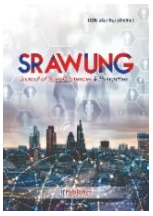

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Quality Enhancement Needs in Selected Private Higher Education Institutions at the Provinces in Cambodia

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ABSTRACT

Cambodia's higher education institutions focus quality improvement. As a result, this research investigates quality enhancement for long-term growth at private higher education institutions (HEIs) in North-Eastern Cambodia, with a particular emphasis on graduate quality and labor market skill mismatches. The major purpose was to look at quality management components that encourage HEI quality improvement. A cross-sectional quantitative technique was used to collect data from 384 respondents. The theoretical framework specifies Quality Management, Quality in Education, Enhancement, Quality Assurance, and Quality Assessment, with an emphasis on curriculum standards, qualified individuals, and effective leadership. The findings revealed overwhelmingly positive perceptions of various quality management dimensions, including educational management, academic curriculum, academic staff and teaching strategies, student assessment, facilities and support staff, collaborations, financial management, internal quality assessment, and external quality assessment. Predictors accounted for 84.5% of the variation in HEI Quality Enhancement (R-squared =.845, p <.001). Student assessment had the most beneficial influence, followed by internal and external quality assessments, facilities and support personnel, and partnerships. Correlation analysis found significant dependency among these factors. A SWOT analysis identified strengths (internal quality assurance, leadership), weaknesses (resource constraints, data management), opportunities (external validation, collaboration), and threats (regulatory changes, economic pressures). This study highlights the need of quality improvement in Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs), focusing on student evaluation, quality assurance, infrastructure, and strategic alliances. Future research should focus on multicollinearity, factors having non-significant effects, and bigger qualitative or comparative investigations.

Keywords: *External Assessment, Quality Assurance, Quality Enhancement, Quality Management, Student Assessment*

INTRODUCTION

In Cambodia, particularly at its private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the North-Eastern Provinces, guaranteeing and improving educational quality is critical to meeting the changing labor market needs and worldwide standards (Chanthoun, 2024). Cambodia has made tremendous progress in reconstructing its higher education industry, focusing on quality assurance and certification. The Cambodian Accreditation Committee (ACC) establishes standards and oversees their implementation. The Royal Government connects domestic higher education standards with regional norms (Sam et al., 2025).

Effective quality enhancement is a continuous and complicated process that is largely dependent on the effective execution and perception of numerous quality management components (Chheng, 2024; Kayyali, 2023). Understanding how stakeholders perceive these components—from educational management and curriculum design to academic staff, facilities, collaborations, and financial management—is critical for identifying strengths, addressing weaknesses, and developing specific improvement strategies (Chanthoun, 2024; Ricci et al., 2018). This eventually leads to evidence-based policymaking and strategic planning for long-term educational excellence (Ban & Heng, 2023; Bou, 2025).

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of excellent higher education, private higher education institutions in Cambodia's North-Eastern Provinces continue to confront significant hurdles in attaining comprehensive and lasting quality improvement (Bou, 2025).

There have been continuous complaints about the implementation process. Because QA is continually changing and requires continuing improvements, it is usual for problems to occur that require prompt resolution. As a result, three major groups of difficulties were identified: institute-related QA issues, QA process issues, and stakeholder-related issues (Pushpakumara et al., 2023).

Higher education institutions may also struggle to design effective methods to improve educational quality and achieve national and international goals (Ministry of Education, 2024; Sam et al., 2025). This lack of clarity can lead to ineffective resource allocation and stakeholder discontent (Ban & Heng, 2023). This study seeks to describe stakeholder opinions of major quality management components and overall education quality improvement in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Furthermore, it aims to investigate the link between these quality management components and education quality enhancement, finally assessing their impact on quality improvement in HEIs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality in higher education is a multifaceted and developing notion impacted by a variety of stakeholders. It includes Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) procedures. QA assesses, monitors, and improves the quality of

a higher education system, whereas QE emphasizes continual improvement. Strong curricular standards, skilled personnel, leadership, and dependable evaluation procedures are all essential components. Internal Quality Assurance Manual (2020) and Pushpakumara et al. (2023) are two interrelated aspects that contribute to a higher education institution's overall quality and reputation.

Educational management is a scientific and planned approach to managing all aspects of education with the goal of meeting certain objectives. Within this framework, management activities include planning, coordinating, executing, and regulating various educational aspects. Educational management is to optimize resources, develop effective techniques, and improve educational quality. Curriculum planning, human resource allocation, financial administration, and learning outcome evaluation are all important aspects of educational management. By using effective management principles, educational institutions may overcome problems, boost operational efficiency, and improve the overall quality of educational processes and outcomes (Dacholfany et al., 2024).

The academic program aims to provide professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to build and manage quality systems in diverse businesses. It often includes issues like as quality standards, process improvement, and performance measurement, with TQM ideas frequently incorporated (Neliwati et al., 2023).

Academic staff and teaching methodologies are focused on maintaining high levels of teaching and learning through a variety of ways. These techniques include leveraging Total Quality Management (TQM) concepts, emphasizing student-centered learning settings, and employing effective teaching methodologies. Quality management in education also includes continuous improvement methods that incorporate all stakeholders and make use of technology for monitoring and assessment (Suleiman, 2023).

Facilities and support workers are critical to meeting and maintaining high standards. Facilities, including infrastructure and equipment, have a direct influence on the quality of work and services. Supporting workers, such as quality teams and individuals participating in various QM procedures, give invaluable experience and help (Groen et al., 2019).

Collaborations in quality management entail many types of cooperation and partnerships, both inside and across businesses, to improve the quality of goods, services, and processes. These partnerships may occur at several levels, ranging from inside a team to across whole supply chains, and are critical for achieving continuous improvement and satisfying client demands (Abbas et al., 2024).

Financial management in the context of quality management refers to the strategic planning, organization, direction, and control of financial resources to support and improve the business's quality efforts. It entails making educated financial decisions that fit with quality objectives, ensuring resources are efficiently allocated to reach desired quality levels, and monitoring the financial consequences of quality-related operations (Grozdanovska et al., 2017).

Internal Quality Assessment (IQA), also known as Internal Quality Assurance, is an important aspect of quality management that ensures the quality and consistency of processes, goods, or services within a business. It entails continuously monitoring and evaluating actions, processes, and outcomes in order to find opportunities for improvement and assure adherence to defined standards. (Internal Quality Assurance Manual, 2020).

External Quality Assessment (EQA) is a quality management procedure in which an independent, external body evaluates the quality of a laboratory's testing methods and findings against a benchmark, which is often a reference lab or a peer group (Internal Quality Assurance Manual, 2020). To increase the quality of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia, a multifaceted strategy is required, with an emphasis on strengthening governance, improving teaching and learning, and cultivating a culture of quality and continuous improvement (Ban & Heng, 2023).

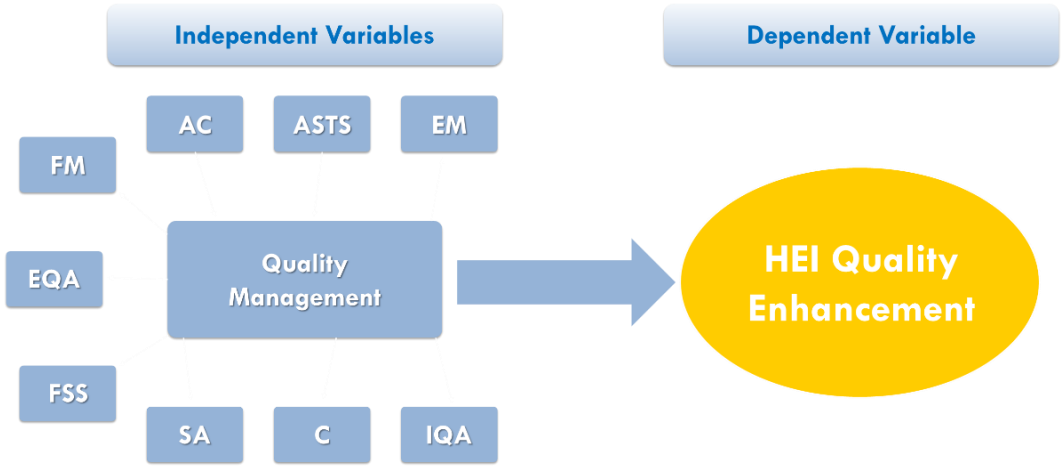

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Relationship Between Quality Management and HEI Quality Enhancement
Source: Processed Data by Researchers

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Initially, a quantitative phase will collect numerical data to reflect stakeholder views of quality management components and overall education quality improvement, as well as to investigate the links and effect of these factors. This will be followed by an exploratory qualitative phase, which will give deeper insights into the underlying causes and mechanisms of the quantitative findings through direct interactions and non-numerical data collecting from chosen individuals (Dawadi et al., 2021).

The study's population and sample are separated into quantitative and qualitative phases. For the quantitative stage, the target population consists of various stakeholders within chosen private higher learning Institutions (HEIs), from

which a sample of 384 respondents, including academic staff (lecturers), administrative staff, and possibly management (rectors, vice-rectors, deans, heads of departments), participated through stratified sampling based on accessibility and relevance. In contrast, the qualitative phase will involve a smaller, purposive sample of key informants drawn from the quantitative participants, such as deans, heads of quality assurance units, experienced lecturers, or administrators, to provide rich and detailed insights into specific perceptions, challenges, or effective factors identified in the first phase.

According to Uakarn et al. (2021), the sample size was determined using a method derived from Cochran's formula, where the sample size (n) is equal to:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

Z = Z-score (for a 95% confidence level, Z is approximately 1.96)

p = estimated population proportion (often 0.5 for maximum sample size)

e = margin of error (as a decimal, so 5% is 0.05)

Therefore,

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 * 0.5(1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 * 0.25}{0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 384.16$$

The total population is 384 respondents among 40 for semi-structured Interview Questions.

Data analysis included both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. SPSS was used to analyze numerical data, with descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) for demographics and perceptions, and inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation, Multiple Regression) to investigate relationships and predictive influences on HEI quality enhancement (Elst, 2019). Transcribed interview material will be subjected to thematic analysis, which is a systematic qualitative process for identifying patterns and themes for better understanding. In addition, a SWOT analysis was performed to identify organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for strategic planning (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This table shows a demographic breakdown of the study's respondents, including their distribution across several categories. A little majority of participants (53.10%) were female, while 46.90% were male. Deans held the most slots (26%), followed by Vice Rectors, Vice Deans, and Heads of Academic Departments (15.60% to 16.40%), demonstrating a substantial presence from leadership and mid-management jobs within academic institutions. The sample had somewhat more responders from private education institutions (52.10%) than public (47.90%). A substantial majority of respondents (69.80%) had Master's Degrees, with Bachelor's Degree holders making up 27.60% and PhDs accounting for only 2.60%. The 30-39 age bracket has the highest prevalence (35.20%), followed by 40-49 (31.30%) and 50-59 (26.30%). Finally, over two-thirds of participants had five to ten years of academic job experience (33.90% for five years, 32.30% for ten years), with a sizable proportion (28.40%) having more than 10 years.

Table 1. Demographic Information

Demographic Information	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	180	46.90%
	Female	204	53.10%
Positions	Rector	21	5.50%
	Vice Rector	63	16.40%
	Dean	100	26%
	Vice Dean	60	15.60%
	Head of Academic Department	60	15.60%
	Head of Academic Office	40	10.40%
	Lecturer	40	10.40%
Education Institution	Public	184	47.90%
	Private	200	52.10%
Education	Bachelor’s Degree	106	27.60%
	Master’s Degree	268	69.80%
	PhD	10	2.60%
Age	20-29	28	7.30%
	30-39	135	35.20%
	40- 49	120	31.30%
	50- 59	101	26.30%
Academic Working Experience	Below five years	21	5.50%
	Five years	130	33.90%
	Ten years	124	32.30%
	Over ten years	109	28.40%

Source: Processed Data by Researcher (2025)

This table offers descriptive data for several dimensions of quality management and HEI Quality Enhancement, based on a sample of 384 respondents, with all variables measured on a 5-point scale (from 1.00 to 5.00). The mean ratings show a generally good impression of all components, indicating moderate to high agreement with present procedures. Specifically, "HEI Quality Enhancement" had the highest mean score (3.5766), suggesting a good overall view of quality improvement activities. Individual aspects with the highest average scores were "External Quality Assessment" (Mean = 3.4906) and "Internal Quality Assessment" (Mean = 3.4822), closely followed by "Facilities and Supporting Staff at HEI" (Mean = 3.4401) and "Collaborations" (Mean = 3.4349). "Educational Management (Administration and Supervision)" received the lowest mean score, 3.1234, but was still over the scale's midpoint. The standard deviations, which range from 0.98 to 1.11, indicate a considerable amount of heterogeneity in responses across each dimension.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Quality Management and HEI Quality Enhancement

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Educational Management (Administration and Supervision) at your HEI	384	1.00	5.00	3.1234	.98398
Academic Curriculum	384	1.00	5.00	3.2359	1.06020
Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs	384	1.00	5.00	3.2734	1.11181
Facilities and Supporting Staff at HEI	384	1.00	5.00	3.4401	1.08168
Collaborations	384	1.00	5.00	3.4349	1.05785
Financial Management	384	1.00	5.00	3.4094	1.08323
Internal Quality Assessment	384	1.00	5.00	3.4822	1.07597
External Quality Assessment	384	1.00	5.00	3.4906	1.05153

Student Assessment	384	1.00	5.00	3.3733	1.00268
HEI Quality Enhancement	384	1.00	5.00	3.5766	1.03941
Valid N (listwise)	384				

Source: Processed Data by Researcher (2025)

This table is a correlation matrix that depicts the correlations between key quality management variables and overall HEI quality enhancement. Each cell displays the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between two variables, which ranges from 0 to 1 (representing the strength and direction of the linear link).

A score of 1.00 implies a complete positive correlation (a variable that correlates with itself), whereas values closer to 1 imply greater positive connections. The "HEI Quality Enhancement" variable constantly has substantial positive relationships with all other quality management aspects, especially "External Quality Assessment" (0.82), "Student Assessment" (0.82), and "Facilities and Supporting Staff at HEI" (0.80). This implies that when these variables improve, so does the perceived quality of the institution. Strong connections are also evident among the predictor variables themselves; for example, "Facilities and Supporting Staff" has very high correlations with "External Quality Assessment" (0.91) and "Internal Quality Assessment" (0.79), while "Financial Management" has a strong correlation with "Internal Quality Assessment" (0.86). These strong positive correlations highlight the linked nature of these components as they contribute to overall excellence in higher education institutions.

Table 3. Correlational Result of Quality Management Dimensions and HEI Quality Enhancement

Variables	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
HEI Quality Enhancement	1	0.61*	0.63*	0.67*	0.80*	0.76*	0.77*	0.79*	0.82*	0.82*
Educational Management (administration and supervision) at your HEI	0.61*	1	0.77*	0.53*	0.66*	0.67*	0.57*	0.63	0.69	0.50*
Academic Curriculum	0.63*	0.77*	1	0.51*	0.65*	0.67*	0.59*	0.64	0.69	0.53*
Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs	0.67*	0.53*	0.51*	1	0.71*	0.72*	0.74*	0.73	0.80	0.53*

Facilities and Supporting Staff at HEI	0.80*	0.66*	0.65*	0.71*	1	0.81*	0.79*	0.78*	0.91	0.65*
Collaborations	0.76*	0.67*	0.67*	0.72*	0.81*	1	0.73*	0.75*	0.80	0.60*
Financial Management	0.77*	0.57*	0.59*	0.74*	0.79*	0.73*	1	0.86*	0.85	0.60*
Internal Quality Assessment	0.79*	0.63*	0.64*	0.73*	0.78*	0.75*	0.86*	1	0.85	0.60*
External Quality Assessment	0.82*	0.69*	0.69*	0.80*	0.91*	0.80*	0.85*	0.85*	1	0.65*
Student Assessment	0.82*	0.50*	0.53*	0.53*	0.65*	0.60*	0.60*	0.62*	0.65*	1

Source: Processed Data by Researcher (2025)

The table shows the regression analysis investigating the parameters impacting "HEI Quality Enhancement." Several factors demonstrate substantial connections. "Student Assessment" shows the largest positive correlation (Beta =.444, p <.001), demonstrating that robust student assessment processes strongly correlate with increased quality. "Facilities and Supporting Staff at HEI" (Beta =.111, p =.040), "Collaborations" (Beta =.110, p =.007), "Internal Quality Assessment" (Beta =.144, p =.002), and "External Quality Assessment" (Beta =.170, p =.013) all have a positive and substantial impact on HEI quality enhancement. "Financial Management" has a slightly significant beneficial effect (Beta =.083, p =.070). In contrast, the association between "Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs" is negative, but not statistically significant. The high VIF values for "External Quality Assessment" (11.187) and "Facilities and Supporting Staff at HEI" (7.065) indicate possible multicollinearity concerns that may compromise the dependability of their respective coefficients.

Table 4. The Regression Result of Quality Management Dimensions on HEI Quality Enhancement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.004	.085		.047	.963					
	Educational Management (Administration and Supervision) at your HEI	.001	.037	.001	.028	.978	.619	.001	.001	.337	2.967
	Academic Curriculum	.010	.035	.010	.280	.780	.637	.014	.006	.331	3.019
	Academic Staff and Teaching Strategies at HEIs	-.030	.034	-.032	-.889	.375	.673	-.046	-.018	.314	3.183
	Facilities and Supporting Staff at HEI	.107	.052	.111	2.057	.040	.808	.106	.042	.142	7.065
	Collaborations	.108	.040	.110	2.734	.007	.760	.140	.056	.256	3.899
	Financial Management	.080	.044	.083	1.817	.070	.773	.094	.037	.198	5.043
	Internal Quality Assessment	.139	.045	.144	3.096	.002	.793	.158	.063	.193	5.186
	External Quality Assessment	.168	.067	.170	2.496	.013	.828	.128	.051	.089	11.187
	Student Assessment	.461	.029	.444	15.837	.000	.825	.634	.323	.528	1.895

Source: Processed Data by Researcher (2025)

The table regression results show that "Quality Management" is a very significant predictor of "HEI Quality Enhancement." The standardized coefficient (Beta) for Quality Management is.875, with an extremely low p-value of.000, indicating a significant positive correlation. This means that for every one standard deviation improvement in Quality Management, HEI Quality Enhancement is predicted to rise by.875 standard deviations, assuming other parameters remain

unchanged. The high t-statistic of 35.264 emphasizes the statistical relevance of Quality Management as a predictor. Furthermore, the zero-order, partial, and part correlations are all.875, indicating a very strong positive relationship between Quality Management and HEI Quality Enhancement, even after controlling for other potential variables in the model (though Quality Management is the only predictor in this case). Finally, the Tolerance and VIF values are both 1.000, indicating that there is no multicollinearity, which is predicted given that this model only includes one independent variable.

Table 5. The Regression Result of Quality Management Dimensions on HEI Quality Enhancement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.187	.100		1.881	.061					
	Quality Management	1.008	.029	.875	35.264	.000	.875	.875	.875	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: HEI Quality Enhancement

Source: Processed Data by Researcher (2025)

CONCLUSION

The study looked at the elements that contribute to higher education institution (HEI) quality improvement in Cambodia's north-east area. The study discovered a generally good impression of existing practices across most dimensions, with high positive relationships between Facilities and Supporting Staff and External Quality Assessment.

Student assessment appeared as the most important individual positive predictor. The detailed SWOT analysis found significant internal strengths, such as solid IQA systems and leadership support, as well as chances for external validation and collaboration. However, resource restrictions, resistance to change, and external concerns such as altering policy landscapes and economic pressures need strategic planning for long-term quality improvement. The study highlighted the importance of a multifaceted approach to quality management, with a strong emphasis on student assessment, robust internal and external quality assurance, adequate facilities, and collaborative efforts, all of which contribute significantly to the improvement of quality in HEIs in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes many major suggestions for higher education institutions (HEIs) in North-Eastern Cambodia to support long-term quality improvement. Institutions should emphasize enhancing student evaluation methods through enhanced methodology and openness, given their enormous predictive potential. Concurrently, improving both internal and external quality assurance processes is critical, with an emphasis on complete assessments and leveraging their significance in accreditation and institutional reputation. A suitable learning environment requires optimizing facilities and supporting staff, which includes assuring enough physical and technical infrastructure as well as skilled individuals. HEIs should also aggressively promote and grow relationships with both internal and external sectors in order to enhance curriculum and practical experiences. While financial management is regarded positively, ongoing monitoring is required to assure adequate budget allocation for all academic quality procedures, including staff development. Furthermore, higher education institutions should proactively use their recognized strengths, reduce weaknesses, grab opportunities, and prepare for risks in order to promote continual quality improvement and align curriculum with market demands.

The study recommends more research to improve quality management in Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). This involves tackling multicollinearity in regression models, investigating underlying linkages, comprehending resource restrictions and data management issues, and evaluating external risks and possibilities. Comparative research across different HEI kinds and geographies may give larger insights.

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