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Internal Quality Assurance Development and Employability

A Case Study of Private Higher Education in Cambodia

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ABSTRACT

Quality assurance has been a regulatory obligation in Cambodian colleges since 2003, yet it remains a relatively new idea. There is no official quality-management structure at the systemic level, and little attention has been devoted to this in the higher education sector. This study seeks to identify the internal quality elements that influence employability and quality improvement in higher education. The study uses a quantitative approach for measurement, with 200 accurate structured questionnaires sent to the public. Inferential statistics were used to do quantitative data analysis. Inferential statistics of data were presented using regression analysis and multiple regressions. This study found that leadership, academic staff, physical facilities, student evaluation, and teamwork all had a favorable impact on quality improvement. Mission approach and curriculum do not appear to have statistically meaningful effects on quality improvement. Furthermore, the study found a weak positive association between the quality of higher education and employability in higher education. The current study aims to investigate how internal quality improvement influences graduate employability and helps to the growth of private institutions in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Keywords: *Employability, Internal Quality Assurance, Internal Quality Development, Quality Enhancement*

INTRODUCTION

For political and economic progress, high-quality postsecondary education is essential (Mader, 2014). Frequently, actions that increase HEIs' accountability to outside stakeholders are linked to quality assurance. It covers the core disciplines of higher education, such as teaching, research, and community service (Swanzy, 2015). An organization creates an Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) unit or directorate to advance a quality culture. Enabling the development and execution of structures and institutions that guarantee the caliber of educational endeavors is its main responsibility. It gets the organization ready for inspections by outside quality control organizations (Alzafari & Ursin, 2019).

In Ghana, quality assurance in higher education institutions commenced in the 1990s, mostly as a consequence of an explosion of private HEIs giving higher education. It has become essential for HEIs and their courses of study to be recognized in order to ensure the caliber and consistency of operations in the supply of higher education (Linda Tsevi, 2015). Formerly, the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB) oversaw Ghana's higher education institutions. Under the new Education Regulatory Bodies Act of 2020 (Act 1023), the NCTE and the NAB merged to form the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) in 2020. The Commission's objectives include regulating all facets of higher education to support efficient and orderly HEI administration and certification, as well as HEIs' consistent quality delivery standards. Additionally, the Commission will guarantee that universities uphold the highest standards of appropriateness and quality in their research, teaching, and learning programs and results (Mensah, 2022).

The Guideline for Internal Quality (IQ) Assessment is intended to meet the needs of Quality Assurance practices at Cambodia's six universities, including the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Chea Sim University of Kamchaymear (CSUK), Svay Rieng University (SRU), Mean Chey University (MCU), University of Battambang (UBB), and University of Heng Sarin Thbongkhmum (UHST). This product resulted from consultation and cooperation with the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), under the SICA project, and interactive involvements of EU-partner universities namely Agora Institute for Knowledge Management, Uppsala University, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, and Mykolas Romeris University (2020).

This Guideline aims to promote quality management by providing a remedy for standards of excellence in quality assessment, processes and procedures for carrying out self-assessment at the programmed level, the roles and responsibilities of individual assessment committees, as well as an assessment tool for verifying and certifying the quality assurance procedures carried out in these Cambodian universities.

Problem Statement

Graham et al (2023) stated that higher education institutions (HEIs) have been working to improve quality assurance during the previous decade. It has also proven difficult to increase internal quality assurance (QA) capabilities.

Mensah (2022) have brought out the fact that, in order to more accurately represent the scope of its operations, the AQAU was renamed the Directorate of Academic Quality Assurance (DAQA) in 2014. The university's Academic Board has approved the new organization and nomenclature, which are now known as the "Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance (DAPQA)". These early-stage initiatives are all aimed at raising academic standards. Regarding internal university quality assurance procedures, however, little is known empirically, especially whether or not they are capable of raising quality and creating a culture of quality. This setting informed the conception and execution of this study. It made an effort to look at the suitability and effectiveness of the IQA procedures that the university has in place. It looked at the extent that the university developed and put into effect policies, procedures, and organizational frameworks that ensure excellent education and build a community of performance.

Research Objectives

1. To identify Internal Quality Development (IQD) of Private Universities in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
2. To assess an effectiveness of implementing Internal Quality Assurance of the private Universities in Cambodia.
3. To assess the role of Internal Quality Development in higher education quality enhancement of the private Universities in Phnom Penh.
4. To analyze the impact of in higher education quality enhancement on the graduate employability of the private Universities in Phnom Penh.
5. To analyze the existing problems and prospects of Internal Quality Assurance of the private Universities in Cambodia.
6. To provide suggestions for the role of Internal Quality Development in the graduate employability of the private Universities in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Research Questions

1. What is an Internal Quality Development (IQD) in Private Higher Education in Phnom Penh, Cambodia?
2. How is an effectiveness of IQA implementation at HEIs in Cambodia?
3. What is the role of Internal Quality Development in higher education quality enhancement of the private Universities in Phnom Penh?
4. What is impact of in higher education quality enhancement on the graduate employability of the private Universities in Phnom Penh?

5. What are the existing problems and prospects of Internal Quality Assurance of the private Universities in Cambodia?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mary Afi Mensahi (2022) suggested creating clear policy guidelines, committing to a culture of excellence, and implementing progressive quality improvement measures to maintain a high-quality culture and ensure the quality of its programming and awards.

Sokoine University of agriculture (2018) has risen that a stakeholder in higher education is an individual or group with an interest in the quality of education and the level of results. These include the government, employers, students, families, academic and administrative personnel, institutional management, prospective students, student parents, and taxpayers.

1. Academic staff includes teachers, research fellows, and librarians.
2. Administrative staff includes those who work in administration, technical, agricultural, forestry, veterinary, field, or library work, as determined by the Council.
3. Other members of the University's staff who are not involved in teaching or research may also be included.
4. Assurance refers to customer confidence and safety in the face of danger.
5. Internal quality assurance is a process used by institutions to maintain and improve the quality of education and research for students and staff. While this definition is wide, it separates IQA from other management activities by focusing on quality maintenance and enhancement.
6. Quality assurance refers to a systematic and continual process of ensuring that conditions exist to meet the institution's standards, or the techniques by which an institution can ensure that the standards and quality of its mandates are maintained. In other words, quality assurance is a procedure inside an organization's management system that seeks to verify quality objectives are met.
7. Quality denotes the degree to which a collection of intrinsic traits meets standards. The term "inherent characteristics" refers to innate traits of a product or service that have not been allocated to it and are inborn.

Sokhom Chan (2016) has pointed out the following nine factors are listed in the guidelines for internal quality assurance in higher education: vision, mission, planning, academic programs, student services, research, innovation, and support from society, preservation of the arts and culture, leadership, governance, financial management, and internal quality assurance system. While the ASEAN University Network has revised a quality assurance model at program level in higher education, the Office for National Education Standards and Quality

Assessment places emphasis on aspects of educational quality. In order to support business schools, colleges, and universities in achieving their objectives and becoming more competitive, the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program offers performance excellence criteria. The Accreditation Committee of Cambodia has established nine dimensions of educational quality for institutional accreditation.

There could be related to the fact that teaching and learning were the early emphasis of internal quality systems, and, despite increasingly addressing other activities, institutions nonetheless tended to give them primacy. (Manatos et al., 2017). The emphasis on teaching and learning also appeared to imply that, despite external references, institutions modified their IQA systems to suit their own goals, albeit to a limited extent.

Perhaps due to the emphasis of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) systems on the teaching and learning process, the approaches to ensure and improve quality were also primarily focused on this process (Manatos et al., 2017). However, certain concerns were raised about other procedures, most likely as a result of the A3ES recommendations for IQA systems.

Because of the various stages of deployment, information systems showed differing degrees of growth and comprehensiveness. Some institutions were modernizing these systems, particularly in terms of the breadth and integration of information required by IQA systems. This improvement was apparently a response to rising external accountability requirements and the realization of the systems' "inability to respond to the needs of the quality system" (Tavares et al., 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are only seven variables such as Leadership, Mission Strategy, Curriculum, Academic Staff, Physical facilities, Student Assessment, and Collaboration are used as the tools for this study. Thus, the researcher has proposed the new conceptual framework as in Figure 1.

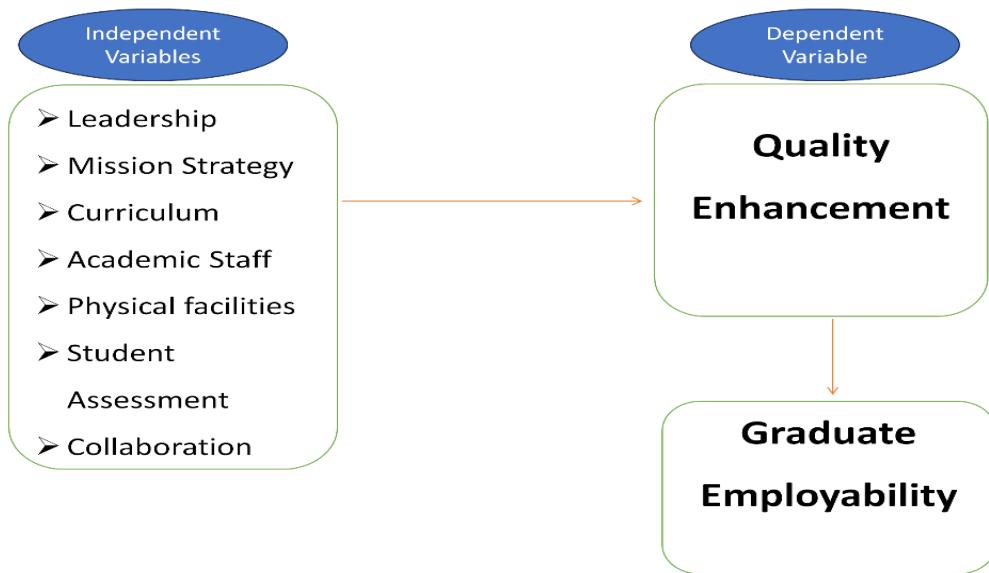


Figure 1. Proposing Model

Source: Processed Data by Researcher

The study utilized a survey research design. This was a quantitative design, which allowed for both descriptive and inferential analysis. Non-probability sampling method of respondents was used to ensure that only educational staff with higher education in their workplaces was included in research. The survey included rectors, vice rectors, deans, vice deans, head of academic department, head of academic office, lecturers from both private and public universities in Cambodia. The actual number is unknown. A researcher used a well-designed and validated questionnaire to collect information on respondents' ages, genders, academic levels, salaries, and positions in the organization, all of which were crucial in assessing the respondent's demographics. The independent variables include Leadership, Mission Strategy, Curriculum, Academic Staff, Physical facilities, Student Assessment, and Collaboration.

It was challenging to investigate the entire population. For this reason, the researcher used a convenient random selection method. Convenience sampling is a way of selecting participants from the target population based on easy availability. As a result, the target number of respondents for this survey was 200 respondents. The study's dependability was guaranteed by conducting a pilot test.

All variables have Cronbach's alpha values over 0.7, which is deemed acceptable (Bonett & Wright, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 describes the results of the model in higher education quality enhancement is considered as an independent variable to determine the extent of its contribution to the graduate employability of private Universities of Cambodia. The regression results show that the higher education quality enhancement had no significant impact on the dependent variable, the graduate employability of the private Universities in Cambodia.

This is revealed from the corresponding regression model of Multiple R is 0.056 (5.60%), i.e., the strength of the relationship between the set of independent variables (Internal quality development) and dependent variable (quality enhancement) is weak.

R square for 0.003 (0.3%) means the dependent variable explained by the independent variables for 0.3 percent, i.e., 99.7 percent (100- 0.3 %) of independent variable was not mentioned in the regression equation model. Thus, 99.7 percent is called error term or disturbance term.

For F value is 1.215 at p-value equal 0.271 (insignificant); as F-value is small means it determines that the outcome of the predictors is not related to score in the population, otherwise the independent variable has not jointly influenced on the dependent variable.

Further, it clearly shows that the dependent variable, i.e., the graduate employability had not been significantly influenced by the independent, higher education quality enhancement. The regression coefficient of the graduate employability is 0.052 and its 't' and 'p' value are 1.102 and 0.271. The 't' and its 'p' values of the regression coefficients of the independent variables, i.e., the higher education enhancement indicates that the impact of the dependent variables, the graduate employability is not significant at five percent.

Table 1. Contribution of Internal Quality Development to HEI quality enhancement
(Regression Results)

Dependent Variable Quality Enhancement	R=0.850 $R^2 = 0.722$ R-Adjust =0.717	F=138.56 Sig.=0.000			
Independent Variable	Regression Coefficient	t-value	P-value	Collinearity	
				Tolerance	VIF
Leadership	.248	6.476	.000	.494	2.026
Mission Strategy	-.013	-.324	.746	.451	2.220
Curriculum	.096	1.494	.136	.224	4.468

Academic Staff	.220	3.239	.001	.206	4.859
Physical facilities	.040	3.810	.000	.397	2.516
Student Assessment	.294	1.998	.046	.850	1.176
Collaboration	.294	7.265	.000	.452	2.210

Source: Processed Field Data by Researcher (2024)

Multiple Regression Analysis

The analysis carried out which provided a significant result in higher education quality of private Universities in Cambodia.

In addition, it discusses the role of internal quality development in higher education of Cambodia. On the basis of the availability of data, indicators of internal quality development, such as leadership, mission strategy, curriculum, academic staff, physical facilities, student assessment and collaboration.

On the basis of the analysis, it is revealed data which are collected from some private higher education institutions in Phnom Penh. Further, the study that measure the influence of seven independent variables, such as leadership, mission strategy, curriculum, academic staff, physical facilities, student assessment and collaboration had significant impact on higher education quality enhancement, except mission strategy and curriculum had insignificant impact on higher education quality enhancement of the private Universities.

In addition, higher education quality enhancement had insignificant impact on the graduate employability. Thus, to sum up, it can be concluded that the higher education quality enhancement through internal quality development had not been influenced on the graduate employability of the private Universities in Cambodia.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Leadership styles on Employee Performance

Dependent Variable G. Employability	R=0.056 R ² = 0.003 R-Adjust =0.001			F=1.215 Sig.=0.271	
Independent Variable	Regression Coefficient	t-value	P-value	Collinearity	
				Tolerance	VIF
HIE Q. Enhancement	0.052	1.102	0.271	1.00	1.00

Source: Processed Field Data by Researcher (2024)

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

As one of the world's fastest expanding universities, internal quality improvement has become increasingly important. Internal quality improvement is one of the most valuable features in most developing countries, and it may serve as a pivotal vehicle for higher education development. Internal quality assurance is generally recognized as a driver to economic success, and vast and rising investment continues to flow into its development across the world. The current study focuses on analyzing the influence of internal quality improvement on graduate employability, as well as its significance in the growth of private universities in Phnom Penh and Cambodia.

Higher education quality contributes not just to job creation, but also to the generation of millions of dollars in income in a community. A variety of industries in a community benefit from their abilities. The current study, which focuses on its role in Cambodia's internal quality development, aims to assist planners, policymakers, private entrepreneurs, communities, and, most importantly, the government in developing appropriate plans and policies for the development of the higher education sector in the study area. Furthermore, the study's relevance lies in identifying and emphasizing issue areas in Phnom Penh's educational growth, as well as presenting relevant answers and future possibilities.

Suggestion

Future academics may want to incorporate additional locations, such as Phnom Penh and provinces, while assessing the country's internal quality improvement. Thus, the limitations of the current study have offered insights into future research in this subject. Overall, this study attempted to assess the influence of internal quality growth on Cambodian graduate employability. In addition, the research seeks to identify and assess existing difficulties and potential for higher education growth in Phnom Penh's private universities. Internal quality development is dependent on a defined strategic plan and the willingness of both the government and the private sector to implement it. Cambodia's first major action plan is to ensure the implementation of Cambodian National Qualification. Policymakers and planners should design suitable plans and regulations to support external program assessment (EPA) and internal quality development in Phnom Penh's private universities. Specific approaches proposed in the study should be applied in a systematic manner to realign student learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and student evaluation systems.

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