Proj Mgt
- Maths, Sci. & Engi
- Arts & Humanities
- Law & Pub Admin
- Finance & Banking
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Public Health
- Management
- Bus. Admin
Figure 8: Number of PhD students

- Bus. Admin: 225
- Management: 0
- Public Health: 0
- Tourism: 1
- English Language (TESOL): 0
- Agriculture: 0
- Finance & Banking: 0
- Sci & Technology: 0
- Rural Dev & Proj Mgt: 4
- Maths, Sci. & Engi: 0
- Arts & Humanities: 0
- Commu & Media: 0
- Law & Pub Admin: 129
- Education: 13
- Social Sci & IR: 64
- Economics: 6

0 50 100 150 200 250

20
Figure 9: Resources and other guidelines for supporting graduate school
Figure 10: Guidelines for supporting research and teaching
Figure 11: Financial sources and management

- **Published tuition (PhD)**: 59.3% Yes, 40.7% No
- **Published tuition (Master)**: 94.1% Yes, 5.9% No
- **External funds**: 93.9% Yes, 6.1% No
- **Government funds**: 88.2% Yes, 11.8% No
- **Research funding for teachers**: 44.1% Yes, 55.9% No
- **Research funding for students**: 78.8% Yes, 21.2% No
Figure 12: Partnership with other institutions

- Partnership with local HEIs: 62.5% Yes, 37.5% No
- Partnership with inter. HEIs: 77.1% Yes, 22.9% No
- Partnership with local NGOs & industries: 52.9% Yes, 47.1% No
- Partnership with inter. NGOs & industries: 64.7% Yes, 35.3% No
- Network between researchers: 63.6% Yes, 36.4% No
- Exchange for teachers: 54.5% Yes, 45.5% No
- Exchange for students: 52.9% Yes, 47.1% No
Figure 13: Curriculum Development

- Policies for curriculum development: 75% Yes, 25% No
- Review of curriculum: 73.3% Yes, 26.7% No
- Principles for integrating graduate attributes: 62.1% Yes, 37.9% No
8. Conclusions

• The graduate school system in Cambodia is evolving in a slow and uneven way. Some graduate schools have clear standards, policies and guidelines, and some are still working on them. Most programs are small with inadequate resources, making it difficult to evaluate graduate programs. Nonetheless, students need good teachers and good study materials such as journals, e-library, etc;
• by comparison between private and public higher education institutions, the private ones are more ready than the public ones in terms of developing the management structure of the graduate school. Most higher education institutions have embedded the governing board of the graduate school within that of the institution;

• Many universities do not have a separate graduate office, and management of students, teachers, and study programs;
• because most of the graduate programs are small, it is hard for them to establish a separate office for the graduate school;

• At this stage, many graduate schools have insufficient or inadequate guidelines, policies and regulations in place to support the process of running the graduate school;

• There is a need for support from ACC or MoEYS in terms of providing technical assistance in developing these policies and guidelines;
• There is no a uniform policy for language of instruction at the graduate level;
• The establishment of the graduate school in Cambodia is driven by the labor market forces, and there is a lack of a need-analysis policy to provide guidance for establishing graduate training programs;
• Qualifications and experiences in teaching and supervising at the graduate school level are still in an infancy stage;
• Resources, facilities, and policies for supporting research and teaching activities are important for graduate schools, yet they tend to be neglected;  
• There is little or almost no external funds supporting doctoral training programs (e.g. national, international NGOs, etc.), and government funds supporting research in priority areas of studies;  
• There is no clear process indicating how curricula are developed and reviewed, particularly, the process of integrating student attributes into curricula;
• Partnerships between HEIs and local NGOs and industries, as well as with international NGOs and industries are neglected by higher education institutions. Networks between local and international researchers are still small in numbers;

• There is a need for collaboration between the ACC and MoEYS to conduct some training workshops for academics and staff who are responsible for the graduate school to broaden their understanding of the process of management of the graduate school;
• Teacher employment and mobility is a critical issue for branch campuses in the provinces. There is no time allocation for student consultations in relation to assignments or research activities. This leads to a lack of meaningful interaction between the students and their teachers;

• Due to a lack of the national qualifications framework for recognition of degrees awarded by overseas universities, HEIs are reluctant to introduce joint degree or sandwich programs between international and local HEIs;
• A complaint about the lack of consistency between the credit system established by ACC and MoEYS exists among HEIs, making it difficult for them to determine credit hours for their graduate programs;

• Tensions over the ownership of quality assurance in higher education exists in Cambodia, similar to other countries across the world, as there are many actors involved in quality assurance in higher education;
• Doctoral students must be required to publicize their theses/dissertations at least three months before beginning their defense presentation;
• There must be a severe punishment for those who commit plagiarism or an academic misconduct;
• There is skepticism and concern about competency of staff members of the Department of Accreditation of Graduate Programs as it is in its embryonic stage in terms of quality assurance and accreditation of the graduate program. The key question is whether the Department has enough competent and qualified individuals to do such a high level and challenging job.
9. References

- Mak, N. 2008, ‘Higher Education in Cambodia- University Governance’, paper presented to the *University Governance in Higher Education in Southeast Asian Countries* Souphanouvong University, Lao PDR.
Q & A

Thank you!