

Stakeholders' Perceptions of Quality in Cambodian Higher Education

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for another academic award; the content of this thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of approved research program; and, any editorial work paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged, and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.



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Dedication

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List of Acronyms

ACC	Accreditation Committee of Cambodia
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CHEA	Cambodian Higher Education Association
CITA	Cambodia Independent Teachers Association
DGHE	Department General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
DoHE	Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
DSR	Department of Scientific Research, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IQAU	Institutional Quality Assurance Unit
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Abstract

Quality in higher education has become an important issue and has received considerable attention, mainly in developed nations. In recent years, many developing nations have followed their developed counterparts in adopting quality assurance systems to improve the quality of their higher education, as they also now need a highly skilled workforce to thrive in the emerging knowledge-based economy. Cambodia, a developing country which has experienced a civil war and uneven social, political and ideological changes since it claimed independence from France in 1953, has for the past ten years had a focus on the improvement of the quality of higher education on which Cambodia's economy and future development goals mainly depend. Since the 2000s, Cambodia has seen a dramatic increase in the number and size of higher education institutions, reaching towards the stage of massification after almost three decades of political unrest. Some view this increase in the scale of higher education as a great achievement for Cambodia, having significantly widened access for students who wish to pursue their studies in higher education. However, some critics describe some higher education institutions in Cambodia as little more than certificate shops or diploma mills as their outputs are poor and they do not meet the national needs for the development of skills.

In response to both the government's efforts to improve the quality of its higher education and to criticisms over the quality of Cambodian higher education, this study examines the quality of Cambodian higher education from the perspectives of key local and international stakeholders. This study seeks to understand how stakeholders perceive the quality of Cambodian higher education, what strategy the Cambodian government has developed to ensure the quality of its higher education, and how the stakeholders view the effectiveness of the government's strategy to ensure the quality of higher education.

In order to answer the above questions, a qualitative phenomenographic research study was undertaken, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Using a snowball sample, 61 key stakeholders in Cambodian higher education were interviewed. Those key stakeholders were students, teachers, rectors, the government (represented by senior officials in the Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education, Department of Scientific Research, and the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia), employers from governmental agencies and the private sector, three main international donor agencies and the two academic unions which are involved in Cambodian higher education.

The stakeholder approach chosen in this study is based on the initial observation driving this study that the adoption of new quality assurance institutions in Cambodia would need to take account of the influence of path dependence on development. In early efforts to develop a quality assurance system, Cambodia failed to invite key stakeholders in higher education to participate in the planning process. International stakeholders were influential in funding and designing a system modelled on those that had worked well in many liberal democratic Western societies. However, the success of new institutions requires a partnership between indigenous people and outsiders which was lacking in this case. The investigation into the combination of local and international stakeholders in this study is consistent with the change in development practice from a focus on the technical assistance provided by international agencies in a dialogue of persuasion to instead promoting a dialogue of partnership in which local stakeholders' views and expectations inform both the objectives and the design of new institutions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Thanks to social, political and ideological changes over more than half of a century, higher education in Cambodia has experienced many transitions since its emergence in the 1960s. Cambodian higher education has been influenced by the French, Vietnamese and the former Soviet Union styles, and lately by Western models (Chamnan & Ford, 2004; Chealy, 2006; Clayton, 1999; Leng, 2010). In each transition, Cambodian higher education has been influenced by its political leadership which has failed to focus on addressing the quality of higher education (Ayers 2000a). Historically, Cambodian higher education began to take shape after Cambodia gained independence from France in 1953, but since then, Cambodia has never had a chance to improve its quality of higher education thanks to uneven social and political changes. The failure and lack of commitment to improving the quality of higher education in Cambodia could have been the result of the civil war from 1970 to 1998. Consequently, attempts to improve the quality of Cambodian higher education have been neglected. Since the government introduced the idea of privatization of higher education in the late 1990s, the number of higher education institutions (HEIs) and enrolment rates has sprung up dramatically. There has been very limited literature on the quality of Cambodian higher education since Cambodia was liberated from the Khmer Rouge regime. Sloper (1999) argued that the higher education system in Cambodia was so poor that it was beyond description.

Although previous governments failed to modernize Cambodian higher education, the term 'quality' in higher education in Cambodia was on the nation's spotlight for the first time in the early 2000s when the Cambodian government requested a loan from the World Bank to establish the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC). Its main purpose was to improve the quality of Cambodian higher education after a period of uncontrolled explosive growth in higher education (Ford, 2003). Many private institutions were springing up, with most being unaccredited and widely perceived to be of dubious quality. In the 2002-03 period, 16 private HEIs emerged and during 2003-2004, the total enrolment rate within HEIs in Cambodia reached 45,000 (Chealy, 2006). As of 2009 there were 77 HEIs in Cambodia, 45 of which were private and the total enrolment in all HEIs was 136,400 (Seima, 2009). Chealy (2006) contends that the fast growth in higher education has meant that Cambodia has reached the stage of massification of higher education; however Cambodia's enrolment rate is still less than three percent of the tertiary age cohort (UNESCO, 2009).

Worldwide, higher education has evolved noticeably since the establishment of the first true university in Bologna in the 11th century and those of Oxford and Paris in the 12th century. In advanced industrial economies, it has changed from being a privilege for an elite class to being

an expectation for many. There has been massive growth in higher education participation for the last 50 years worldwide, as higher education confers significant individual benefits in terms of personal development, social status, career possibility, and most importantly of all perhaps, lifetime earning. In this perspective, students who study full-time at university aim at gaining useful skills for employment in the fast growing knowledge-based industries, while employed students who study part-time thrive to upgrade and secure their professional skills (Trow, 2000). The focus on higher education in training citizens to become a skilled workforce for economic development can be traced in both developing and economically advanced nations. In the economically advanced countries, during the period of massification of higher education, governments invested huge amounts of money in an expectation that universities would produce quality graduates who would serve as a skilled workforce for economic development (Altbach, 1999; Guri-Rosentblit, Sebkova, & Teichler, 2007; Tilak, 2005). While higher education institutions are pushed to produce manpower, the bottom line of the governments in the economically advanced nations in the world is to provide the opportunities to those who are inspired to attain university education. As a result, the most affluent societies and their universities seemed to be moving steadily toward the provision of post-secondary education for the whole of university-age population (Trow, 1972). The Organization for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) and the World Bank have promoted the importance of higher education as a key means for the development of human resources needed to engage with the new global knowledge-economy (Peters, 2001).

In the developing world, higher education was often first established by colonial powers and transformed in different postcolonial contexts. Though higher education is also recognized in the developing nations as a key force for modernization and development (Teferra & Altbach, 2004), universities in the developing world are rooted in their own cultures and are affected by their social, economic and political realities. Therefore, the enrolment growth rates in the industrialized nations and those in the developing world are substantially different. For example, during the period of massification in higher education in the advanced nations, gross enrolment ratios rates were between 30 to 40 per cent (Trow, 2000) whereas at the same time participation gross enrolment ratios in their developing counterparts were below 10 per cent of the age cohort (Tilak, 2005). Now higher education worldwide has received greater attention from the international community as it is critical to build the human capital, and it is also regarded as an indispensable factor of development (Kapur & Crowley, 2008). As higher education provides knowledge to students today who will make use of it in the future, the world has reached an age of knowledge in which educated people and their ideas have become strategic commodities critical to their security, prosperity, and social well-being (Duderstadt, 1997).

Cambodia's gross enrolment ratio (UNESCO, 2009), at less than three per cent, lags behind that of other countries in the region and the world due to the civil war, which lasted for almost three decades. Cambodia faces a unique challenge in its higher education as a result of the civil war and the depletion of human resources as the result of the destruction of the education system by the Khmer Rouge regime. However, since 1993, Cambodia has received both technical and financial assistance from major donor countries and international financial institutions. Since 1998 Cambodia has enjoyed relative peace and political stability, which are prerequisites for its economic development, and Cambodia has integrated itself into the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Cambodian government now views its higher education as an indispensable impetus to the national and economic development. The Cambodian government has realized that a main challenge to 2020 will be to improve Cambodia's economic productivity through the quality improvement of its higher education in order to create graduates to promote national development (Ngoy, 2009). The government objective is also in line with the donor countries which see Cambodian higher education as a key force for modernization. Now Cambodia's economic growth and future development rely heavily on its educated population, said the US Ambassador Carol Rodley in Phnom Penh at an aid signing ceremony in 2010 (Sothnararith, 2010). If Cambodia is to succeed in meeting that objective it must have a strong higher education sector.

However, the quality of Cambodian higher education has come under severe scrutiny from critics who argue that Cambodian higher education is now at the cross-roads without knowing what direction it will take (Chen, Sok, & Sok, 2007). Some say higher education in Cambodia is just at an early stage of development (Chamnan & Ford, 2004), observing that the rapid growth in enrolments has led to high unemployment rate among graduates (Ford, 2006). Apart from the criticisms from local and foreign critics, the Cambodian government itself also recognizes that the quality of education services provided by higher education institutions in Cambodia is still often unsatisfactory. In early 2009 Prime Minister, Hun Sen, in a graduate ceremony, complained about the quality of Cambodian higher education, and instructed the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) to take tougher action to improve the quality of higher education (Kohsantepheap, 2009). The current challenge for Cambodia is to improve the quality of the higher education system while at the same time allowing for expansion of its higher education. Though the fast expansion of higher education institutions in Cambodia has been criticized for their poor quality provision, the Cambodian government has not yet been able to decide on the accreditation standards for all universities. What Cambodia has done is the establishment of the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), which has done very little in terms of quality assessment in higher education institutions in Cambodia.

In the past, Cambodian leaders have used education to establish their legitimacy in building the Cambodian nation-state, and each transition has reflected leaders' political imperatives (Ayres, 2000a). Cambodian leaders have used higher education to legitimize their leadership without inviting stakeholders to address the issue of quality. This study will investigate the viewpoints of those who are involved in Cambodian higher education and will be critical participants in any reform initiative. Importantly, in order to improve the quality of higher education in Cambodia rather than simply importing standard templates and process from overseas, this study seeks to understand and respond to the ways in which the quality of Cambodian higher education is perceived by local and international stakeholders.

Research Questions and Aims

In this study, questions relating to the quality issues in Cambodian higher education will be addressed and answered by those who are closely involved both directly and indirectly. Views from key stakeholders will be elicited in order to understand and respond to the ways in which the quality of Cambodian higher education is interpreted by local and international stakeholders. The study is framed around three central questions:

1. How do stakeholders perceive the quality of Cambodian higher education?
2. What strategy has the Cambodian government developed to ensure the quality of higher education?
3. How do the stakeholders view the effectiveness of the government strategy to improve the quality of higher education?

The purpose of this study is to gain insights and a deeper understanding of key stakeholders' opinions or perceptions of the quality of Cambodian higher education as the researcher's review of the literature reveals that there is hardly information on the quality of Cambodian higher education from the perspectives of key stakeholders. This study seeks to understand how key stakeholders respond to the criticisms of higher education, including both local and international stakeholders such as employers in multinationals in Cambodia and the aid donor agencies that have been very active in giving development aid to Cambodia's higher education. The combination of local and international stakeholders reflects the principles of participatory development in which the successful establishment of new institutional arrangements requires the participation of both indigenous people and outsiders through a partnership (Boettke, Coyne, & Leeson, 2008). The opinions and viewpoints on the current situation of Cambodian higher education quality from key stakeholders in Cambodian higher education will assist in

understanding the limited success of existing efforts and possibilities for more effective future development.

As there is little research undertaken to understand the current situation of quality in Cambodian higher education, this study will be expected in the following ways.

1. This study is expected to make a significant contribution to understanding of issues affecting the quality of higher education in Cambodia.
2. The knowledge gained through this study is expected to provide stakeholders with a realistic assessment of perceived quality in Cambodian higher education, and this knowledge will also contribute to a base of evidence which policy-makers can use to determine the weaknesses in the Cambodian higher education system, and to identify areas where changes or improvements need to be made in order to ensure educational quality in the higher education sector.
3. Based on the ways in which stakeholders respond to the quality aspects in Cambodian higher education, this study will provide a clear framework for the Cambodian government to adjust its policies on higher education by focusing on the quality issues and on the actual conditions for a quality assurance process that might work in the context of Cambodia.

Conceptual Framework

Punch (1998) defines the conceptual framework of a research study as the conceptual status of the research problems being studied and their relationship to each other. As stated above, this study aims to gain insights and a deeper understanding of the quality of Cambodian higher education from the stakeholders' viewpoints. In the United States of America, every three or four years, the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) takes a poll of the state leaders to identify pressing issues in higher education. "Effectiveness and accountability" was the only theme emphasized by this stakeholder group in every survey over a twelve year period (Lingenfelter, 2003, p. 19). For governments, the term 'quality' which has dominated the current debate about higher education, remains closely connected to other terms such 'accountability', 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' (Lindsay, 1992). Accountability in higher education can be defined as the responsibility taken by universities to be answerable to the key groups of people with a legitimate interest in higher education, commonly referred to as stakeholders. A university is required to prove its accountability to the stakeholders by showing evidence of performance and achievement. Saunder (2007) points out that accountability is a complex concept that makes us keep in mind the following questions:

1. Why should higher education institutions be accountable?
2. To whom are they accountable?
3. What types of evidence must institutions provide in order to prove their accountability?

According to Saunder (2007) the answer to the first question is that all higher education institutions must be accountable by, “virtue of compelling social and financial interests that many stakeholders hold in the higher education enterprise” (p. 20). Most governments in the world hold higher education institutions accountable for the quality of performance in exchange for financial support. At the same time, governments create demands by requiring universities to demonstrate that they are serving important social and economic goals. As a result, higher education institutions are preoccupied with how well they can perform their duties in order to show accountability.

On the second of Saunder’s questions, in a general sense, higher education institutions are accountable to many key stakeholders who have some immediate reasons for interest in the higher education enterprise. Stakeholders include their financial supporters (the government and private donors), the general public (parents, students, the community at large, employers) and the institutions themselves. Graham, Lyman and Trow (1995) describe the concept of accountability in higher education by stressing two interrelated hemispheres, made up of internal and external accountability which encompass all stakeholders. Internal accountability refers to the obligation of those in colleges or universities to one another, which involves the provision of evidence and arguments to justify their trust through concrete evidence of how they carry out their mission, how well they perform their duties and what they do in order to prove their effectiveness. External accountability, on the other hand, is the obligation of colleges or universities to their supporters and to society at large in order to provide the assurance that they are pursuing their missions faithfully, that they use resources honestly and responsibly, and that they are meeting legitimate expectations. Graham *et al.* (1995) claim that external accountability reinforces internal accountability in higher education. In a similar fashion, Cheng and Tam (1997) offer a framework for studying education quality that involves both internal and external constituencies. They explain that, “education quality is the character of the set of elements in the input, process and output of the education system that provides services that completely satisfy both internal and external strategic constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations” (Cheng & Tam, 1997, p. 23). Koksai and Egitman (1998) identify government, parents, students, employers and the universities as key stakeholders in higher education.

The third question of Saunder’s questions, concerning evidence, is at the heart of accountability debate on how higher education institutions demonstrate their accountability. Huisman and Currie (2004) and Saunder (2007) identify three mechanisms that press higher education institutions to demonstrate their accountability to the concerns of key outsiders. First, higher education institutions must comply with regulations, criteria, and rules set by the government in order to define higher education. Second, higher education institutions can show accountability through competition which focuses on public relations and marketability. Third, higher education institutions can prove their accountability by sustaining and increasing the quality of performance. The three responsibilities require universities to show the evidence of accountability. All in all, the three mechanisms of accountability demand evidence of quality (Abdon, Ninomiya, & Raab, 2007).

The principle of accountability in higher education defined by Graham *et al.* (1995) and the framework for education quality provided by Cheng and Tam (1997) build the basis for the conceptual framework of this study. In this study, key stakeholders which constitute the research conceptual framework are categorized into five groups, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Key Stakeholders in Cambodian Higher Education

	Sector	Stakeholders
Internal	University	Rectors Teachers Students University consultants
	Academic unions	Cambodian Higher Education Association (CHEA) Cambodia Independent Teachers Association (CITA)
External	Government	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) Department of Higher Education (DoHE) Department of Scientific Research (DSR) Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC)
	Donor agencies	World Bank Asian Development Bank (ADB) Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
	Employers	Employers in governmental agencies Employers in the private sector

Previous studies that adopt the stakeholder approach to quality in higher education show that different stakeholders hold different views on quality, with one key difference being the selective focus on inputs, processes or outputs of higher education. For example, Hewitt and Clayton (1999) and Chua (2004) found that students' and academics' perceptions of quality are focused mainly on the process and output. Governments were found to be concerned with all the three elements in the input-process-output framework, while the employers' views on quality point mainly to the process and output, particularly graduate attributes. Building on the findings of these two studies, this study will be looking for similar and different patterns across various perceptions of quality from key stakeholders in Cambodian higher education. The inclusion of foreign aid donors in this study, which is not a feature of previous stakeholder research on higher education quality, is based on the view that in Cambodia these agencies have been deeply involved in Cambodian higher education through their funding of programs and provision of technical assistance to universities and government.

Significance of the Study

Lim (2001) explains that the sustained rapid economic development must go hand in hand with the presence of an appropriately skilled labour force. In a practical sense, if programs run by higher education institutions conform to the requirement of the economy, and all educational sectors perform well, the resulting labour force will have most of the skills needed for the economic development. Cambodia is among the many developing nations which see rapid growth within its higher education sector, and this causes concerns over the quality of higher education in response to the national development needs. Since Cambodia introduced a free market economy in the early 1990s, higher education has been viewed as the key impetus to human resource development in the economy. However, the rapid growth of higher education institutions is allegedly not responsive to the growing needs of the labour market, leading to a decreased quality of graduates, but increased graduate unemployment which really has a negative impact on social and economic development of Cambodia (Chamnan & Ford, 2004; O'Mahony, 1999). Now Cambodia's economic growth and future development rely heavily on its educated population. In a similar vein, both the World Bank and the Cambodian government recognize the importance of higher education in the national development of Cambodia. In 2010, the Royal Government of Cambodia and the World Bank signed a new project to help strengthen higher education institutions in Cambodia with the World Bank injecting a US\$23 million project aimed to improve higher education quality. "Quality in higher education is one of the key issues to build the country's human capital which is crucial for sustainable development and poverty reduction," said the World Bank Country Director, Annette Dixon, adding "this new project will help Cambodia strengthen its quality standards for education as

well as to build the skills needed for the public and private sectors”(Kongkea, 2010). Now, Phase II of the Cambodian government’s Rectangular Strategy will aim to continue strengthening the partnership between the Cambodian government and private sector and also between the Cambodian government and national and the international community to enhance the quality of education. Investing in human capital for Cambodia’s sustainable development and poverty reduction is part of the World Bank strategy to strengthen its quality standards for higher education as well as to build the skills needed for the public and private sector (Sarooun & Mealey, 2011). However, the current situation of higher education in Cambodia raises many questions concerning future success and quality (Ford, 2006). More importantly, as Cambodia has made substantial efforts in integrating itself into the international community, including its membership of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Cambodia is obliged to improve the quality of its higher education to a standard which is comparably acceptable to the quality of higher education of countries in the region. Hun Sen, Cambodia’s Prime Minister has recently stressed that higher education, human resource development and labour market responsiveness are fundamental to Cambodia’s success in joining ASEAN (Kunmakara & Brennan, 2011). As far as the quality of Cambodian higher education is concerned, this study will be of significance in a number of ways.

Firstly, the stakeholders’ perceptions of the current quality in Cambodian higher education will decide whether higher education in Cambodia is responsive to the government’s objective for national development needs or not. If higher education is not responsive to the government objective, what solutions might be needed to improve the quality of Cambodian higher education? Secondly, this research is in line with the Cambodian government and the World Bank efforts to improve the quality of the higher education sector in Cambodia in order to strengthen the capacity of Cambodia’s higher education system by improving the overall aspects. Thirdly, the findings of this study will help policy-makers in Cambodian higher education develop a new policy based on the views of stakeholders. Findings would also help improve the Cambodian higher education system, which directly impact Cambodian development in economic and social policies.

Above all, the results of this research will provide useful insights into perceived importance of quality of Cambodian higher education that can stimulate further debate and discussion on the role of the Cambodian government in developing the standard quality in the future as Cambodia is making progress towards the regional and international economies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Landscape of Cambodian Higher Education

Centuries ago, namely in the Angkor age, Cambodia was a kingdom with a great military and artistic force in Southeast Asia (V. Thompson & Adloff, 1953). The 12th century magnificent temples of Angkor and irrigation, which are still evident today, were created in that period. However, documents on these structures have disappeared. For this reason, Duggan (1996) contends that it is difficult to create a picture of Cambodia's formal education from the Angkor period to the French colonization due to lack of historic records.

Cambodia has experienced a troubled history since the demise of the Khmer Empire following French colonization in 1863. As a senior official in the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) observed recently, the current status of higher education in Cambodia, and the strategies and prospects including the aspiration of the future can only be understood through the understanding of the historical roots and development of various political and economic philosophies and paradigms that Cambodia has experienced since 1863 (Cuyno, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a historical snapshot of development of higher education in Cambodia. However, due to the unavailability of literature on Cambodia's higher education before the French arrival in Cambodia in both Khmer and English, this section uses mainly secondary sources for an understanding of the post-colonial history of higher education in Cambodia. This section briefly sets the historical context for this study, as the focus of this thesis is on contemporary developments in Cambodian higher education. Therefore, this chapter traces the evolution of the higher education system in Cambodia in six transitional, political and economic periods which include the French colonial period, the post-independence period, the republican period, the Khmer Rouge period, the post-Khmer Rouge period and the new Kingdom of Cambodia. This chapter

also examines how the issue of quality in Cambodian higher education was conceptualized and managed in each period.

French Protectorate (1863-1953)

In 1863, Cambodia became a French protectorate after France established a firm colonial presence in southern Vietnam (Osborne, 1994). Norodom, who was a prince at that time, signed a protectorate treaty with France in August 1863 in the hope of protecting Cambodia from Thai control and Vietnamese threats. Under the protectorate treaty, France recognized Cambodia's sovereignty and pledged to help Norodom maintain order within Cambodia (Chandler, 1992; Clayton, 1995; Osborne, 1994). During the French colonization period, the French did very little to develop Cambodia's education system with only a small system of Franco-Cambodian primary schools in the decades following their arrival in Cambodia and a few high schools, all of which were heavily influenced by the French education system (Duggan, 1997). (Ayers, 2000a) claims that the French protectorate of Cambodia reflected the nonchalance of education in Cambodia, and under French patronage, these few schools served the children of the royal families, the French residents, members of Cambodian elites and children of Vietnamese immigrants recruited by the French to undertake administrative tasks. In 1893, the French built Lycee Sisowath (it is now renamed Sisowath high school) with the purpose of training Cambodians to assist with the work of colonization. In 1917, the Ecole d'Administration Cambodienne (Cambodian School of Administration) was established with the purpose of training Cambodian boys for the higher ranks of the civil service. Thompson & Adloff (1953) and Ayers (2000a) contend that those at the highest echelons of the elite, generally members of the royal family, would attend an institution in Paris. According to Ayers only around 100 Cambodian students went to further their studies in France during the colonial period.

After an almost a century in control of Cambodia, the French left a higher education legacy by building the first higher education institution (The National Institute of Law, Politics and

Economic Sciences) in 1947, a few years before independence in 1953. Under the French protectorate, the language of instruction in that institution was French, and the model and curriculum and teaching approaches were copied directly from the French system (Chamnan & Ford, 2004). Scant documentation survives from this period, but would expect that discussions of the quality of this institution would be concerned with its faithful reproduction of the French model and the extent to which it engendered indigenous loyalty and successfully trained Cambodian men from the elite class to assist the French administrative colonial services.

Post-independence period (1954-1969)

Prince Norodom Sihanouk became the King in 1941 when the French installed him on the throne in the place of his uncle, Prince Moniret (Warner, 1966). The French later regretted their decision to crown Sihanouk as he bullied them and wrested independence from them in 1953 (Kirk, 1971; Warner, 1966). Sihanouk was not only the King, but also the Head of State and then a Premier. He had been so popular among Cambodians since independence from France that he was then called the *Father of Independence* and later *Samdech Euv or Papa Prince* (M. R. Smith, 1967). Sihanouk's leadership brought to the five million Cambodian people a political stability that many of their neighbouring nations envied (Warner, 1966). Cambodia was then at peace and relatively prosperous. Young members of the elite, who returned from tertiary education overseas, mainly from France, took up positions in the government. In the post-1953 period, Prince Sihanouk injected a strong interest in education, placing considerable emphasis on higher education and national development. The Prince allocated 20 per cent of the national expenditure to the education budget (Ayres, 2000b; Duggan, 1996) and this period saw a significant growth in the higher education sector. Sihanouk's vision to expand higher education came to his mind after his visit to Indonesia in 1964 when he toured a university campus (Ayres, 2000a; Osborne, 1994). The first university in Cambodia (the Khmer Royal University, and now known as the Royal University of Phnom Penh) was opened in 1963 with a Cambodian national being its first vice rector (Duggan, 1996). During the 1960s nine higher education

institutions were established in Phnom Penh and in some key provincial areas such as Kampot, Kampong Cham and Battembang (Can, 1991; Clayton, 1998; Ngoy, 2005). During this period of rapid expansion of higher education, the emphasis was more concerned with quantity rather than quality. For example, in 1965 alone six new higher education institutions were established -- the Royal Technical University, the Royal University of Fine Arts, the Royal University of Kampong Cham, the Royal University of Takeo-Kampot, the Royal University of Agricultural Science, and the People's University (Chamnan & Ford, 2004). The University of Takeo-Kampot had a Faculty of Oceanography although it was located more than 50 kilometres from the sea, and had a Faculty of Medicine, complete with a hospital, though it did not have any doctor. By 1966, 7,360 students were enrolled in Cambodia's tertiary education institutions (Ayres, 2000a).

In the 1960s, the Indochina war marked the onset of Cold War in Southeast Asia. The intensifying war in Vietnam had several tremendous effects on Cambodia (Chandler et al., 1978). During this period, Cambodia was deeply involved in the Vietnam War. On November 9, 1963 in the midst of a budgetary crisis, Cambodia decided to cut off its relationship with America, who provided \$278 million in economic assistance between 1954 and 1963. An economic aid program from America accounted for \$88 million, with 14 percent allocated to educational development (Ayres, 2000a). The disruption of relations between America and Cambodia had a significant impact on Cambodia's economy, and higher education in particular. As the 1960s unfolded, Mao's Cultural Revolution in China and the war in neighbouring Vietnam began to cause chaos in Cambodia. Cambodia's official reaction to its economic problems at that time was to align itself more closely with China in the adoption of an agriculture-first policy. In terms of education, the alignment failed to address the problems of its higher education system. In that period, Cambodia showed little concern with how the new higher education institutions were to be managed due to the lack of financial resources. The consequence of this quantitative expansion of higher education in the absence of adequate resources was a decline in quality. Ayres (2000a) argues that the new higher education

institutions were established with the primary aim of expanding access through a rapid expansion of the old-fashion French-style education. In that period, the medium of instruction in higher education institutions was French and most lecturers were French. The focus on the quality in higher education was seen through a tough exam procedure which was adopted from the French style. The exams were difficult, and few students passed. The fact that few students were successful in their tertiary education led to the belief that higher education in Sihanouk's period was of better quality. All HEIs in this period were under the control of the Ministry of National Education.

The Republican Period (1970-1975)

In 1970, there was a military coup d'état staged by General Lon Nol with the alleged support of the United States of America. The coup d'état could have been caused by Sihanouk's foreign policy, which was criticized for its inability to prevent Cambodia from getting involved in the conflict in neighbouring Vietnam, and which could also have been interpreted that Sihanouk was supporting the Communist Vietnam against America during the Vietnam War (Ayres, 2000b; Sydeth, 2004). The coup dragged Cambodia into a period of destructive civil war and political chaos. The civil war was spreading all over the country with many main roads connecting Phnom Penh, the last stronghold of Lon Nol, cut off. Many higher education facilities in the provinces were damaged and many academic staff moved to take refuge in the capital (Can, 1991). (Ayres, 2000b) points out that the fundamental problem facing the higher educational system in Cambodia in that period was the result of the civil conflict which caused the destruction of educational facilities and financial constraints.

It was not only the civil war that affected the higher education sector that had emerged during the Sihanouk era. The Lon Nol government did not establish any policy to improve the quality of the higher education institutions that had been invested in during the 1960s. Many facilities were now ruined and no attention was paid to the development of higher education as the

country was deeply in political and civil turmoil and more resources were allocated to the military. The war also prevented reforms in education that could have begun to address the issues of relevance and quality improvement in higher education. Universities in that period faced a severe shortage of teaching staff with foreign lecturers playing a dominant role in university teaching, and employers complained about the lack of competent graduates (Chhum, 1973).

Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979)

The 1975 to 1979 period was characterized by the destruction perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge as a result of the civil war. The Khmer Rouge regime came to power in Cambodia in mid April 1975. Afterwards, Cambodia's formal education system ceased to exist, and schools and educational administrations were abolished. The Khmer Rouge ordered the eradication of all previous elements of the education system, and under this regime, education which had flourished under the Sihanouk's era ceased at all levels and in all locales. The physical and institutional infrastructure of higher education was almost completely destroyed. Adapting the ideology of their Maoist counterpart in China, the Khmer Rouge leaders concentrated on manual labour and political correctness over knowledge by claiming that rice fields were books and hoes were pens. According to (Clayton, 1998), Pol Pot, who was the top Khmer Rouge leader, said "We are building socialism without a model. We do not wish to copy anyone; we shall use the experience gained in the course of the liberation struggle. There are no schools, faculties or universities in the traditional sense although they did exist prior to liberation because we wish to do away with all vestiges of the past" (p.3). Based on this ideology, the Khmer Rouge engaged in the physical destruction of higher education institutional infrastructure such as books, buildings and other educational resources. People who were highly educated were singled out for elimination. More than two million people are believed to have been killed. It is estimated that 75 per cent of tertiary education teachers and 96 percent of university students were killed by the Khmer Rouge (Chamnan & Ford, 2004).

Post-Khmer Rouge period (1979-1992)

In 1979, Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia, ousted the Khmer Rouge regime and formed the National Liberation Front of the Cambodian People, which soon became the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (Can, 1991; Clayton, 1999). The Vietnamese- backed PRK government then had to rebuild the nation from scratch, including its education system (Ayres, 2000a; Jordon, 1991). Duggan (1996) describes the situation in 1979 as horrible, saying that the Cambodia that survived the Khmer Rouge ordeal was like a dismembered body that was trying to come back to life. The PRK government undertook a massive rehabilitation program aimed at enrolling as many students as possible. The slogan of that time was 'those who know more teach those who know less'. Former teachers and professors who survived the Khmer Rouge regime were encouraged to take part in the field of education. It was thought that technical assistance from the Vietnamese government after 1979 would help restore the education sector in Cambodia as the reestablishment of the educational system, including higher education, was one of the first priorities of this era (Clayton, 1999; Sloper & Duggan, 2001). The rehabilitation of higher education began between the late 1970s and 1984 with assistance from Vietnam and former Eastern communist nations. The new regime was concerned with the rehabilitation of its higher education because it regarded it as a solution to the country's chronic shortage of technicians and leaders in economics, politics and cultures (Ayres, 2000a). From an empty handed position and technical assistance from Vietnam and the former communist countries, the KRP government was able to reopen its higher education system during 1980s. However, the objective of higher education was then to provide good political training with its primary goal of promoting socialism in Cambodia. During this period, eight higher education institutions which provided instruction in the fields of agriculture, medicine, economics, business, engineering, social sciences, art and culture were reopened (Clayton, 1999; Ngoy, 2005). Vietnam and some countries from then communist nations of Western Europe, noticeably the USSR helped develop the textbooks and curriculum for most of Cambodia's higher education institutions with many programs taught in Vietnamese and Russian (Clayton, 1999). Administratively, higher

education institutions were under the jurisdiction of various specialized Ministries in the 1980s. For example, the University of Health Science was under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, The University of Agriculture under the control of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the University of Fine Arts under the management of the Ministry of Culture. This led to fragmentation in policy and programming and a lack of coordination (Sophoan, 1998). As access to higher education was limited, the purpose of higher education in that period was seen as an apparatus to train children of elite politicians and a small number of children from well-off families (Clayton, 2000). The study of French and English was then prohibited. During this period, some Cambodian students were sent to Vietnam and the Eastern block for their undergraduate studies in the Soviet-style intellectual tradition. Between 1983 and 1989, 2,650 Cambodian students completed degree programs in Vietnam, the Soviet Union and the former Eastern communist bloc (Clayton, 1999). However, with pressure mounting for reconciliation between Vietnam and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the winds of regional change increasingly affected the Cambodian climate. The reorientation of the Cambodian higher education system to a more market-oriented system took place when Hun Sen was elected Prime Minister in 1985. After realizing that the task of building socialism in Cambodia was unlikely to achieve the success anticipated, Hun Sen called for efforts to be made in order to complete economic reorientation from a centrally-planned economy to a market-driven economy, and to reorganize education in Cambodia throughout the late 1980s (Ayres, 2000a). Soon after Hun Sen had taken office, the movement toward a more capitalist economy gathered substantial momentum. However, the government failed to set a new policy for change in higher education.

Interestingly, 1989 was a turning point as the Soviet perestroika and the *doi moi* in Vietnam initiated considerable change in Cambodian politics (Clayton, 2000; Jordon, 1991). Recognizing these changes, the Cambodian government moved toward a free-market economy. According to Clayton (2000), the Ministry of Education initiated reforms congruent with new ways of thinking, eliminating the system of Marxist-Leninist political education. In 1989, the

Vietnamese advisers and Russian professors who had been teaching in HEIs started to withdraw from Cambodia and their departure caused another crisis for higher education creating teaching vacancies that needed to be filled with Cambodian graduates. Khmerization was another challenge for Cambodian higher education as textbooks written in Vietnamese and Russian needed to be translated into Khmer language.

In short, it can be noted that the post-Khmer Rouge government made extensive efforts to restore the Cambodian higher education system, which had been destroyed in the Khmer Rouge era. However, the government did not set a clear strategy for improving the quality of Cambodian higher education, as the function of higher education institutions at that time was to mostly train Cambodian cadre for automatic employment in the civil service (Chamnan & Ford, 2004). The failure to address questions of quality was because higher education was focused on training large numbers of young people in response to the shortage of educated people who had been slain in the Khmer Rouge regime, and because the then government needed educated people to rebuild the whole national infrastructure (Sloper, 1999). Higher education studies were tuition-free for students, and graduates were guaranteed with automatic employment in government agencies.

Between 1979 and 1992, Cambodia entered into regional and international cooperation agreements with some former communist countries that established mutual recognition and equivalence of degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded by higher education institutions of both sides. For example, in 1988 Cambodia and the former Soviet Union signed a mutual recognition agreement and similar agreements were also signed with the governments of Vietnam and Laos (Meas & Chantha, 2004).

New Kingdom of Cambodia (1993 to the Present)

In 1993, under the 1991 Paris Peace Accord signed by the four Cambodian warring factions, the United Nations organized the first-ever national elections in Cambodia, which resulted in the establishment of a new legitimate government known as the Kingdom of Cambodia. Since the 1993 elections, Cambodia has gained both technical and financial support from a number of donors. Thus, the new government was better able to use those resources to reshape its education structure. In 1997, the Australian government funded the Cambodian Australian National Examination Project (CANEP) with the ultimate aim of assisting the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) of Cambodia in improving and enhancing all aspects of the Cambodian national secondary school exams, particularly grade 12, which is the final high school leaving exam (Sloper, 1999). This project led to a substantially nationwide increase in high school graduates. However, most high school graduates could not enrol in the public higher education institutions due to competitive entry requirements and limited capacity of public HEIs. Therefore, only a small number of Cambodian high school graduates were successful in gaining their access to the public higher education institutions. Seeing this dramatic change in the post-secondary education, the Royal Government of Cambodia allowed the establishment of private universities, with Norton University becoming the first private university in Cambodia's history in 1997 (Chen, et al., 2007; Ford, 2003; Ngoy, 2005). Norton University is run by a Cambodian man, but adopted an English name to attract Cambodian students because English became popular among the young Cambodian generation after the UN peace mission in Cambodia 1993. It is now a successful private university, receiving 4000 applicants for commencing places in the 2007-08 academic year, and its total number of students has grown to more than 9000 (Orivel, 2009). The government's decision to grant Norton University a license to operate sparked a rapid growth of private higher education institutions in Cambodia. Public higher education institutions were not able to meet the growing demand from the student population. As a result, private investors have taken this opportunity to start their own businesses in higher education by establishing many private universities.

Three factors explain the fast expansion of private HEIs in the early 2000s. The first reason was that in 1998, when Hun Sen became the sole Prime Minister of Cambodia (before that, Cambodia had two Prime Ministers), he initiated the privatization of higher education policy as he was keen to see competition between public and private HEIs, hoping that the competition would lead to quality improvement. Hun Sen in 2004, when receiving an honorary doctorate from a private university in Phnom Penh, said that this reflected the improvement of higher education, which was the result of the government's privatization policy he launched in 1997. The second reason was that the government of the time did not want to establish more public HEIs due to the politicization of public-sector appointments. One of the features of the power-sharing agreement between the Cambodian People's Party and FUNCINPEC Party was that as senior university appointments were made on political grounds by the parties, which each had a quota. Many of the appointees had little competency, and served to expand an already bloated and inefficient bureaucracy (Ford, 2006). The third reason was that the Cambodian government wished to encourage the private sector to participate in the development of higher education as part of an effort to not further stretch the limited education budget, as private HEIs are self-financed institutions which do not create a financial burden on the government.

Because of the Cambodian government policy on privatization of higher education, private HEIs have now been expanding rapidly, and their number has far exceeded that of the public institutions. Both public and private HEIs are now seen to play an important role in absorbing a massive number of high school graduates who need access to higher education. However, the quality of educational provision is still questionable.

Types of HEIs in Cambodia

In Cambodia, the term 'higher education' refers to formal education and training activities in post-secondary schooling that leads to the award of a degree of at least a minimum length of

four-year full-time study either in public or private HEIs. Cambodia's Education Law, which was passed in 2007, states that higher education is the education following the secondary education, that higher education shall teach learners to have complete personality and characteristic, and that higher education shall promote scientific, technical, cultural and social research in order to achieve knowledge, skills, morality, inventive and creative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit for the development of the country.

There are two types of higher education establishments in Cambodia, universities and institutes, and two streams of higher education: the academic stream and the technical and vocational stream. The academic stream is mainly under the guidance of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), while the second stream is under the supervision and the management of the Ministry of Labour and Technical and Vocational Education and Training. Previously, the technical and vocational stream has been under the umbrella of the MoEYS, but it was transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Technical and Vocational Education and Training in 2004 (Chealy, 2006). Higher education institutions under the technical and vocational stream are not included in this study, for two reasons. First, they are managed by the Ministry of Labour and Technical and Vocational Training and are subject to very different quality assurance regimes. Second, the inclusion of technical and vocational education and training would have expanded the scope of this project beyond what is manageable for a PhD.

Currently, there are 77 HEIs (32 of which are public), which are divided into three categories. The first category is the academy, an institution responsible for carrying out research and fulfilling a think-tank role for the nation. There is only one academy, the Royal Academy of Cambodia (RAC), which is under the supervision of the Council of Ministers. Although this institution is primarily assigned to conduct research, it also provides advanced courses ranging from masters to PhD programs. This institution calls itself a research institution, although its research output is small by international standards.

The second category is the university. There are now 36 universities operating in Cambodia, 13 of which are public institutions and eight of these public universities are under the jurisdiction of the MoEYS. A university in Cambodia is entitled to deliver all higher education qualifications ranging from diplomas to doctoral degrees, and is entitled to five major fields of study, three of which are compulsory. The three compulsory fields are humanities (art, literature and languages), sciences (mathematics and natural sciences) and social sciences. These three subjects are required by the ACC in its criteria for the accreditation process, but until now this requirement has only been applied to the Foundation Year.

The last category is the institute, which mainly offers training in a particular field, but does not provide a wide range of research or training in multi-disciplinary subjects. As distinct from a university, an institute is a HEI specializing in a professional field, for example, in engineering, medicine, agriculture, education and so forth. An institute is not required to deliver the five fields as a university is. There are now 38 institutes in Cambodia, 19 of which are government-funded. Nine of them are under the supervision of six different ministries, four are under the control of the Ministry of Labour and Technical Vocational Training and two are under the MoEYS.

With a few exceptions, all types of HEIs in Cambodia offer traditional face-to-face mode of course delivery. All Cambodian HEIs are conventional with either limited or no online learning services. Distance or online learning is an emerging concept, but not popular in Cambodia, though a few institutions are starting to explore possibilities. There are a small number of Cambodian students who are taking distance learning programs with foreign providers as foreign qualifications are perceived to have greater value than those acquired locally. In short, in comparison to international standards, most HEIs in Cambodia are small with narrow academic and resource bases.

Although some public HEIs are older than private ones, the public institutions are not perceived to be better quality education providers. Although most public HEIs were established in Sihanouk's period and were reopened in the wake of the 1979 Vietnamese invasion, the administrative management structures left over from the socialist regime in the post-Khmer Rouge era still persist in public HEIs (Chamnan & Ford, 2004). Though much of these structures have improved, these public HEIs remain handicapped by centralized ministry control and under-funding. Public HEIs are able to enrol fee-paying students into various courses which used to be free of charge and some had been doing this prior to the establishment of private HEIs, in order to supplement teachers' salaries and provide capital for expansion. Fees charged by public institutions blur the distinction between public and private institutions. At the moment, all public institutions are expected to become quasi-government institutions called 'Public Administration Institutions', but the expectations of greater transparency in governance and management that go with this new status are still in doubt (Ford, 2006).

Private HEIs have increased their role dramatically since the late 1990s and are now seen as major providers of higher education in the country, representing over half of the country's HEIs and absorbing a large number of high school leavers – 80% of students were enrolled in private HEIs in 2006 (Innes-Brown, 2006). The emergence of many private HEIs is both a positive and painful sign for Cambodia. The positive sign is that private HEIs have for the last ten years offered education programs ranging from undergraduate to postgraduate courses. Some optimists think that the competition between private and public HEIs could lead to a better quality higher education in this country. The painful sign, on the other hand, is that the rapid and uncontrolled expansion of private HEIs has cast doubts over the quality education provided. For example, some critics describe private HEIs as commercial enterprises or bread shops providing low quality services (Ford, 2006).

At the moment, Cambodian higher education has reached a stage which critics describe as a system plagued with difficulties (Ford, 2006). The private sector has experienced rapid growth,

while the public institutions are certainly plagued with difficulties such as strangulation by government control and increasing politicization. The quality of many institutions is still a cause of concern. However, although the rapid expansion of higher education in Cambodia is seen as a good sign for Cambodia, literature on Cambodian higher education seems to be critical of this rapid growth and shows concerns with quality. For example, (Ford, 2006) describes private universities as commercial enterprises and as bread shops. (Ngoy, 2005) contends that quality in Cambodian higher education is still low compared to that of countries in the region. The quality academic output from HEIs in Cambodia strays away from what employers are looking for, causing the mismatch between higher education provision and labour force demands that may threaten social stability (Chamnan & Ford, 2004; Chealy, 2006; Ford, 2006; Innes-Brown, 2006).

Entry of Students into Cambodian Higher Education

Entry to higher education has changed since the higher education sector was reopened in the 1980s. Before 2002, admission to HEIs in Cambodia had required high school leavers to sit for entrance examinations organized by each HEI and supervised by the Department of Higher Education, an arm of the MoEYS. However, since 2002, entry to higher education has been based on grade 12 national exam results organized by the MoEYS. Currently, there are two pathways to higher education in Cambodia, which are simple but rigid. The first one is that the Department of General Education issues the Senior High School Certificate to Year 12 students who successfully pass the national exams. With this certificate, students can apply for admission to a bachelor program in any HEI. The second way is through the Associate Degree, issued by HEIs to Year 12 students who fail the national exams after they attend a one-year course within a HEI. The Associate Degree is equivalent to the Senior High School Certificate. Year 12 students with the Associate Degree are also admitted to a bachelor program in any HEI. Both students with the Senior High School Certificate and the Associate Degree have to pay for their

tuition fees but some win scholarships which mean the waiver of tuition fees, based on a high score in the national exams.

There is a long journey for high school students to make before passing the Year 12 exams and gain their admission to higher education. This admission criterion looks transparent, but it involves a lot of stories before Year 12 students apply for their admission, and their journey to higher education is full of mysteries that need to be uncovered. The administration of the Year 12 exam is believed to involve corruption, and the results are subject to invention (Innes-Brown, 2006). In the past, it was alleged that students paid between US \$700.00 to US \$900.00 to get a pass. Traditionally, exam buying had been widespread until 2009 when the MoEYS took tough action to punish any proctors who were found accepting money or bribes during the Year 12 exams. However, cheating is still known to take place during the exam period, and it takes places in many forms. The first form is that during the exam period students collect money and bribe the teachers who are assigned to invigilate and control the exams, as high school teachers are not paid a decent salary to live on (Chakrya, 2010a). Although each year prior to the exams the MoEYS issues a warning that proctors who are caught receiving bribes from students will face stiff punishments, cheating still appears to be widespread. In the 2010 Year 12 national exams, several students were quoted as saying that they had bribed their proctors to allow them to check notes they had smuggled into the exams or answer sheets allegedly sold in advanced by teachers outside the exam centres (Saovuth, 2010). The second form of cheating is that during the exams, some students leak the exam tests through mobile phone to their relatives who wait outside the exams centres. Their relatives hire someone to do the test, and they hire the police employed to guard the exam centres to pass the answer sheets to their brothers or sisters who are taking the exams.

There are two reasons why Year 12 students cheat in their exams. Students hope that they will have a higher score which can win them to a scholarship to study at a HEI. For example, a student who sat for the 2010 Year 12 exams was quoted as saying, “I am hopeful of going to the

National University for Management (NUM) on a scholarship if I get high scores” (Narim & Williamson, 2010). The second reason is that students, good or bad alike, cannot confidently rely on the knowledge they learn in their high school tenure. One student who also sat in the 2010 exams admitted that, “during the exam, we did not depend on our knowledge; if we did that, we would surely fail” (Chakrya, 2010b). The weakness of secondary education is seen as a common problem in Cambodia.

In the 2010 Year 12 national exams, cheating was found to be so rampant in Phnom Penh and some other provinces that the President of the Cambodia Independent Teachers Association (CITA) wrote to the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, asking that the 2010 Year 12 exams be nullified (Chakrya & Kunthear, 2010). However, the Department of General Education, the branch of MoEYS that organized the exams, denied the claim that the examiners accepted bribes from students by allowing them to cheat and copy from each other during the exams even though the CITA presented some evidence of cheating. In Cambodia, there is an established tradition of cheating in the Year 12 exams, and the bribes the students pay the teachers vary by subject. In 2010, there were reports that each student paid around 10,000 Riels (\$2.50) for easy subjects such as history while they paid 20,000 riels (\$5.00) for harder subjects such as physics and mathematics (Chakrya, 2010a). Students allegedly paid about US \$30 each in 2010 to proctors during the two and a half days of exams so they could turn a blind eye to cheating and keep watch for school inspectors (Saovuth, 2010). It is also not uncommon to find that students pay bribes to teachers at every level of the school system, beginning in the primary school to high school, and it happens due to the inadequate salary paid to teachers. The higher education admission criteria look transparent only on paper. However, the adoption of the Year 12 exam results as the main entry into higher education has been hailed by the public and donor countries (including Australia, which funded the establishment of the national examination). As a result of widespread exam buying and cheating, some students entering higher education do not have appropriate academic backgrounds to cope with more demanding courses in higher education.

Prior to 1997, admission to higher education was limited and very competitive but demand was very high. Children from well-off families and elite politicians were over-represented in higher education. Those who passed Year 12 exams, but did not have access to higher education did not have a chance to fulfill their studies and had to wait for the following years in order to sit for another entrance exam. However, since private HEIs emerged, access to higher education has been widened. Now with flexible pathways to higher education, enrolments have been on the rise with a total enrolment of 137,400 in 2008-2009 academic year (MoEYS, 2009). This figure is still low compared to Cambodia's population of more than 14 million. The gross enrolment ratio (a cohort of actual university-age students enrolled in higher education) for higher education in Cambodia is just less than three per cent (UNESCO, 2009). A smaller proportion of women is enrolled in higher education; in 2008 female students made up just 34 percent of all higher education enrolments (Virak & Khorn, 2008).

In Cambodia, a 'scholarship' means a tuition-free place for a student to study at an HEI, but does not include stipends. Scholarships, which are also referred as tuition fee waivers, have been of little help to disadvantaged students including students from rural areas, ethnic minorities and women. However, over the past few years, the Department of Higher Education (DHE) has made considerable efforts to develop the selection processes necessary to promote equitable access to higher education. In 2005, the Admission Office (AOs) was established and a computerized admission selection system for tuition-free students was introduced. According to the MoEYS (2009), of the total number of scholarships, 60% is allocated to merit-based scholarships, 40% to priority candidates, 15% to female recipients, with the poor receiving 15%, and those who are from remote or rural areas receive 10%. Despite these efforts, disadvantaged students are still under-represented. In the 2008-09 academic year, only 3,260 (1,533 female) out of 55,178 high school leavers were announced as the scholarship recipients to study at the HEIs (MoEYS, 2009). Among this number of scholarships, ethnic minorities and poor students from rural areas are still under-represented as the majority of HEIs are located in the capital

city. Currently, there is a World Bank funded scholarship project which aims to increase scholarships for poor and disadvantaged students from rural areas. Under this scholarship program, a pilot case is being implemented to provide tuition and stipends to approximately 500 poor students who meet both educational as well as pro-poor selection criteria (MoEYS, 2009). This special priority scholarship program will be carried out by the DHE within the existing framework of the national scholarship scheme.

Governance of Higher Education

The higher education system is governed according to a disparate set of policy guidelines and regulations for the development, management and quality improvement. The most important for this study are:

- Sub-Decree (1992) on Creating and Administering of Higher Education and Technical Education Institutions
- Royal Krom/ Act (1996) promulgating the Law on the Establishment of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS)
- Sub-Decree (1998) on organization and functioning of the MoEYS
- Sub-Decree (2002) on Criteria of University Establishment
- Royal Kret/Decree (2003) Accreditation of Higher Education
- Sub-Decree (2003) on Organization and Functioning of the ACC
- Royal Kram/Act (Dec, 2007) promulgating the Law on Education (Virak and Khorn, 2008)

The above laws state that the establishment and management of HEIs in Cambodia is under the jurisdiction of the MoEYS. The MoEYS, and its Department of Higher Education (DHE) in particular, has responsibility for coordinating academic affairs, conducting inspections, auditing, monitoring, and evaluating the institutions' performance/output.

The Education Law that came into effect in the end of 2007 sets out the national measures and develops criteria for establishing a comprehensive and uniform education system that ensures the principles of freedom of studies in accordance with Cambodia's constitution. Under this Law, the National Supreme Council of Education (NSCE), which was established in 1999, has the following functions:

- 1- To raise policy proposals for strategy for long-term which respond to social and economic development of Cambodia
- 2- To evaluate the tasks related to the education sector, technical and vocational training on time to the Royal Government of Cambodia
- 3- To collect all resources for serving education

According to the Law on Education, the NSCE shall be led by the Prime Minister and the members of NSCE are appointed among high officials who have experiences in education, politics, economy, science, technology and culture.

Despite the MoEYS's overall coordination role, and the leadership of the NSCE, the country's public HEIs also fall under the jurisdiction of ten different ministries and agencies which are both directly and indirectly involved in the affairs of higher education through their financial and administrative links with the public HEIs. The resulting administrative management of higher education is characterized by fragmentation in programming and lack of policy coordination. Public HEIs that are under the jurisdiction of particular ministries are narrowly specialized, have little engagement with the MoEYS, and respond only to the instructions given by the parent ministries to which they belong (O'Mahony, 1999; Sophoan, 1998). The ministries and agencies that supervise one or more public HEIs are:

1. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
2. Ministry of Labour and Technical Vocational Education and Training
3. Ministry of Health
4. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery

5. Ministry of Culture and Arts
6. Ministry of Economy and Finance
7. Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs
8. Ministry of National Defence
9. Office of the Council of Ministers
10. Ministry of Interior

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport supervises all private universities and eight public universities and the Ministry of Labour and Technical Vocational Education and Training does the same for institutes. All private universities fall under the jurisdiction of the MoEYS, but sometimes some of them do not pay much attention to the instructions from the MoEYS as the owners and rectors of private HEIs are very often influential persons who hold high office in the government (Cuyno, 2009).

Although the Education Law states that the MoEYS is in charge of the public control of HEIs, in practice the Law seems to ignore the fact that public HEIs are under the supervision of different ministries. The other ministries and agencies manage HEIs with aligned specializations. For example, the Royal University of Agriculture is administratively supervised by the Ministry of Agriculture; the University of Health Science is linked to the Ministry of Health; the Royal University of Fine Arts is managed by the Ministry of Culture, and the Royal Academy of Cambodia and the Royal School of Administration are under the arm of the Council of Ministers. In practice the system of public HEIs is fragmented and lacks of coordination between the ministries that control their own HEIs and the MoEYS. Some ministries take full control of the university management and operation, and have very little coordination with the MoEYS. For example, HEIs under The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Culture and Religion develop their own curriculum and courses. Certificates or degrees from HEIs managed by these ministries are signed by their own ministers. The University of Health Science, which is under the Ministry of

Health, has its associate degrees signed by the Ministry of Health leaving the bachelor degrees signed by the MoEYS. In institutes under the Ministry of Health, associate degrees refer to training medical personnel below the level of medical doctor, such as nurses and midwives. Therefore, the associate degrees offered by the Ministry of Health differ markedly from other associate degrees, which are conferred to students who have failed to pass the Year 12 national exam. HEIs under the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior have their degrees co-signed by their Ministers and the Minister of the MoEYS.

There are three main governmental agencies that coordinate, control and assist the work of HEIs - the Department of Higher Education (DHE), and the Department of Scientific Research (DSR) and the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC). The DHE coordinates and assists HEIs in implementing regulations and directives from the MoEYS, particularly related to undergraduate programs, namely the Associate and Bachelor degrees.

The role of the DSR is to coordinate, facilitate, and enhance the capacity of HEIs to undertake research activities related to the national interest, and it is responsible for post-graduate programs. The DSR has been criticized for its inability to control and supervise the post-graduate programs in HEIs as it lacks research capability and experience, and the DSR does not yet set any criteria for assessing post-graduate theses (Chealy, 2006).

The ACC, which was established by a Royal Decree in 2003, gives accreditation to HEIs by examining their governance, physical facilities and equipment and academic standards. The ACC reports its work to the Council of Ministers. Under the Decree, all HEIs both domestic and foreign are subject to accreditation in order to be eligible for degree granting. For the time being, the ACC is mainly responsible for the Foundation Year by giving provisional accreditation to most Foundation Year programs in HEIs.

There is a conflict of interest between the DHE, ACC and DSR regarding the control of HEIs. The DHE seems to regard the work of the ACC as related to the Foundation Year only, claiming that the bachelor degree programs are its territory. The DHE also regards masters and doctoral programs, which are also supervised by the DSR, as its province. Now there are some suggestions that the regulatory and service role of the DSR should be integrated into the DHE mandate in order to simplify and streamline the operations of the government (Cuyno, 2009). The work of the DSR and DHE is ultimately reported to the MoEYS, while the Council of Ministers is keen to see the whole higher education sector reporting to its office (Innes-Brown, 2006).

Quality assurance

During the 1980s and 1990s, the legacy of the Khmer Rouge made it necessary for Cambodia to cater to the urgent needs for skilled human resources at every level and the quality in higher education was ignored in favour of increasing quantity. The higher education system in the 1990s was neither national nor uniform. Academic credentials, academic programs, routine planning and even class attendance requirements were ad hoc at best and rarely subject to any form of quality assurance (Sloper & Duggan, 2001). However, in the mid-1990s, some major donors such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and AusAID were involved in the process of higher education reform in Cambodia. Those donors produced some key reports which highlighted some critical issues and challenges for the reform of academic programs in higher education in Cambodia. For example, the National Higher Education Task Force, which was jointly funded by the World Bank and Australia, laid out the foundations for how to change the higher education system in Cambodia (Sloper, 1999). In 1997, the National Higher Education Task Force submitted its recommendations to the Council of Ministers for approval to carry out the reform of Cambodian higher education. However, due to political chaos in that year, the Cambodian government failed to respond. Some recommendations are still relevant, but others are no longer useful. When the Task Force was writing its

recommendations, the privatization of higher education in Cambodia had not yet occurred. Therefore, most of the recommendations were related to the ways in which the public higher education system could be changed for the better.

The concern for quality in higher education of Cambodia emerged after the number of HEIs skyrocketed in the 2000s as the result of the government policy on privatization. Soon after most private HEIs had sprung in an uncontrolled way, the Cambodian government realized that it had to take the quality of Cambodian higher education into consideration. The strengthening of quality education, including higher education is reflected as a key policy in the Educational Strategic Plans for 2001-05 and 2006-10, prepared by the MoEYS and endorsed by the Cambodian government, highlighting in the Capacity Building and Human Resources Development of the 'Rectangular Strategic Policy'.

In 2001, the government requested a loan from the World Bank in order to set up the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) to monitor its higher education system (Ford, 2003; Ngoy, 2005) and it was established by Royal decree in 2003. The ACC's main purposes are to ensure and promote academic quality of Cambodian higher education to a level consistent with international standards, and to determine the organizational structure, roles, functions and duties regarding the administration of the accreditation process. The ACC's institutional accreditation process is similar to those practiced in other countries in Asia and the Asia Pacific, in that it focuses on areas such as mission, governance, effective management, academic program, teaching staff, learning resources, students, student services, physical facilities and financial resources (Lenn, 2004). Accreditation by the ACC is in theory compulsory for all institutions granting degrees.

Organization and Procedures of the ACC

The ACC is an independent quality assurance body managed and supervised by the Office of the Council of Ministers. Its Governing Board is headed by a Deputy Prime Minister who is the chairperson, with the Minister of MoEYS being the vice chairperson. The ACC's roles and duties are to:

- Determine the accreditation policy and measures to assure academic quality for all HEIs in Cambodia
- Determine the accreditation status of all HEIs
- Approve curriculum for the foundation year course for the first year university students in HEIs
- Maintain records of institutional and program evaluation and quality assurance activities in each HEI
- Make evaluation on the basis of visit to the HEIs
- Cooperate with other national and international institutions involved with accreditation and quality assurance
- Ensure proper participation of stakeholders concerned with the outcomes of each academic institution that applies for accreditation, e.g. concerned ministries, professional associations, etc
- Make broad announcement to the public of the results of the ACC findings in relation to its tasks of accreditation (Chealy, 2006).

Although the ACC is widely seen as a positive development for quality assurance in Cambodian higher education, much of the recent literature on Cambodian higher education has been critical of the ACC. As soon as the ACC was established there was a conflict between the World Bank, the sole financial supporter of the ACC, and the Cambodian government. The World Bank wanted the ACC to be an independent body in order to perform its tasks in a free and fair manner. However, the government brought the ACC under the control of the Council of

Ministers. When the World Bank realized that some senior staff of the ACC were were political appointments and lacked expertise in assessing academic programs, the World Bank started to withdraw itself from ACC. Since then, the Cambodian government through the Office of the Council of Ministers has managed the function of the ACC with technical assistance from some countries.

Ford (2006) contends that the ACC lacks experience in assessing academic programs in HEIs, and little seems to have changed since he made that observation. So far, after seven years of operation it has granted provisional accreditation to Foundation Years in HEIs but it has not yet been able to grant full accreditation to a single higher education institution. Other critics such as (Innes-Brown, 2006) argues that the ACC serves as a government arm deeply influenced by politics and although the ACC staff responsible for the assessment process are recruited from industry, academia and the community, the independence of their judgments is questionable. (Chealy, 2006) also observed that the ACC staff's capacity to assess academic programs was very limited and dependent on foreign assistance. The application procedure for accreditation is very complex and bureaucratic. Although HEIs have accepted the need for accreditation from the ACC, they still complain that the ACC's assessors are not familiar with academic work in higher education and lack professional experience (Cuyno, 2009).

Research Capacity of Higher Education Institutions

All HEIs in Cambodia apart from the Royal Academy of Cambodia are predominately teaching institutions and their research capacity remains very limited (Chealy, 2006). Although the government shows interests in research activities, it does not allocate funding for research. A few public universities carry out some research activities in partnership with aid agencies that provide funding for research. The lack of research capacity is partly rooted in a cultural tradition in which students are taught to rote-learn, but not to question or challenge their teachers or authority figures. The lack of research capacity may stem from deeper cultural traditions in

which the traditional teaching style let the teachers lead the class while students follow passively (Chamnan & Ford, 2004). Cambodian society shows respects for teachers, and staff in government ministries shows their respect for their superiors, and it is culturally inappropriate to question them.

The absence of research is also influenced by many practical factors. First, Cambodia lacks people with PhD qualifications to lead and supervise research students. The lack of PhD qualifications is the result of the 'Killing Field' in the Khmer Rouge regime, in which intellectuals and highly educated people were singled out for elimination. If those highly educated people had survived many would have held a PhD degree, and they would have had the capacity to carry research or to supervise research students. Second, there is a lack of stimulating reading materials, as libraries are not stocked with adequate books or journals and those they do stock are mainly in English. Most of those which were published in Khmer before 1975 were destroyed in the Khmer Rouge era. With the English barrier, most Cambodian scholars show their reluctance in doing research. Third, the absence of research is due to the absence of publications outlets. In this sense, teachers or scholars tend not to be interested in doing research as they cannot get their research work published. Fourth, research is not rewarded in Cambodia. Elsewhere, people with research capability are rewarded and promoted to a senior academic position. In Cambodia, teachers who publish a journal article which is the product of their research may be seen as a challenge to their superiors. Sometimes, people who publish their research results which are deemed to be critical of the existing situation are considered to have a tendency for the opposition party. As a result, they are isolated or they do not get recommended for promotion. Fifth, as university teachers receive an inadequate salary from the government, they focus mainly on teaching activities, which are the main source of their incomes. As they cannot apply for funds to do research, they tend not to see any benefit in doing research. Sixth, as research is a costly long-term investment, HEIs tend to ignore it. Instead, they focus on generating income to cover expenses on teachers' salaries and other administrative costs.

Although research capacity in Cambodia has been very limited in both public and private HEIs, the MoEYS has shown its intentions and inspirations to increase the research capacity through the establishment of the Department of Scientific Research (DSR) and the Pedagogical Research Department. Although the two departments have a limited scope of research, the importance of research activities is being acknowledged by Cambodian policy-makers. Recently, the Cambodian government has established the National Framework for PhD Assessment. Although the members in this framework mostly have a PhD qualification, they are the people outside the MoEYS as there was only one representative from the MoEYS. All members in the framework have more than one job, and some hold a political portfolio in the government. Since being established in 2009, this framework has not begun to assess PhD courses which are offered by many HEIs.

Summary

In summary, the Cambodian higher education system has been described by previous studies as suffering from a series of failings: (1) inappropriate and irrelevant curriculum (O'Mahony, 1999; Sloper, 1999), (2) a lack of flexibility in both teaching and learning (Chamnan & Ford, 2004; Chen, et al., 2007; Cuyno, 2009), (3) graduates who lack critical thinking skills (McNamara, 2007; O'Mahony, 1999), (4) a shortage of well-qualified academic staff and low moral from inadequate salaries (O'Mahony, 1999; Sloper, 1999), (5) severe operating budget shortages (Chamnan & Ford, 2004; Chealy, 2006; O'Mahony, 1999; Sloper, 1999), (6) a shortage of basic equipment, teaching materials, libraries and other learning resources and laboratory (O'Mahony, 1999; Sloper, 1999), (7) an absence of research (Chamnan & Ford, 2004; Chealy, 2006), (8) a lack of a credible institutional quality assurance mechanism (Chamnan & Ford, 2004), (9) a lack of a long-term higher education master plan (Sloper, 1999), (10) poor university governance with all public higher education institutions having less autonomy and being influenced by politics (Chealy, 2006; Sloper, 1999).

From the historical perspective, the issue of quality in Cambodian higher education has never been addressed adequately by previous governments. In essence, modern higher education in Cambodia is relatively recent development, and during this period, Cambodia has been subject to major political ideologies and changes ranging from colonialism, constitutional monarch, republicanism, communism, and the beginnings of democracy. The speed and magnitude of these changes have had drastic impacts on all aspects of life, and higher education is of no exception. The lack of clarity in the government policy on quality in higher education is the result of many factors including Cambodia's extraordinarily traumatic past history, long-standing cultural factors, recent social problems and various international influences. At the moment, higher education in Cambodia is in a period of change which brings both positive and negative impacts on the new Cambodian intellectuals. The positive sign of the rapid expansion of higher education is that it widens access to higher education so that more young Cambodians have a chance to pursue their educational goals as higher education in this nation reaches toward massification. The negative sign, on the other hand, is that the expansion is so fast that it causes doubts over the quality of higher education services, which is the main concern for this study. Although the current government of Cambodia is starting to address the issue of quality of its higher education, not much has been done to define the quality product of its higher education. The ACC, which serves as the first quality assurance body, is still not mature enough in terms of academic assessment. It is still a long way for the ACC to become a qualified and independent quality assurance body which has an important role in strengthening the quality in Cambodian higher education. As Cambodia has joined the regional and international communities such as ASEAN and the World Trade Organization, Cambodia is obliged to improve the quality of its human resources in which higher education has an important role to play. It is expected that in the future, Cambodia will need highly qualified, experienced, strong-willed and committed human resources. The following chapter discusses approaches to quality assurance in higher education in an international context and makes a case for the importance of understanding the

views of key stakeholders, especially in a society such as Cambodia in which many actors are involved in the management of the higher education system.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Quality Assurance Systems in Higher Education

This chapter first seeks to investigate when and how the concept of quality became a critical issue in higher education and traces the influence of the quality movement from its early focus on quality in the industrial manufacturing sector. It also discusses when and how quality emerged as a critical issue in higher education worldwide and what mechanisms have been used to respond to the demand for quality in higher education. This study adopts the stakeholder approach to quality in higher education, seeking to understand how key stakeholders in Cambodian higher education perceive the quality of Cambodian higher education and the existing quality assurance mechanisms. Finally, this chapter examines the characteristics of quality in higher education in other developing nations and in Asia and the Pacific with the purpose of finding common issues in the quality assurance of higher education which may assist in understanding the Cambodian case.

Historical view of quality in the industrial sector

Historically, prior to the Industrial Revolution, quality in the industrial sector was naturally viewed as the results of the application of individual skills of an artisan or craftsperson (Seymour, 1993). When the Industrial Revolution gathered momentum in the late 18th and the early 19th centuries, the most central concept of the Industrial Revolution was related to innovation which was associated with the advent of capital intensive plants and equipment, steam power and factories (Hudson, 1992). Eventually, 'scientific management' was introduced by F. W. Taylor in 1911 (Dean, 1997) in which Taylor's breakthrough hit the newspaper headlines in *The America Magazine* because its core concepts focused on efficiency in organized industrial labour (P. A. Jones, 1965). As a result, Taylor's principle of scientific management led to the pursuit of efficiency (which refers to the effective utilization of resources and people in an organization) through the division of labour and mass production in the industry. By 1915, the word 'efficiency' had captured attention from the media and advertising agencies in America which then had an extreme interest in adopting efficiency in the war effort in the First World War (Alexander, 2008). Management theorists describe the early part of the 20th century, mainly from 1900-1930 as the era of technical efficiency, which was defined by (Silver, 1989) as the capacity to utilize the technical progressiveness to convert inputs into outputs in an effective way under the influence of Taylorism (Dale, Williams, &

Wiele, 2000). Even in the post First World War period, the concept of Taylorism still seemed increasingly popular and became associated closely with organized labour (P. A. Jones, 1965) as it helped America become the world leader in productivity. As a result, it became so popular that its approaches were widespread across American industry (Juran, 1993; Kruger, 1999). Consequently, American products at that time enjoyed a reputation for being of high quality, enabling the US economy to grow enormously in the early 20th century.

The quality in the manufacturing sector captured the world attention when quality practitioners, mainly W. Edward Deming, Joseph Juran and Phillip Crosby initiated the idea of revolutionizing the industry in war-ravaged Japan in the post Second World War period (Gatfield, Barker, & Graham, 1999; Goldman, 2005; Leitner, 1999; Redmond, Curtis, Noone, & Keenan, 2008). The reason that these quality experts were sent to Japan was the fact that the US government, after the Second World War, created a novel aid concept whereby Asian recipients of the US economic assistance saw their aid money tied to the procurement of the Japanese goods (Leitner, 1999). In other words, the loans provided by the US government would only be spent in Japan in order to generate industrial orders for Japanese factories and to help Japan re-establish trade relationships with its former trade partners. By doing so, the US leaders hoped that the wall of hatred and grudges felt by the Japanese people toward America in the post-World War II period would be somehow reduced (Leitner, 1999). Therefore, the American quality initiators, namely Deming and Juran encouraged the Japanese to build a quality concept for the Japanese products because the stamp 'Made in Japan' on every piece of merchandise had been perceived as a synonym for junk (Seymour, 1993) and goods made in Japan were seen as unreliable and cheap in every sense of the world (Goldman, 2005). With the help from these American quality pioneers, the Japanese did not only listen, but also learned, adopted, innovated and produced a few of their own quality gurus. As a result, the post-World War II Japanese policy evolved as a skilfully planned and beautifully executed programs that produced the fruits of an industrial miracle. The Japanese thrived to search for ways of improving their manufactured products and preparing them for the international marketplace. The Japanese industrial miracle became a real success in the 1970s and 1980s when the Japanese-made goods began to rock the world and could manage to penetrate the world market, namely in Europe and the United States (Dale, et al., 2000; Goldman, 2005; Gummesson, 1998; Kruger, 1999; Leitner, 1999). In the late 1970s, manufacturers in Western countries, which neglected its quality development and relied on past performance, began to lose their market share to Japan in product areas where they used to dominate (Gummesson, 1998). Likewise, in the United States, things began to change in the early 1970s when the Japanese engineered their products to a higher quality level with lower prices than the Americans, and the United States was shocked when it saw the Japanese-made products penetrating the US market while its products were less

in demand (Kruger, 1999). As a result, in the early 1980s, distressed American companies which lost the market shares to Japan began to discover 'the concept of quality' as a way of responding to competitive market pressures in the global market (Birnbaum, 2000). For example, American people started to get a real glimpse of the quality message developed by Deming and Juran for the first time on NBC television in 1980 in a documentary entitled: *If Japan can...Why can't we?* (Martinez-Lorent, Dewhurst, & Dale, 1998; Petersen, 1999). The NBC new documentary video presented the Japanese industrial recovery in the post-World War II period and contrasted the Japanese success with the problems of the US business and industry. The US economic growth in the early 20th century as a result of Taylorism was challenged by the superior quality of many reasonably cheap products from Japan.

The 1980s was described in some of the leading manufacturing countries as the period of "the quality crisis in industry" (Juran, 1993, p. 35) because of the superior quality of many Japanese products which leapfrogged their US and Western competitors. The quality concept, a business philosophy consisting of principles, practices and techniques, became a widespread interest for improved organizational performance in the manufacturing sector (Gustafsson, Nilsson, & Johnson, 2003). Since the 1980s, 'quality management', which is described as a tool for dealing with the management of people to continuously improve the products offered by an organization and to improve the efficiency of the process in the production, has gained a wider acceptance in industry, and has been recognized as a methodology for securing a market share as well as focusing on the quality of products (Harman, 1996; Mackowski, 1994). QM in the 1980s demanded a shift in the industry from the practice of the quality inspections of products (quality control), developed in the early 1960s to the concept of quality assurance (Huggins, 1998; Martinez-Lorent, et al., 1998). The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of Total Quality Management (TQM), which was oriented in the direction of the customer, and provided a more perfect alignment of organizational resources, involving everyone in the organization (Dale, et al., 2000; Dayton, 2003). TQM was the first quality buzzword and became a popular approach across American industry in the 1980s (Goldman, 2005; Kanji & Tambi, 1999; Petersen, 1999). As a result of the popularity of TQM, other subsequent quality programs soon emerged, for example the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the International Standards Organization (ISO) (Mangelsdorf, 1999).

The quality movement in higher education

From the second half of the Twentieth Century onwards, universities became involved in a powerful environment of educational expansion and democratization of educational opportunities, which was heavily supported by governments. However, the most important

social challenge that universities all over the world faced in the post Second World War, namely the transformation toward a mass higher education system, took place in a national environment. The mass higher education system put the perspective of national strengths and competitiveness in the context of the emergence of a global economy. For example, France saw a growth in university population between 1960 and 1965, while the United Kingdom witnessed increasing university student enrolments between 1962 and the early 1970s (Weathersby, 1983). In Asia, the transformation from elite system into mass higher education took place in Japan in the early 1990s when the Japanese government began to expand university education by allowing both local private and public institutions to claim the university status (Tan, 2003). After World War II, a Japanese phrase “Wa-kon-yo-sai” meaning “strengthening” the Japanese spirit by using Western technology was adopted (Mitsuta, 1999). As a result, mass higher education began to intensify in Japan as it needed skilled people to catch up with the Western world. After the Second World War, in order to catch up with the West in terms of knowledge and technological development, the Japanese government provided grants to all national universities in Japan. All funding and resources required by these national universities were provided by the Japanese government, and the national universities did not have to worry about funding issues or organizational change to meet emerging social needs (D. N. Nguyen, Yoshinari, & Shigeji, 2005).

In Cambodia, as discussed earlier, higher education began to flourish in the 1960s in the post French colonial period under the leadership of then Prince Sihanouk. In that period, Prince Sihanouk saw higher education as a tool for producing Cambodia’s skilled labour force which was needed for the economic development in Cambodia and placed considerable emphasis on education and national development, devoting 20 per cent of the national expenditure to the education budget (Ayres, 2000b). However, the new higher education institutions were established with the only aim of ensuring that students had access to higher education in Cambodia, and there was little attention paid to the notion of quality (Ayres, 2000a).

In the 1980s, many governments turned their attention to the issues of accountability especially in the development of performance measures and other mechanisms intended to encourage higher education institutions to be accountable for the quality of their activities (Gordon, 1993; Green, 1993; G. A. Jones, 2004). The 1980s also marked the emergence of a new phase of internationalization of higher education. Universities in developed nations sought to attract self-funded foreign students to their campuses as well as to establish cooperative links in some developing and transitional economies in order to enable foreign students to study for their overseas qualifications (Bennell & Pearce, 2003).

By the 1980s, the transition from elite to the mass system in higher education had occurred in many parts of the globe. This expansion for universities usually took place at a time of economic expansion, and governments later had to limit public expenditure on higher education (Reiko, 2001). Therefore, the 1980s in many countries with mass higher education systems was a time of financial troubles which included declining funding, government budget cuts and seemingly inexorable rises in operating costs (Balderston, 1983). For example, in the 1980s, the US government had a shift in policy away from federal support for matters of social concern and towards a new interest in relationships between higher education and business (H. W. Smith, 1983). Then private and state higher education institutions had to maintain their appeal even they raised tuition fees in response to the cost increase. The watchwords of the 1980s in America were to be competitive and efficient, and academic excellence, and quality was the lifeblood of academic administration and academic politics (Balderston, 1983). In this regard, universities tended to measure their academic quality against standards and achievements of great universities, and higher education management became market-driven in the sense that competitive marketing tended to target students as customers.

In Western Europe, the 1980s marked a shift in the way governments perceived the role in higher education institutions which had received the bulk of their funding from governments. Increasingly, higher education institutions were expected to be accountable for the government funding because prior to the 1980s the notion of accountability seemed foreign to most universities whose activities had been sheltered from the public eyes by the traditional defence of academic freedom (Green, 1993). This provided a rationale for a surge of interest in quality of higher education. In England, the 1980s also marked a government funding policy shift towards higher education when the Conservative government was determined to expose the whole range of publicly-funded services to greater scrutiny in order to secure more effective accountability and efficiency in public expenditure (Webb, 1994). There were two main reasons why the UK government raised the quality concerns in higher education in the 1980s. The first concern was about the impact on standards of overcrowding and the resulting pressure on staff-student ratios, library resources and space, while the second reason was that the government expressed a concern about the impact on standards of the larger student intake, and the concern was that “more means worse” (Cartwright, 2007). Therefore, in the 1980s the UK government put pressure on higher education institutions to think hard whether university staff were doing useful work of good quality in return for the tax payers’ money (Becher & Kogan, 1987). During the 1980s, initiatives were made towards quality management in higher education, and it seemed that in large measure the quality control approach was used to ensure basic standards (Melia, 1994; Srikanthan, 2005). During this period, the general quality control approach was adopted in the UK higher education system (Kanji & Tambi, 1999). This study will discuss the

general quality control approach adopted in universities in the 1980s, using the case of Britain because the British universities and its leading polytechnics are among the finest in the world, making important contributions to knowledge in almost every subject and discipline with levels of efficiency that are models for the world, and the British standards of higher education are among the highest in the world (Kanji & Tambi, 1999; Trow, 1978). British models and similar efforts in other developed economies have influenced external stakeholders extensively, and understanding these provides insights into the external influences on the Cambodian system.

In the United Kingdom, there are two distinct types of higher education institutions: the higher education sector which comprises universities and the further education sector which comprises technical colleges and teacher training colleges and these two types of institutions adopted different approaches to quality management.

The further education sector

The further education sector in the United Kingdom is made up of polytechnics and technical colleges which are expected to serve the role of meeting both the national needs and the requirements of local industry and other forms of local demands (Becher & Kogan, 1992; Brown, 2004; Lello, 1993; Reid, 1990). These two types of further education institutions were to maintain a system of the “twin traditions” of academic and technical education (Radford, Raacheim, de Vries, & Williams, 1997, p. 37). They were administratively and financially managed by local education authorities, which were thought of as arms of local governments keeping them under social control by directing them towards the responsiveness of local employment needs (Bolton, 1998; Brennan, Fredrowitz, Huber, & Shah, 1999; Davies, 1990). The issue of quality within the further education sector was understandably to meet and maintain the standards of the community needs. However, things began to change under the Thatcher and Major governments in the 1980s, in which the growing number of polytechnics reached a climax throughout this period (Bolton, 1998). The UK government then established a legitimate interest in education, in standards being achieved and the value for money of the education service, including further education (Bolton, 1998; Davies, 1990). The reason that the issue of quality was raised in the further education sector was the fact that mass unemployment was a reality in the UK throughout the 1980s (Davies, 1997) and technical education and training courses provided by the further education institutions were considered an important tool of employment policy in England, and that industrial skills should be usefully taught to students before employment (Baker, 1989; Thorogood, 1982). Therefore, seeing the importance of further education, the UK government in the 1980s introduced two mechanisms of quality control, Her Majesty’s Inspectorates and the Council for National Academic Awards, in order to

measure and maintain the standards of education provision in polytechnics and technical colleges (Brennan, de Vries, & Williams, 1997; Harman, 1996; Melia, 1994; Van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994; Varey, 1993).

In practice, an inspectorate carried out periodic evaluations of academic functions mainly related to student learning and teaching activities which were based on a collective rather than individual judgment, and then drew a conclusion required by a national, regional and local standard (Brown, 2004; Dunford, 1998). Her Majesty's Inspectorates inspected the further education institutions with an emphasis on course structure and resources. The inspectorates were seen as an advisory role which was welcomed by colleges and local education authorities, and sometimes they were seen as college visitors rather than inspectors (Dunford, 1998). Local communities also approved the recognition and provided support for local institutions, thus the periodic visits by the inspectorate were seen as a way of maintaining the public confidence and useful tool for maintaining standards without seriously upsetting the institutions (Melia, 1994; Srikanthan, 2005).

Another mechanism of control over the further education institutions when they moved to award degree courses that were comparably equivalent to the standard of university awards was the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) (Barnett, 1987; Brown, 2004; Hodson & Thomas, 2003; Nixon, 1987). The function of the CNAA was to consider and review the quality of work in colleges and to ensure that students successfully completed the courses that the CNAA had approved. Courses run by the further education institutions were validated following visits by staff from CNAA. The CNAA had a well-tried method of peer-review and made its judgments through a structure of committees (Barnett, 1987; Radford, et al., 1997). The CNAA was met with little resistance from the polytechnics as they preferred to obtain a high status. However, the CNAA was criticized for being bureaucratic, unnecessarily heavy, slow and time-consuming (Barnett, 1987; Nixon, 1987).

In conclusion, the notion of quality in the further education sector in England before the 1990s was assessed by mechanisms of quality control, which Green (1994) claims, has its origin from the manufacturing industry. These quality control approaches used within the Polytechnics by the UK government were in line with contemporary industry norms in industry where quality control was extensively practiced. In the industry sector, industry special inspectors were hired to control and ensure the quality of products, and this mass-inspection was described by (Deming, 1986) as being "unreliable, costly and ineffective". The purpose of the quality control characteristic between industry and further education was only regarded as a tool for

maintaining an anticipated level of standard through an intervention from external examiners (Srikanthan, 2005).

The universities

Universities in the 1980s in England were seen to have a bearing on an international role in linking the community to the body of knowledge around the world, and they are often called the autonomous sector of the British higher education (Lello, 1993). The accountability of the university was never questioned, and neither the local community nor Parliament had ever sought the accountability from the universities (Price, 1992). The local community had no access to the ways universities were operating because each university was autonomous in academic matters. Singh (2008, p. 17) stresses that academic accountability of the university in England was reflected in a way the university was supposed to, “do with responsibility, obligation or simply to do the right thing presumably based on a certain amount of trust”. The universities had a free reign on their operation and built their own reputation. There was no provision for any external agency to examine how universities operated quality controls, curriculum development, and much else (Bird, 1994). Her Majesty’s Inspectorates had limited access to traditional universities and were granted access only by invitation. However, there were some coordinating bodies that had influence on universities. The University Grants Committee, which had an advising role for the government on financial allocation to universities, maintained its control over the universities in aspects of student-staff ratio. It was also given the task of ensuring that there was no direct government interference in the university independence, and this remarkably put the relationships between the government and universities at arm’s length (Srikanthan, 2005).

The issue of quality in the UK universities arose as a result of the UK economic decline in the 1970s and the responsiveness of higher education to its restoration and the restriction on the growth of social welfare state in general (Radford, et al., 1997). Universities were subject to external quality controls (external examination) in response to the concern of the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, which developed codes of good practice for maintaining and monitoring standards in the UK universities (Brown, 2004). There were two aspects of the universities’ internal constitutions that are inherent in their “charters” representing forms of external control. First, all the university charters nominate a visitor, a concept originally coming from the ancient ecclesiastical law through the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge (Radford, et al., 1997). The second form of external control in a university’s statutes is the membership of its executive governing body. This two-fold mechanism is to ensure that degrees awarded in similar subjects similarly conform to standard across the higher education sector and to ensure

that students are dealt with fairly in the assessment criteria (Radford, et al., 1997). In short, it seems that the uniformity of standards throughout the British university system before the 1990s was the external examiner system. This external examiner was considered as an instrument for quality control which was to maintain the comparability of standard across the higher education institutions.

In the 1980s, Cambodian higher education also included Vocational and Technical Education and Higher education. The two types of education were in the hand of the MoEYS. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Cambodian higher education was never subject to any form of assessment due to the fact that the main purpose of higher education then was to produce graduates as Cambodia was just liberated from the Khmer Rouge regime and Cambodia needed educated people to rebuild its war-torn nation. Therefore, there was no mechanism for quality assessment in Cambodia's higher education system. The quality assurance was initiated in the early 2000s when higher education was experiencing unregulated growth which caused mounting concerns over the quality of educational provision with HEIs. In 2004, the Vocational and Technical Education stream was transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and Training while the university sector remains under the management of ten different ministries.

Higher Education in the Post 1990s

An important period that rocked the life of the university was in the 1980s, which is described as a more turbulent time than any time in the history of higher education (Srikanthan, 2005). Noticeably, the late 1980s was known as the era of maturation of higher education and the subsequent period is known as the post-massification of higher education (Mount & Belanger, 2004). The post-massification, which is known as a higher education system that provides access to more than half of the new entrant cohort, has become the hallmark of the developed nations. The move from a mass system of higher education to the post-massification period in the late twentieth century saw higher education moving from the periphery of public debate to a more central concern of the governments, making the governments more concerned about the governance of higher education (Mount & Belanger, 2004). The widespread concern prevailing in the last two decades of the twentieth century about the post massification has paved the way for the 1990s to a view that further expansion of higher education was considered as a foundation of a knowledge society. Furthermore, the condition of the post-massification is an attribute of a level of high demand in the economy for those with graduate skills as the higher education system's capacity was perceived as the supplier of the skilled individuals. In such a post-massification period, the question was raised whether the government investment in higher

education should be attached with a necessary and sufficient condition to increase its productivity (Sutherland, 2008).

At the same time, it appeared that many governments in the world in the post 1990s found it necessary to strike some kind of balance between quality and quantity in a time of shrinking resources for higher education. In this post-mass higher education system, the rapid enrolment growth was seen as a perceived erosion of quality accompanying diminished resources and public demand for greater value for the investment made (Gaither, 1998). In this perspective, the more practical question was asked whether “an education that has many claims to be good and useful can be made available to a wider range of students than hitherto” (Radford, et al., 1997). As a result, the 1990s was seen as an era of intensifying interest in the quality in higher education (Wood, Topsall, & Souta, 2005). Accordingly, higher education institutions were forced to open up to public scrutiny in ways unknown in previous decades (Brennan & Shah, 2000).

From the 1990s onwards, there has been a drastic change in higher education policy worldwide. In Europe, the focus on the quality of teaching and learning in higher education has been subject to substantial reforms (Green, 1993). In China, higher education has been under a profound process of restructuring. The restructuring of China’s higher education in the 1990s was obviously initiated by the official document titled ‘Decision on Reform of China’s Educational Structure’ with the ultimate objectives of moving toward learning from the Western developed countries and establishing a kind of higher education system that is adaptive to changes occurring in China and the challenges from outside (Zhao & Guo, 2002). In America, as the 1990s unfolded, the financial conditions faced by American higher education institutions were uncertain and higher education financing pursued a new direction beyond student aid and tuition policies (Leslie, 1995). In Australia, quality in higher education became an issue in the early 1990s when the Higher Education Council was asked to investigate the characteristic of quality in higher education and what strategies were to be used to encourage, maintain and improve quality (Brennan, et al., 1997).

In Asia, in the 1990s, the demand for quality in higher education was also evident. With its rapidly growing population and drastic social changes, Asia provided major challenges for higher education. The higher education systems in this region, which were built on different cultural and ideological traditions, sought quality assurance models from the West and the United States (Harman, 1996). In Southeast Asia, quality in higher education emerged as a priority among the 10 members of Asian nations. Because of the concern over quality in higher education, the Asian University Network (AUN) was established in 1995 as an academic

network with the main objective of promoting mutual understandings through various kinds of cooperation amongst academic staff and students. One of the priority activities of the AUN was quality assurance, and it initiated in 1998 an 'ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance' activity based on the common understanding that regional quality assurance would help improve and maintain the quality of all higher education institutions within the region (Umemiya, 2008).

In England, in the early 1990s, the government made it clear that universities would be made accountable for public scrutiny of their standards. The interest in academic standards began to sharpen after the binary line, which had separated the former polytechnics from the universities, was abolished in 1992 (Cartwright, 2007). Since then, the debate over the quality in higher education and the imposition of national standards for the quality assurance of the universities has been raging in the United Kingdom. In that period, the changing nature of the UK higher education system raised concerns about academic standards and the ways to maintain them because of the expansion rate and diversity, and partly because the government funding did not keep pace with the rapid increase in student numbers (Green, 1994; Tasker & Packham, 1993). Therefore, in England in the 1990s, the government introduced quality assurance aiming to secure value for public investment in higher education and to demonstrate public accountability (Clark, 1997). In the mid-1990s, for instance, the UK government called for more attention to be paid to academic standards and greater explicitness about how they were defined and determined by higher education institutions. In this regard, the quality control approaches adopted before the 1990s were evolving during the periods of heightened interest in the quality of higher education. The existing approach to quality in higher education was not considered effective enough in the changing circumstances, and this traditional method was simply seen as a tool for maintaining the status quo (Srikanthan, 2005). Consequently, the UK government responded to the quality imperative in higher education by implementing a system of institutional quality assessment run by the Quality Assurance Agency for higher education (QAA).

The QAA was established in 1997 as a single external quality assurance agency whose purpose is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education (Cartwright, 2007; Harvey, 2005; Hewlett & Walton, 2001). When the QAA started its assessment work on the practice of teaching and learning within the higher education institutions, many autonomy-related issues were raised. As a result, the Higher Education Quality Council, which is made up of representatives from the higher education institutions and funded by the higher education institutions themselves, was established in order to assist in the

developmental needs of the institutions. However, (Hartley, 1995) argues that the universities established the Higher Education Quality Council just to avoid closer scrutiny by the government.

Overall, the UK managerial ethos for quality assessment has been viewed as a dominant ideology in the higher education administration with which most of higher education institutions are obliged to comply (Radford, et al., 1997). In the UK, maintaining and improving quality in higher education provision is a frequent quoted objective of the government initiative, and the central issue for the English universities in the 1990s would be how to maintain quality while the university sector was expanding rapidly (Hewitt & Clayton, 1999). External examination systems are now seen as quite conservative, expensive and costly and as somehow an isolated activity which can only be applied in a small higher education system. Furthermore, (Gaither, 1998) describes the UK external examiner system as just gathering data and providing numbers to feed the short-term demand which endangers true quality. The British external examiner system is also criticized for failing to engage transformative learning and teaching (Harvey, 2005; Stensaker, Brandt, & Salum, 2008). In a similar vein, Harvey (2002, p. 245) contends that, “the external evaluation, in legitimizing the status quo, fails to ask significant questions about the reality of learning experience for students at a momentous historical juncture for post-compulsory education”. Brennan & Shah (2000) conclude that the UK external assessment has failed to make any impact on higher education, and it was simply the case that there were larger external forces acting on higher education institutions. Therefore, in a more practical sense, more proactive approaches which would ensure quality improvement need to be revised in order to keep up with the changes. In short, the changing landscape of higher education worldwide since the 1990s has made quality in higher education a priority in a nation’s spotlight. Since the 1990s, further driving forces for quality in higher education worldwide have been observed, and those driving forces will be identified in the section below.

The current thrust for quality in higher education worldwide

The growth and expansion of higher education since the last decade of the 20th century has given rise to a new landscape of contemporary higher education. In this perspective, (Mendivil, 2002) explains that the recognition of higher education in the national modes of growth and development and the value of knowledge, productivity and competitiveness is reflected in the growing demand for higher education. It is now imperative that universities produce outcomes that are required by good citizens in order to make useful contributions to the development of their society. In this sense, “The good citizen is an entrepreneur who will use their education to make money, to create jobs and generally to assist the national economy to flourish” (Evans,

2002, p. 38). In support of this view, (Gough & Scott, 2007) point out that one possible tool for thinking about the role of higher education in building the future is perhaps the metaphor of investment along with the associated idea of capital and an investment, and the returns from the government investment should be justified and counted, and higher education institutions need to justify these expected future returns. The idea of capital and investment in higher education creates an economic sense, and from the economic sense, higher education should produce graduates who are well-equipped with knowledge and skills so that they can make immediate and potential contributions to their society. In this respect, quality graduates are expected to fuel the economic development of the nation. Therefore, universities have been viewed as the backbone of political and educational agenda in many nations in the new economy (Hwarng & Teo, 2001). In this perspective, the Cambodian government has recently raised the issue of quality graduates who are supposed to play an important role in Cambodia's economic development in the future. As mentioned in Chapter One, in 2009 Cambodia's Prime Minister, Hun Sen, ordered the MoEYS to take tougher action to improve the quality of higher education in Cambodia.

In the new economy, the demand for quality in higher education is driven by competitions for funding, market forces and globalization. The first factor which pushes for quality in higher education is the competition for funding which is seen as a reality for all higher education institutions worldwide. Since the 1990s, competition for funding, resources and students has become phenomenal for higher education around the globe as the present demand for higher education exceeds the capacity of governments to financially support it (Dolton, Greenaway, & Anna, 1997; Mendivil, 2002). Higher education was historically able to survive mainly because it was traditionally funded or supported by the government, and competition for good students was less intense. However, that scenario has changed since the 1990s when the competition for funding, resources and good students became an international phenomenon. Dill (1995) argues that the emerging international competitions among universities are the driving forces behind the contemporary concern for quality in higher education. The mass higher education system has put the perspective of national strengths and competitiveness in the context of the emergence of a global economy (Damme, 2001). This development took place at a time of economic constraints and in a climate of limited funding resources. During that period, funding for higher education became harder to obtain as public funds became scarcer, partly as the result of the ideological move to smaller government and user-pay concepts, and perhaps partly as the result of the greater demand for funds from the other governmental sectors (Lim, 2001). The 1990s also marked the end of the Cold War, which drew every nation into competition for economic growth (Yamamoto, 2004). Therefore, the 1990s showed that in almost all regions in the world, the growth rate was far greater than that of college-age groups (Mendivil, 2002). For

this reason, higher education has witnessed many forms of transformations. Certain aspects standing out on the international theme of changes in higher education include the diversification in the types of higher education institutions, functions and sources of funding. In this spirit, (Leslie, 1995) claims that in order to diversify the sources of funding, the higher education systems of the industrialized Western nations in the 1990s began to move towards a market model of funding as government support for higher education in most of these nations was declining. The financial cuts from government in the 1990s has led to intense competition between private and government-funded universities which aim to attract more students and survive in the limited budget atmosphere, and in order to attract students who are a main source of their venues, universities need to raise the quality of their educational services.

The second factor that pushes for quality in higher education is the influence of market forces. Higher education now becomes driven by business and corporate values (Kezar, 2005). For an international economic advantage, higher education that generates much of the knowledge needed for economic development in the knowledge-based world is now conceptualized in tradeable terms. The market orientation of higher education has resulted in the implementation of new funding and regulatory framework which revolves around neo-liberal market mechanisms and new managerial principles (Naidoo, 2003). This new development has led to academic capitalism, which is defined as the use of the market-like activities to generate revenues from external sources (Slaughter, Rhoades, & Beatriz, 2005). In the business sense, academic capitalism becomes a reality in higher education as universities are now integrated into the idea of knowledge as a commodity which leads to the user-pay concept. In this sense, Dolton (1997) and Barr (1998) argue that if higher education yields private consumption benefits, such benefits should be paid for by students who are perceived as the ultimate beneficiaries of higher education. As a result, students are now required to make some contribution to higher education by paying tuition fees which used to be free.

The last factor pushing for the quality in higher education from the 1990s is globalization (Currie, 1998). In a practical sense, globalization has become a critical issue in contemporary university communities, and globalization affects both the businesses and higher education sectors. As the world becomes globalized, governments worldwide have linked education reforms to the concept of globalization, which impacts a variety of developments including the intensified integration of a global economy (Naidoo, 2003; Reiko, 2001). It is now obvious that the ability to compete successfully in the changing world in the era of globalization depends on scientific and technological knowledge and innovation. In this fashion, higher education has been positioned as a crucial site for the production, dissemination and transfer of economically productive knowledge (Naidoo, 2003; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). In the same breath, as the

world is shaped by the globalization of economic activities and a growing importance of knowledge which can be applied to the participation in human affairs, (Brenton, 2003) identifies two major changes which accompany globalization. According to Breton, the first change is the fact that our societies are now shaped around knowledge production which have evolved from an industry development mode. The consequence of such evolution results in the notion that industrial goods are no longer the driving force behind economic prosperity. However, the creation of knowledge products is defining the capacity for innovation in socio-economics. In this sense, knowledge has changed its status and has become a commodity that is advertised and traded like other manufactured products. Consequently, customers demand quality in such a commodity. The second change is the impact that commodity has on universities. In the knowledge-based society, universities have lost their monopoly over the production and distribution of knowledge. Now higher educational products are deemed to be a nation's valued intellectual core property that has gone global in the same way that commercial goods have, which reflects a global desire for quality in higher education (Schalick, 2002).

The three above factors which have influenced higher education institutions worldwide to respond to the quality in higher education are viewed as the backbone for economic development in the era of globalization. As higher education becomes a private good, it is considered as a tradeable commodity which creates the user-pay concept in higher education which used to be free to students. The user-pay concept adversely affects the ways students make their choices, and the ways university administrators change their attitudes toward the quality imperative in higher education.

Now all universities, regardless of where they are located, share something of the market atmosphere (Sax, 2004). From the commercial perspective, students are now viewed as consumers. This view pushes higher education institutions to become involved in a tough competition in order to market themselves to the fee-paying consumers. In this respect, Currie (1998) stresses that the user-pays concept in almost all universities has spread like a wildfire so that now, even inside universities, each department has to pay for services from other sections, which used to be subsidized by the government. As a result, the user-pay concept makes students and their parents increasingly demand a stronger correlation between the costs and outcomes of courses they pay for (Gamage, Suwanabroma, Ueyama, Hada, & Sekikawa, 2008). Therefore, as most students are now required to pay for their tuition fees, the interest in quality of educational services has become more intensifying in all universities because of the need for greater accountability to accompany the significant increase in the students' greater expectations (Loma, 2007). More importantly, as a university is now considered as another part of the consumer society, McFarlane and Lomas (1999) argue that there is an educational consumption

from external stakeholders across higher education with students demanding an education that is of quality and deserves the value for their money. By the same token, Dullaart (1988) claims when considering the purchase of an educational commodity, a customer balances two valuations which are the value of the commodity and his exchange of the sum of money it costs. Therefore, because of the use-pay concept imposed on students, students now take the quality of educational products into account before they decide to buy an educational service. Above all, “students now request an education in the same way that they would order a McDonald’s value meal” (McFarlane & Lomas, 1999, p. 78), and students now consider enrolling in a course at a university as a bit like shopping in a department store (Sax, 2004). Thus, as universities are generally seen as transient communities for students, they have to assure students in the best sense that they offer students trust in the quality of their courses. The demand for the quality of educational services from students has also put higher education institutions under a lot of pressure, and made them change the way they operate.

As students are viewed as the purchasers of higher education services in a quasi-market, university administrators are required to define and raise academic standards within the academic community. The university administrators now act like a chief executive officer in a business enterprise (Radford et al., 1997; Slaughter et al., 2005). In addition, they are involved in marketing and lobbying for government funded contracts. University administrators seek some possible ways of converting courseware into intellectual property that can be packaged and sold for profit (Washburn, 2005). As higher education services come to treat the customer as the king (Michael, 1997), the university administrators adopt the business strategies in competing for students who are a main resource of the university’s incomes. In a competitive environment, many universities often employ specialists into key positions specific to revenue generation activities (Mount & Belanger, 2004). Furthermore, as more universities now have a free reign to charge tuition fees from students, they have to market their courses aggressively and compete with other universities to hire the best academics (Dolton, et al., 1997). In short, the university administrator is expected to demonstrate a strong determination and consider the market forces and demand for quality or else the university will lose the legitimacy as a reliable service provider. In short, in response to the demand for quality in higher education which is driven by the market force, the university management employs the language and logic from the manufacturing business industry which then focuses on quality in response to customer demand. Gronroos (1994) concludes that in a practical sense the university management now emphasizes the importance of customer satisfaction and efforts to improve the customer’s perceived quality.

In conclusion, quality in higher education has become a critical issue since 1990s as a result of the competition for limited funding in the public higher education institutions and the

competition for students between private and public universities, the market force and the era of globalization. As higher educational services are regarded as commercial goods which can be traded like an industrial commodity, both the manufacturing industry and higher education institutions adopt an ideology of consumerism which treats customers as their main source of revenues, and they both are using the same language of business as their products are sold to customers. In a general sense, higher education is a service industry with a service orientation directing attention to the needs, expectations, and satisfaction levels of various groups of people, which are termed interchangeably as customers, constituencies, stakeholders, consumers, beneficiaries or users (Ruben, 1995). As higher education is now transformed into a mass commodity to be bought and sold in the market place, there is a worldwide trend that commercialization and privatization of higher education are phenomena on the world market of higher education. In a true sense, universities now increasingly view themselves as an enterprise aggressively competing in both national and international marketplace as the result of globalization. Because of intense competition, almost all universities seem to develop the sense of quality in their educational service provision in order to attract potential customers. In this manner, Readings (1996) points out that the competition amongst universities for quality pushes the pre-modern traditions of the university to the force of market capitalism in which trade barriers are removed. As a result, universities try to demonstrate to stakeholders that they have a different quality assurance process to ensure the quality of academic standards. Above all, the universities in the world adopt quality assurance mechanisms in response to consumer demand for a better educational quality as consumers are no longer interested in a cheap and cheerful education, but in quality education (Weir & Smallman, 1998). In the era of intensifying interest in quality in higher education, different nations adopt various quality assurance mechanisms for higher education in response to the quality imperative, which will be reviewed in the section below.

Evolving approaches to quality in higher education

Since the 1990s, quality has undeniably become one of the major issues in higher education in both industrialized and developing nations. Quality in higher education was not invented; rather it was the result of increasing interest in higher education, with students demanding practical, relevant qualifications delivered in a manner that met their competing demands (Saarinen, 2010; Wood, et al., 2005). Thriving to meet students' genuine needs and demands, action began to be taken by universities to develop and improve the quality of educational course programs. The concern over the quality in higher education in the 1990s was mainly related to the university management, the qualifications necessary for students to gain admission and subsequently to gain a degree, the qualifications necessary to be appointed to an academic position or to achieve

professional promotion as evaluation through peer review of research, and publications were considered an element of traditional “people” approach to quality in higher education (Brennan & Shah, 2000, p. 2). Therefore, some universities around the world started to look to industry and the private sector economy for a model for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their operation (Galloway, 1998). As a result, quality management techniques from the industry began to be adopted in many of the universities around the world (M. N. N. Lee, 2008) because industry standards and quality frameworks for quality systems were seen as a basis for an instrumental response to calls for the improvement in academic quality (Houston, 2008; Newton, 2010; Pratasavitskaya & Stensaker, 2010). For example, some universities in Europe and the UK began to introduce the European Framework for Quality Management and generic quality system standards such as ISO 9000, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in order to improve their service quality performance (Chua, 2004). However, these quality management approaches as practiced in other sectors are often merely statistical tools applied to processes involving material, measurable outcomes, and is not a method to effectively measure human outcomes (Doherty, 1997). Even the most popular service quality model, SERVQUAL was also adapted to measure quality in education (Chua, 2004). Performance indicators were adopted by some countries in order to generate methods of assessing education quality (Johnes, 1996). However, performance indicators are highly limited in their information content, and have nothing to tell about the quality of the educational process (Cullen, Joyce, Hassal, & Broadben, 2003).

The latest model of quality management imported from the industry is Total Quality Management (TQM), one of manufacturing industry’s most widely used model for quality management, and which was also adopted and applied to colleges and universities in the UK, USA and some Asian nations such as Malaysia (Chua, 2004; Goldman, 2005; Hwang & Teo, 2001; Kanji & Tambi, 1999; Koch, 2003; M. N. N. Lee, 2008; Shanahan & Gerber, 2004; Sirvanci, 2004). One of the fundamental principles of TQM in an organization is the focus on the continuous quality improvement based on the participation of all its members and aims to achieve a long-term success through greater customer satisfaction from both internal and external stakeholders (Becket & Brooks, 2006; Cheng, 2003).

However, although the TQM model is perceived as a useful tool for defining education quality and providing services that satisfy both the expectations of external and internal constituencies (Cheng, 2003), TQM is not viewed as a practical tool for assessing quality in the higher education as managing quality in the education context is elusive (Green, 1994), and quality in education should be defined differently from that of the manufacturing and other service industries (Chua, 2004; Koch, 2003; Koch & Fisher, 1998; Madu & Kuei, 1993; Sirvanci,

2004). The TQM philosophy has been criticized by many scholars for its weaknesses when applied in the education setting. It is criticized for not recognizing the impact of the environment and people's different insights in the higher education institution, and failing to address the conflicting views about competing educational aims (Elliott, 1993). Furthermore, TQM is considered lacking relevance to the most critical issues facing universities today, and is only effective in dealing with administrative work such as bill collection, registration, inventory and job scheduling (Koch, 2003; Koch & Fisher, 1998; Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996; Sirvanci, 2004; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003). In the higher education context, Koch and Fisher (1998) stress that the challenges facing most higher education institutions today relate to academic philosophy, standards and practices, not to the day-to-day operation of administrative work. In this spirit, TQM is more appropriate to the service rather than the education functions of a university and has rarely been adopted for the assessment of academic process within higher education (Brennan & Shah, 2000b; Becket & Brooks, 2006), and applying the concept of TQM in the academic environment is both a myth and illusion (Pratasavitskaya & Stensaker, 2010). Koch (2003) includes that TQM, which is a process which aims to increase productivity and decreasing costs in manufacturing industry, has little to contribute to the discussion of quality in higher education.

As the approaches to quality management imported from the industrial sector were not effective in tackling with the quality in higher education in the knowledge- economies, the developed world has called for the establishment of quality assurance agencies with the aim of developing standards and guidelines for the emerging quality assurance. In developed nations such as the UK, USA and Australia, there has been extensive international cooperation amongst higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies (Umemiya, 2008). For example, the United Kingdom has the Quality Assurance Agency while European countries have the Bologna Declaration to promote European cooperation in quality assurance with the purpose of developing comparable criteria and methodologies (Harman, 1998; Huisman & Westerheijden, 2010).

In recent years, developing countries have followed their developed counterparts by adopting quality assurance in order to improve the quality of their higher education (Harman, 1996). The quality assurance approaches adopted from developed nations to put into practice in developing nations are widely seen as minimal and ineffective because the conditions required to effectively implement them do not prevail in developing nations (Lim, 2001). In the developed nations, the administrative responsibility for the management of quality assurance at both national and institutional levels falls in the hands of agencies or special units who specialize in academic work and function independently from the government interferences or politics. For

example, in the UK, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), which inspects, audits and reports on the quality procedures within higher education institutions, is independent from the government, and the QAA staff members are experienced, well-trained and qualified for academic program assessments (Billing, 2004; Harman, 1998; Lim, 2001). Similarly in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) functions independently from the government and the funding bodies, and it is free from any political considerations (Leong & Wong, 2001). In Southeast Asia, quality assurance in higher education has been on the agenda in countries in the region. Yet, although many countries in this region have shared their experiences and knowledge of quality assurance, the concept of quality assurance is still new to countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam because the collaboration of quality assurance agencies throughout this region have not yet proceeded probably due to wide differences in the history and the extent of higher education amongst the countries (Hinaga, 2004).

Worldwide, quality assurance mechanisms in developing countries are developed with the help from economically advanced nations as developing nations lack qualified people to develop their quality assurances, for example, in Yemen (Anaam, Othman, & Awadh, 2009) in Iraq and Kurdistan (Kaghed & Dezaye, 2009), in Serbia (Milenkovic, 2003), in Chile (Lemaitre, 2001) in Vietnam (K. D. Nguyen, Oliver, & Priddy, 2009). Staff in the quality assurance agencies in developing nations are not qualified enough to assess the academic programs in higher education institutions, and they are usually trained by experts from developed nations to do quality assessment work. In developed nations such as Australia, there are two levels of quality assurance, the national and institutional levels, and each university is a self-accrediting institution with its own institutional quality assurance processes (Lim, 2001; Woodhouse, 2004). However, most higher education institutions in developing nations do not have the internal or institutional quality assurance as quality assurance issue is relatively new to the university sector, and university leaders have limited understanding of the quality assurance requirements (Lim, 2001; Mohamedbhai, 2008).

In most developing countries, while quality assurance agencies look good on paper, in practice they often produce little results as the agencies' work is influenced by politics. Assessors in the quality assurance agency are often not appointed on academic merits, but on political connections (Lim, 1999, 2001). Therefore, their work is not effective as they do not do their job independently. The characteristics of the quality assurance bodies in developing nations worldwide tend to match the characteristics of the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) in Cambodia as described in the previous chapter.

In short, quality management in higher education has changed drastically since it was imported from the industrial model in the 1980s. Quality assurance in higher education has become of particular importance of both developed and developing nations as result of increased government emphasis on accountability in higher education. Although quality assurance is a new idea in higher education (Harman, 1998), different countries employ different mechanisms in order to improve the quality in higher education in the era of globalization which sees higher education as a driving force behind economic development.

Conceptualizing quality in higher education

Quality management in higher education is in many countries in the hands of the quality accrediting agencies which mainly monitor quality through external assessment mechanisms (Becket & Brooks, 2008; Green, 1994; Lacovidou, Gibbs, & Zopialis, 2009; Welsh & Dey, 2002). These traditional external quality assessment agencies tend to look at quality in higher education by focusing mainly on such aspects of student learning and teaching (Cheng, 2003). However, this quality approach has been described as ‘pedagogy of confinement’ where an external measurable form of control erroneously comes to mean good education (Gibbs & Iacovidou, 2004). The external examination approach to quality is criticized for “being bureaucratic, incapable, conservative, expensive and costly” and an isolated activity which can only be applied in a small higher education system (Harvey, 2005; Stensaker, et al., 2008). Others scholars tend to define quality from an internal institutional perspective by looking at some main aspects. For example, Haworth and Conrad (1996) identified five prevailing views of program quality in the higher education literature, including, “faculty, resources, student quality and effort, curriculum requirements and multidimensional levels”. However, these five dimensions of quality provide only a foundation for understanding contemporary concepts of program quality in America (Fansler, 2000).

Although it appears that no single agreed model for quality management in higher education is reached, great effort has been invested in studying other possible models that meet the changing demands of quality in higher education (Cheng & Tam, 1997). Although quality in the education context should be handled in a different way to that of manufacturing or service corporation (Madu & Kuei, 1993), literature on quality in higher education reveals that higher education leaders, experts and institutions have now turned their attention to the quality management models practiced in the industry (Becket & Brooks, 2008; Chua, 2004). A new breakthrough for defining quality in higher education is the input-process-output framework, which is commonly practiced in the industry when quality of products is measured (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Chua, 2004; Lindsay, 1992; Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996). Owlia and Aspinwall

(1996). Cheng and Tam (1997) argue that the conceptual input-process-output framework for quality dimensions in higher education can provide a basis for understanding and consequently improving the quality in the education context as it covers all the characteristics of quality. The input-process-output framework is consistent with the UNESCO (1998) declaration that quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept which should embrace all its functions, and activities such as teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment with stakeholders being an integral part of the institutional evaluation process. Therefore, the input-process-output approach appears to cover most of the aspects of quality in higher education. Other approaches to conceptualising quality in higher education would be lacking as they fail to examine various aspects of quality in higher education.

The primary purpose of this research is to understand how the quality in Cambodian higher education is perceived by key stakeholders in Cambodian higher education. It is informed by the work of Cheng and Tam (1997, p. 23) who argue that, “Education quality is the character of the set of elements in the input, process and output of the education system that provides services that completely satisfy both internal and external strategic constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations”. The section below will further explain the distinguishing features of the stakeholder approach to quality in higher education adopted in this study.

The stakeholder approach to quality in higher education

From the perspective of strategic management, the stakeholder approach theory has been used extensively in the quality management literature since Freeman (1984) introduced his landmark book, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. The concept of the stakeholder approach to quality in corporate management has been labelled as an effective tool for organizational improvement and sustainability (Boesso & Kumar, 2009; Eljido-Ten, 2007; Freeman, 1994; Goodpaster, 1991; Johansson, 2008; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997; Rowley, 1997). From a corporate management perspective, stakeholders are viewed as constituents who have a legitimate interest or claim on the company (Rowley, 1997). These groups of people are believed to have power, legitimacy and urgency to influence the organizational performance (Mitchell, et al., 1997). The stakeholder approach to quality is now regarded as a useful tool in considering the organizational effectiveness, and maximizing the stakeholders’ benefits can lead to the increase in both organizational and societal benefits (Foster & Jonker, 2003, 2005). It is argued that the problems faced by any focal organization arise partly because its management does not meet the needs and expectations of all stakeholders (Foster & Jonker, 2007). Eljido-Ten (2007) contends that previous approaches to understanding the business environment have

failed because they did not take a wide range of stakeholders into account, adding that in order to manage effectively in a turbulent time, stakeholder theory should be used as it offers a practical way to address the changing demands from different groups who have legitimate stakes in the organization. (Foster & Jonker, 2007, p. 686) argue that, “If a theory of quality management in the stakeholder theory is to be of value, it needs to be applicable to all forms of organizations, not simply to those focusing on profit”. Because of this argument, the stakeholder approach from the strategic management has also been applied in the educational context, and it is widely used in research which tries to understand the concept of quality in higher education in developed nations (Hewitt & Clayton, 1999; Shanahan & Gerber, 2004) and also in developing nations (Lacovidou, et al., 2009). The argument for the choice of the stakeholder approach in this study is further advanced below.

Although there is no universal way in which quality in higher education is defined and managed, the literature on quality in higher education reveals that for any model of quality to be accepted community-wide, it must represent the views of influential stakeholders (Srikanthan, 2005; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2007). Quality in higher education is perceived to be owned and determined by the stakeholders who have a legitimate interest in it (Harvey & Green, 1993; Hewitt & Clayton, 1999; Lacovidou, et al., 2009; Shanahan & Gerber, 2004; Watty, 2005). Most attempts to define quality in higher education are related to customers or stakeholders as they adopt a customer or stakeholder approach (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Cullen, et al., 2003; Elliott, 1993; Radder, 1998). Different perspectives of stakeholders in higher education must be considered when trying to assess the issue of quality as defining quality in higher education from a single perspective is lacking (Harvey & Green, 1993). Harvey and Green (1993, p. 9) further suggest that, “defining a criterion for assessing quality in higher education requires an understanding of different perceptions of quality that informs the preferences of stakeholders”. In support of this notion, Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003) and Cullen (2003) claim that any quality model must be sensitive, and include all the expectations from all stakeholders.

In a general sense, higher education is a service industry directing attention to the needs and expectations of many groups of people which are termed interchangeably as customers, constituencies, stakeholders, consumers, beneficiaries and users (Ruben, 1995). However, Lagrosen, Seyyed-Hashemi and Leitner (2004) suggest the use of stakeholders instead of customers when discussing quality in higher education as this term is less controversial. In this sense, this study prefers the term ‘stakeholders’ over ‘customers’.

There are many stakeholders for whom the quality in higher education is important, and they are government, the funding body, students, academic staff, employers and society at large

(Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2007). From the perspective of accountability in higher education (as seen in Chapter One) accountability reflects the view that higher education institutions need to be responsive and accountable to a broader constituency that includes the government, parents, students, employers and the universities. These people are termed as the stakeholders in higher education (Koksal & Egitman, 1998). Cheng and Tam (1997) categorize stakeholders into two groups in the quality management process. According to Chen and Tam (1997), current students and academic staff are internal stakeholders in the quality management process whereas employers, government funding bodies, institutional management, prospective students or professional bodies are viewed as external ones.

In short, stakeholders in higher education should be viewed as the decisive determinants of quality as stakeholders should have the right to exercise their judgments about the educational goods that they want to address in a particular way that involves a wider range of their concerns, perceptions and shared experiences regarding quality in higher education. In this respect, Mathews (2005) suggests that listening to those involved in higher education reflects a proper sensitivity to consulting with them rather than summarizing what they want.

This study adopts the stakeholder approach to quality in higher education which recognizes the notion that quality should be defined from different perspectives of all stakeholders who have a legitimate interest in higher education. The stakeholder approach to quality in higher education in this study builds on successful previous studies which have adopted this approach. As the stakeholder approach to quality in higher education incorporates different conflicting views of quality aspects, and has gained dominance in assessing quality in higher education, a number of scholars have employed such an approach to defining quality in higher education. For example, Hewitt and Clayton (1999), Shanahan and Gerber (2004) and Lacovidou et al. (2009) have employed this approach in their studies, and they describe it as a practical approach to assessing quality in higher education.

This study will employ more stakeholder groups than those identified by Cheng and Tam (1997) as it includes both local and international stakeholders. International stakeholders in this study are major donor agencies to Cambodia. This study applies the stakeholder approach through the lenses of the institutional arrangement theory (Boettke, et al., 2008) and through the lenses of path dependency which is manifested in the organizational transition from a stakeholder management perspective (Lamberg, Pajunen, Pervinen, & Savage, 2008). The rationale for including the international stakeholders in this study is that these agencies have had a considerable impact on the design of existing quality assurance institutions in Cambodia, particularly the national Year 12 examinations system and the Accreditation Council of

Cambodia. As noted in the previous chapter, the implementation over time of these systems appears to have departed from the intentions of the funding bodies. This study employs the institutional arrangement theory to account for the apparent lack of ‘institutional stickiness’ in this case. There is a considerable body of literature demonstrating that for new institutional forms to be effective over time, the design and implementation requires a partnership between indigenous people and donor agencies (Boettke, et al., 2008). From the lens of the institutional arrangement, any new reformulations and restructuring of quality assurance systems in Cambodia will require a new form of engagement with the concerns of various organizational stakeholders.

Path dependence refers to a process determined by initial conditions and increasing returns based on causes and sequences of the past events (Page, 2006; Pierson, 2000). In common interpretation, path dependence implies that current and future states, actions, or decisions depend on the path of previous states, actions and decisions. This study investigates the success of current arrangements and the views of stakeholders with an eye to their historical development. Cambodia has gone through many transitional periods since it gained independence from France in 1953, and each transitional period reflects its leader’s political imperatives of higher education Ayres (2000a). However, new approaches and institutions have always built on existing traditions, systems and relationships, and this study will seek the critical and persistent features of the contemporary that are likely to impact on the further development of quality assurance systems from the viewpoints of different stakeholder groups.

The combination of the focus on institutional arrangement and path dependence correspond to the principles of new governance. From this perspective, institutional arrangement requires partnerships and networks with all levels of stakeholders regardless of being public or private (Bevir, 2009; Waddock, 1988). In a practical sense, some mechanisms whereby developing nations use to develop their educational policies involve the interpretations among the people involved such as local authorities, community, government and foreign agencies who are main donors to developing nations. Therefore, the combination of local and international stakeholders in this study reflects the requirement of the institutional arrangement between developing nations and donor agencies. From donors’ viewpoints on how their aid should be targeted in developing nations, the focus is on developing partnerships amongst stakeholders in forming technical cooperation (Brinkerhoff, 2003). Donors and local governments now agree that in order to achieve an institutional arrangement, there should be a focus on building a partnership between the donor and the recipient country where this arrangement is introduced (Cassels & Janovsky, 1998; Pellini, 2005). As stated in the expected outcomes in Chapter One, this study seeks to provide the Cambodian government with a clear framework to adjust its policy on

higher education by focusing on the quality issue and quality assurance. Based on the principle of institutional arrangement, there is a ray of hope that the voices from both local and international stakeholders on the quality of Cambodian higher education will help the Cambodian government readjust its policy on higher education in order to ensure the quality in its higher education.

In short, this study uses the input-process-output framework for quality by Chua (2004) to define the quality of Cambodian higher education from the perspectives of stakeholders who are already identified in the conceptual framework in Chapter One. Stakeholders in Cambodian higher education will describe the quality attributes of Cambodian higher education from the aspects of quality in the input-process-output framework for quality in higher education. As Cambodian higher education approaches the stage of massification, this study will seek to discover the critical issues of higher education worldwide in the era of massification period. For the ease of investigating the quality of Cambodian higher education; this study tries to understand the characteristics of higher education in developing nations and those of developing countries in Asia and the Pacific. It is perhaps true that higher education in developing nations worldwide share common quality characteristics and those in Asia and the Pacific could provide similar patterns which can be used to trace the characteristics of quality in Cambodian higher education.

Cambodia is approaching the phase of the mass system of higher education while higher education in many high-income countries reached this stage four decades ago. Cambodia lags behind those industrialized nations thanks to the fact that Cambodia experienced a civil war for almost three decades between 1970 and 1998. From a view on higher education in the period of massification, Teichler (2010) explains that the actual development of higher education in each country reflects its unique historical, social, economic, cultural and political characteristics of that country. In the economically advanced world, the problems of higher education seem to be associated with its growth. The growth and expansion of higher education cause these problems in very part of higher education such as, “finance, governance, administration, recruitment of staff and students, curriculum...and the maintenance of standards” (Teichler, 2010, p. 88). The problems associated with the growth and expansion of higher education in the developed nations could in many ways be the same to those in developing nation. Studies of quality in higher education in developing nations by (Tilak, 2000) and (Lim, 2001) reveal the following common characteristics.

In most developing countries, academic staff members are not well qualified with most having a Masters Degree for the highest qualification usually by coursework with little or no research

training. Administrative staff is often poorly trained, without tertiary qualifications. Academics do not have proper working conditions. The information support services are inadequate with the libraries stocked mainly with multiple copies of the most basic and often out-dated textbooks, while research monographs are largely absent. Access to electronic facilities is grossly inadequate, and article journals are seen as a luxury. The affairs of universities are often influenced by politics which limits academic freedom and autonomy. Higher education is underfunded and poorly managed. Academic staff is low-paid. Most academic staff has to teach more than one institutions to supplement their academic incomes. Higher education institutions lack autonomy (Lim, 2001; Tilak, 2000).

The characteristics of higher education in many parts of Asia and the Pacific are not much different from those found in developing nations globally. According to Harman (1996, p. 22), the discussion of quality of higher education in Asia and the Pacific has focused essentially on seven main issues which include “inadequate resources, staff number and quality, inadequately prepared students, curriculum and pedagogical matters, low internal efficiency, imbalances in graduate output and graduate employment, the special problems of private institutions, and accountability and quality assurance”. Harman (1996, p. 23) further elaborates these seven issues of quality in Asia and the Pacific as follows:

The single quality issue identified mostly in developing countries in Asia is inadequacy of resource provision. The experience of the past has been that resources per student unit have not kept pace with the expansion of enrolment. This has an impact on teaching quality. Academic staff issues are a critical problem in developing countries in this region as there is an overall shortage of well-qualified academic staff. Mostly, academic staff does not have appropriate post-graduate qualifications. Many higher education systems experience a ‘brain drain’ from universities to the private sector where higher salaries and promotions are judged on merit. Inadequately prepared students are seen as a serious problem in many developing nations in the region. Due to the weakness of secondary education, higher education finds that many students do not have appropriate academic backgrounds to cope with more demanding courses in higher education. In many developing countries in the region, universities have little influence on student selection intake, and distribution of students between different courses, which fall into the hands of the government. In many developing countries in the region, there are complaints about out-dated curriculum and teaching methods, with courses not being relevant to development needs. Serious shortages in textbooks and learning materials are often concrete evidence. In many developing nations in the region, it is often found that there is low internal efficiency with students slowly proceeding through the university system. This causes slow progression and graduate

rates. Imbalances in graduate output which contributes to graduate unemployment also exist. Due to the increasing number of private higher education institutions, there has been growing concern about the quality of education offered by these private institutions. In many cases, the supervision of private institutions is seen as minimal and ineffective. Therefore, the accreditation mechanisms are being introduced.

Based on the studies by (Harman, 1996; Lim, 2001; Tilak, 2000), the common characteristics of quality in higher education found in developing nations worldwide and in Asia and the Pacific seem to share similar patterns. These patterns will help this study diagnose the characteristics of quality in Cambodian higher education. As Cambodia is also a developing nation, it is common knowledge that the quality characteristics in Cambodian higher education are more likely to share the patterns of the quality features of higher education in developing nations and those in Asia and the Pacific. A comparison of the characteristics of quality in developing nations and those in Asia and the Pacific to the characteristics of Cambodian higher education identified in Chapter Two reveals that Cambodian higher education shares many common similarities found in developing nations and those in Asia and the Pacific. This study will identify the characteristics of the quality in Cambodian higher education through the voices from key stakeholders in Cambodian higher education. The perceptions of quality of Cambodian higher education from the stakeholders are presented in Chapter Five.

Summary

Quality in industry captured the world's attention after the US leading quality experts, namely Edward Deming, Joseph Juran and Phillip Crosby initiated the idea of revolutionizing the industry in war-ravaged Japan in the post-World War II period. These American fathers of quality helped Japan improve its manufactured products and shared the quality success of Japan. As a result, the Japanese industrial miracle became a real success in the 1970s and 1980s when the Japanese-made goods began to rock the world and could manage to penetrate the world market, namely in Europe, and the United States where these American quality initiators were not accepted in their own country at the time of their preaching for quality. Since the 1980s, several quality management mechanisms in industry, such as quality control, quality assurance, Total Quality Management and ISO have been developed to manage the quality of manufactured products.

Quality in higher education became a critical issue when education, training and the effective utilization of human resources provided by higher education institutions were viewed as the fundamental foundations of building quality in the workforce in the mass system of higher

education. Furthermore, the condition of the post-massification is an attribute to a level of high demand in the economy for those with graduate skills as the higher education system's capacity was perceived as the supplier of the skilled individuals. The market force which creates fierce competition between public and private higher education institutions has also driven a focus on quality in educational products in order to attract students who are a main source of universities' incomes.

Now as the world has become globalized, governments worldwide are aware that higher education plays a crucial role in the production, dissemination and transfer of economically productive knowledge in order to stay competitive in the knowledge-based world as industrial goods are no longer the driving force behind economic prosperity. As higher education becomes the backbone of economic development, the world has started to look to industry for a model for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their operation aimed at improving the quality in higher education. However, the quality management approaches imported from the industry sector are not an effective method for measuring human outcomes in the higher education sector. Consequently, various attempts have been made to define quality in higher education. Now there is a tendency toward defining quality in higher education through the input-process-output framework as it covers all the elements of quality. More importantly, the stakeholder approach to quality in higher education has become a practical tool as it incorporates all different views about what constitutes quality in higher education.

This study combines the input-process-output framework for quality and the stakeholder approach to seek the perceptions of quality in Cambodian higher education from key stakeholders. Therefore, this study invites all the stakeholder groups in Cambodian higher education to express their voices about the characteristics of quality in higher education in Cambodia. Literature on higher education reveals that no research or study has been conducted to investigate the quality of higher education from the viewpoints of all stakeholders in Cambodia. This research study will be of importance as it attempts to get all the stakeholders in Cambodian higher education to express their personal opinions or views about the current situation of Cambodian higher education. The stakeholder approach to quality in higher education will be a new study that fills the gaps of previous research. This study includes external stakeholders from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). These donor agencies have been actively involved in higher education in Cambodia. The inclusion of the international stakeholders is based on the perspectives of path dependency and institutional arrangement. This study will produce results that incorporate all the conflicting views from both indigenous people and foreigners on Cambodian higher education quality. The participation of indigenous

people and foreigners who are donors for Cambodian higher education will also create a partnership in forming the education reform policy in higher education in Cambodia. From the perspective of the development community policy, the donor funding agencies now tend to seek to improve relationships with developing nations through increasing local involvement and building partnership. Joseph (2008) suggests that the stakeholder approach is a practical option in terms of introducing changes in developing nations as it supports reform and reconcile the interests of the stakeholders. From the above discussion, the stakeholder approach to quality in higher education appears to be a practical choice for understanding higher education quality in Cambodia, which is one of the poorest nations in the world.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Technically speaking, any research study whether it is quantitative or qualitative involves the four main elements of social research which are epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. In relation to social research, Crotty (1998) offered a practical guide for these four elements that will be used to frame this chapter. This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenographic inquiry in its methodology, constructivist epistemology and interpretivist theoretical perspective. The bulk of data were collected from key stakeholder groups who have an interest in Cambodian higher education. Informal individual semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants in Cambodian higher education. This chapter details the research strategies, outlines the methods of data collection and analysis, and raises ethical issues related to data collection in Cambodia.

Rationale for a qualitative approach

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3).

A qualitative research design was selected due to the nature of the study which is to gain a deeper understanding of how the quality of Cambodian higher education is perceived by stakeholders. In order to achieve this goal, rich, detailed and descriptive data were needed. The strengths lying behind this qualitative research stem from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people to its emphasis on words rather than numerical data (Maxwell, 2005). The qualitative approach adopted in this study focuses on answering ‘why and how’ questions and allows for the generation of rich data and the exploration of “real life circumstances” (Kuper, Reeves, & Levinson, 2008, p. 337).

This study intends to explore the ideas and concerns which stakeholders express through their personal experiences and involvements in Cambodian higher education. In regards to the objective of this research, a qualitative method apparently appears to be the most appropriate choice. A qualitative approach is better able to reveal participants’ subjective understanding of a social phenomenon in an in-depth and broad sense (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Wiersma, 2000). Furthermore, qualitative methods can be used to, “explore substantive areas about which little is known in order to gain novel understandings, and can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thoughts and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn

about through other conventional research methods” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). In a similar fashion, qualitative research provides an understanding and description of people’s personal experiences or viewpoints of phenomena, and it enables the researcher to identify contextual factors as they relate to the phenomenon of interest (Johnston & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Maxwell, 2005). Qualitative methods, in a practical sense, are preferably used to research sensitive subjects, and they allow these sensitive subjects to be approached in a sensitive way (O’Neil, 2006). A distinguishing feature of the qualitative research described above is a concern with people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge, which clearly meets the objective of this study. Johnston and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stress that qualitative approaches are able to be responsive to local situations, conditions and stakeholders’ needs.

Phenomenographic inquiry

Phenomenography is a qualitative research approach which aims at describing, analysing and understanding people’s experience of phenomena under study (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998; Marton, 1981; Svensson, 1997). Marton (1981, p. 178), who is a founder of the phenomenographic research approach, gave an example of a qualitative research question to this approach: “*What do people think about why some children succeed better than others in school?*” Marton argued that any answer to this question would need a statement about people’s conception of reality, and would require different perspectives. From Marton’s viewpoint, phenomenography is designed to focus on the variation between people’s awareness and understanding of their experience of a particular phenomenon. The phenomenographic approach had its beginnings in the 1970s at the University of Goteborg in Sweden, growing out of research conducted by Ference Marton and Lenard Svensson (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998; A. Barnard, McKosker, & Gerber, 1999; Entwistle, 1997; Svensson, 1997). This approach was originally rooted in the experience of student learning. However, phenomenography has now developed into a distinctive qualitative approach to understanding a broad range of phenomena. For example, it has been adopted in areas such as health care (A. Barnard, et al., 1999) and higher education (Entwistle, 1997). As a relatively recent research approach, it has experienced rapid growth of usage, and interest in this approach has spread (Shanahan & Gerber, 2004).

As an empirical methodology used in social science research, phenomenography is based on the fact that knowledge derives from experience. The essence of the phenomenographic research is reflected in its epistemological view which takes a non-dualistic view of human learning which requires that the investigation focus on both the person and the phenomenon (A. Barnard, et al., 1999; Trigwell & Prosser, 1997). In simple terms, it focuses on the relation between the person and the phenomenon in the sense that a person understands the phenomenon through the

product of their life experience. More importantly, it describes the understanding in the words of the participants through their experiences. Phenomenography contrasts a first-order approach in which the researcher describes or defines the phenomenon as he or she interprets it. Instead, in phenomenography, the researcher uses a second-order approach in which the researcher does not make statements about the world, but the researcher lets participants express their perceptions of that world themselves (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998; Linder & Marshall, 2003; Trigwell, 2006).

Phenomenography also tends to seek to understand people's understanding of the world through a qualitative inquiry. The data needed for phenomenography are typically sourced through semi-structured individual oral interviews in which open-ended questions are used to identify a range of conceptions which are viewed as structures of awareness (Entwistle, 1997; Linder & Marshall, 2003). These structures of awareness are used by people in order for them to understand abstract ideas such as quality, for example. They enable people to develop their understandings of abstract ideas through a complex amalgamation and growth of their life experience in relation to those ideas. "Phenomenography seeks to explore these different conceptions or structures of awareness which people constitute from the world of their experience" (Entwistle, 1997, p. 127).

There are four main reasons why a phenomenographic approach is adopted in this study. Firstly, phenomenography is a qualitative methodology in which each particular study focuses on a concept, entity, or situation and tries to map the various ways in which things are construed ('experienced, conceptualized, understood, perceived and apprehended') by people (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007, p. 4). The question raised by (Marton, 1981) above seeks qualitative answers in the lived experiences of participants. The stakeholder approach to examining quality in higher education employed in this study builds on Shanahan and Gerber (2004), who used this approach in order to understand varying experiences of quality amongst key stakeholders in an Australian university. Shanahan and Gerber's (2004) study was conducted to answer the questions: (1) What does quality of higher education mean? (2) How can an organization assure it? and (3) how can it be improved? That study employed the qualitative research method and phenomenography in its methodology. Data were collected through informal individual in-depth interviews with stakeholders. Therefore, the choice for a qualitative method, a phenomenographic inquiry and the means for data collection in Shanahan and Gerber's (2004) study serve as the foundation for this study. Based on Shanahan and Gerber's (2004) study, this study, which seeks to discover the perceptions of quality in Cambodian higher education from key stakeholder groups, could produce a result which incorporates different views on the quality in Cambodian higher education.

Secondly, in phenomenography, qualitative descriptions are not intended to discover individual qualities of experiencing a phenomenon, instead it emphasizes collective meanings. Phenomenography looks at the constructions of different kinds of conceptions which are grounded in the lived experiences of the participants. It also aims to discover the key aspects of the variation in how a group or groups of people experience and understand the phenomenon under the investigation. This special characteristic of phenomenography seems consistent with the main purpose of this study, which is to understand how the quality in Cambodian higher education is perceived by stakeholders. The focus of phenomenography on group rather than individual experience also appears to mesh with the stakeholder approach to quality in higher education.

Thirdly, the second-order approach in phenomenography is well suited to understanding stakeholders' perceptions. Rather than the researcher describing the phenomenon from their impressions, it is the participants who describe and define the phenomenon through their experiences that lead the researcher to form the basis of understanding and describing that phenomenon. The conceptions of quality in higher education the participants express in their interviews will reflect their views on the quality in Cambodian higher education.

Theoretical perspective of the research study

This study adopts a constructivist epistemology. According to Crotty (1998) and Guba and Lincoln (1994), a constructivist epistemology is a way of interacting with knowledge where there is no truth waiting to be discovered, yet the truth requires individuals to engage themselves with the world. Constructivist epistemology rejects the notion that truth is embedded in objects which are inherently claimed to be found in positivist and post-positivist epistemologies. The adoption of the constructivist view in this study is based on the assumption that "all knowledge and meaning are contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between individuals and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Human beings in the constructivist spirit are described as not only engaging themselves with the world and making sense of it, but "they are all born into the world of meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p. 54) which is mediated through social institutions in which we are embedded. Furthermore, this constructivist view places the "social dimension of meaning" at the centre stage (Crotty, 1998, p. 57). More importantly, constructionism reflects the unique experience of everyone by suggesting that individual's way of making sense of the world is "valid and worthy of any respect (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). Constructionists take for granted the notion that truth is relative to individuals and communities,

and constructivists tend to describe the coherent structure of a multi-layered phenomenon which is the strength of understanding (Cupchik, 2001). As this research study aims to obtain human experiences and perceptions from the human participants, the concept of constructivist epistemology is considered to be a fundamental choice.

In the context of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, Blaikie (2007) describes this relationship in three stances as “outsider/insider, expert/learner and co-scientiser”. From the researcher stance, the researcher would fit in the category of an outsider, watching and trying to understand how the respondents construct realities. In this sense, the researcher’s role as an outsider goes well with phenomenography which adopts the second-order approach, and lets the participants describe a phenomenon from their experiences. In this study, the researcher will not be involved in directly assessing quality in Cambodian higher education, but will seek to better understand the perceptions of quality in Cambodian higher education from various stakeholders.

The research paradigm

A paradigm is *a* set of beliefs and practices that serves as the foundation and guide for an inquiry and that determines the criteria by which one may judge that inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Some see it a set of assumptions about the social world or a view of how science should be done in relation to elements of epistemology, theory and philosophy, along with method (K. Punch, 2006). Literature on research paradigms, for example, Crotty, (1998), Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Punch (2006) and Blaikie (2007), include critical theory, post-modernism, positivism, hermeneutics, interpretivism, ethnography and feminism. Given that this research study aims to deeply understand how the stakeholders in Cambodian higher education make an impression on the quality of Cambodian higher education, it is consistent with the interpretivist paradigm which meshes with the constructionist paradigm and is concerned with the meanings and experiences of human beings (Williamson, 2006). The interpretivist paradigm is congruent with hermeneutics, which is described as the art of interpretation. According to Zeller (1987), hermeneutics is the central place held in it by the idea of language and language-oriented notions such as meaning, intentionality, interpretation and understanding. In this sense, Stake (1978, p. 7) asserts that those who foster understanding believe that “truth in the field of human affairs is better approximated by statements that are rich with the sense of human encounter”. The interpretivist paradigm also looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the world of social life (Crotty, 1998). In this study, the researcher tries to understand and interpret the perceptions of the quality of Cambodian higher education from the viewpoints of various key stakeholders through their

interview responses. In short, the constructivist epistemology is concerned with different views constructed by individuals. Increasingly, the philosophy of hermeneutics, developed by Gadamer and Ricoeur, which focuses on understanding textual interpretations, has been used to inform interpretive research (Geanello, 1998, 2000). In this sense, hermeneutics, which is the philosophy of both understanding and interpretation, is of double-fold interest to this study. As this study opts for interviews as the means of data collection, interpretation, according to hermeneutic theory, would help the researcher analyse interview data obtained from the participants. Interpretation from a hermeneutical perspective is the hinge between language and lived experience expressed through language, and later transcribed into a text and interpreted (Ricoeur, 1974). Therefore, the interpretivist theoretical perspective appears to sit alongside constructionism. Williamson (2006) claims that the central tenet of the interpretivist paradigm involves people constantly interpreting their ever-changing world, and the investigators who are interpretivists believe that the social world is constructed by people. Most of all, the interpretivist paradigm seems to be consistent with the construction of the reality of everyday life in which individuals are mainly interested in interpreting reality from various theoretical perspectives (Berger & Luckman, 1971).

Data collection

This study adopts a phenomenographic methodology in which researchers seek to discern patterns of understanding non-numerical language and describe differences in the way people understand or ascribe the meanings of the world around them. The data needed for a phenomenographic inquiry are typically sourced through semi-structured interviews which aim to explore the participants' experiences of the phenomenon in depth (Trigwell, 2006). This study employs informal individual semi-structured in-depth interviews as the means for data collection. Although qualitative research tends to adopt multiple sources of data such as interview, observation, participant observation and documents in order to study spoken and written representations of human experiences, this study opted for interviewing as the researcher wished to directly speak to the participants about their views on the quality of Cambodian higher education. Furthermore, the method of primary data collection through semi-structured interviewing is felt to be more culturally appropriate and more likely to yield relevant information than questionnaires in the light of Cambodians' unfamiliarity with this kind of research. In this respect, Spaul (1988, p. 76) contends that oral sources are more specifically useful in the circumstances in which "the study requires insights into personal or group motives and attitudes".

The intention to adopt interviews in this study is also influenced by Shanahan and Gerber's (2004) study which employed individual face-to-face interviews with key different stakeholder groups as their data collection technique in order to get a broad understanding of the higher education quality in an Australian university. Another reason for the choosing interviews is that the literature review reveals that there is little available data on the quality of Cambodian higher education.

Other reasons for choosing interviewing as the means for data collection in this study are as follows. First, as this study attempts to seek stakeholders' perceptions of quality in Cambodian higher education it needs qualitative data to answer the research questions. Punch (1998) claims that interviewing is one of the main tools for data collection as it provides a means of accessing people's perceptions, meanings and definitions of situations and constructions of reality. Second, (Mullins & Kiley, 2002) stresses that face-to face interviewing is one of the most appropriate methods for understanding people's emotions. In order to understand human feelings, experiences, and emotions, (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008) claim that interviewing allows the researcher to gain access to the motives, meanings, actions and reactions of people in the context of their daily lives. Third, qualitative research is concerned with understanding human behaviour from the informants' viewpoints. In support of this, Patton (2002, p. 341) explains that, "qualitative interviewing starts with the assumption that the perspectives of the other is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit". Fourth, interviews also expose the interpretive practices through which the informants construct their version of the social world (Potter & Mulkay, 1985). This notion is consistent with the objective of this study which seeks to understand how the stakeholders in Cambodian higher education construct the meanings of the quality of Cambodian higher education.

The research strategy to adopt interviews in this study recognizes that social researchers do not just apply a set of neutral techniques to the issues which they investigate, but research is also part of a dynamic, reflexive engagement with social worlds (Bailey, 1996). Furthermore, in-depth interviews are described as the preferred research method as they facilitate both an understanding of the interviewees' perspectives and the meanings that the interviewees attach to the situations or social contexts that are important to them (Finn, Elliot-White, & Walton, 2000). As a result, interviews offer the opportunity to achieve "more authentic and less exploitative" account of experience than other research techniques (Seale, 1998, p. 205) as cited in (Pritchard, Nigel, & Sedgley, 2002). In short, data collection in a qualitative research method seems to involve direct contacts with human participants. Therefore, the researcher wished to directly speak and listen to key informants in order to elicit a full range of understandings of the quality of Cambodian higher education. All in all, individual face-to-face interviewing as the

means of data collection for this study was seen as a practical option as it aims to extract the inner feelings from the participants.

To be clear, this study used informal semi-structured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions with participants who represented various key stakeholder groups in Cambodian higher education. Semi-structured interviews are mainly used as part of the qualitatively-oriented in-depth interviewing model. Essentially, semi-structured interviews are used in a broad topic in which the researcher can guide the interview (Minichiello, et al., 2008). In this type of the interview, the content focuses on the central issues related to the research questions and allows for greater flexibility than any other interviews (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 1995). In essence, literature on qualitative research tends to show that semi-structured interviewing is the most widely used format of qualitative interviewing as the data collected through this kind of interviewing are more systematic and comprehensive than the informal conversational interview (Minichiello, et al., 2008).

Open-ended questions were used in this study as they allow the researcher to ask the participants in a way that they feel free to express their opinions or think about the topic, and they also allow open-ended responses (Minichiello, et al., 2008). These responses could lead to some further questions which increase the richness of data. In this perspective, Patton (2002, p. 4) argues that “open-ended questions yield in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge”. Informal interviews are described as reciprocal with both the researcher and the participants engaging with each other in the dialogue (Bailey, 1996). In this study, the researcher engaged directly with the participants in order to obtain their authentic views on the quality of Cambodian higher education.

Choice of participants

The 61 participants in this study represented most key stakeholders in Cambodian higher education, defined as the groups with a legitimate interest in higher education. Participants consisted of university students, university teachers, foreign technical university consultants, rectors/vice rectors, senior staff in the Department General of Higher Education (DGHE), the Department of Higher Education (DoHE), the Department of Scientific Research (DSR), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), local employers, employers in multinationals in Cambodia, and donor agencies who were represented by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and AusAID. Details of the number of participants from each group are attached in the Appendix.

Determining where and from whom data will be collected is an important step in designing a research study. Although there are no rules for sample sizes in qualitative research, literature on sampling in qualitative research studies seems to suggest a small sample. For example, Patton (1990, p. 169) states “a qualitative inquiry typically focuses on in-depth relatively small samples. Although Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 199) assert that “all sampling is done with some purpose in mind”, it is hard to estimate an exact number of the participants for this study. In this respect, the purpose of sampling in this study is to define a sample that represents a population to which it is desired to generalize. As within all research techniques, there is concern over the number of interviews that should be taken. In this sense, Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) explain how sample considerations are interconnected with data collection. For this purpose, snowball sampling was employed in this study. Given the challenges of searching the sensitive issue of the quality of Cambodian higher education, this study recruited key players in Cambodian higher education through a process of ‘snowball sampling’, using the initial and subsequent participants to suggest others who fell within the sample frame (Ryan, 1995, p. 103). This snowball technique was particularly suitable as it was impossible to estimate the base population from which a sample could be anticipated in advance. In terms of the extent of data collection, there seems to be no definitive guidelines to the number of interviews which should be conducted. In this fashion, Churchill (1995) suggests that qualitative research should be continually reviewed as the research is being conducted, and when further insights are not forthcoming, the fieldwork should cease. This suggestion has guided this study to employ the snowball sampling approach. By asking for the right people to whom the researcher should talk to, the researcher was introduced to participants who were considered to be influential policy-decision makers in determining the quality of Cambodian higher education. Eventually, 61 informal interviews were conducted with key informants who were represented by both local and international stakeholders.

University students and student representatives in four universities were chosen as respondents for this study. The students or student representatives were recruited directly by the researcher through approaches to student organisations where they existed or through recommendations from other participants. The students interviewed had studied in university for at least three years or were student representatives currently. The selection of other ‘internal’ stakeholders, participants such as university teachers, university consultants, and rectors/vice-rectors, were recruited directly through the researcher’s network.

The selection of local employers and those in multinationals in Cambodia was based on the fact that these participants are the end-users of the higher education products that employ thousands of graduates every year. They are also key decision-makers in higher education and they are

part of the output. They were directly recruited by the researcher based on knowledge of major enterprises in Cambodia and through recommendations of colleagues working in the industry sector.

The selection of people in the MoEYS, DGHE, DoHE, DSR and ACC were based on the belief that these people are external stakeholders who are key decision-makers in the whole system of Cambodian higher education. People in key positions in these agencies were recruited and approached by the researcher and through his personal contacts.

The selection of the donor agencies that are involved in Cambodian higher education included the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and AusAID. These donor agencies have been involved in Cambodian higher education since 1993 (see Sloper, 1999; Clayton, 2000; Chealy, 2006). The representatives of these donor agencies and they were believed to have extensive knowledge of higher education in Cambodia. They were recruited directly and through the researcher's networks and were selected through recommendations from other influential external stakeholders based on their extensive history of involvement in Cambodia.

Conduct of interviews

During the field work in Cambodia, informal in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher with 61 participants and each interview lasted for between 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews were carried out with particular attention given to planning and data gathering issues. Each interview began with a few words of general conversation in order to put the interviewee at ease. The interviewees were informed that they were not compelled to answer any particular question if they did not wish to. In order to provide the participants with a sense of security and comfort, all of the interviews were chosen by the interviewees at a time and place convenient to them. The settings of interviews also involved private spaces for the conduct of the interviews. The interviews mostly took place at the interviewees' workplace with one interviewee choosing a café for the interview venue. The interviews with student representatives took place either inside the university campus or at home. Care was taken to create a comfortable seating arrangement for each interview as the aim was to ensure as much as possible that the participants felt at home and relaxed during the interview. For this purpose, the principles of interview relationship outlined by Fontana and Frey (2000) and the aspects of qualitative research interviews described by Kvale (1996) were considered with special attention given to trust. In this regard, extra care was taken to create a convivial atmosphere where an interview went smoothly. Every effort was also made to establish and maintain a mutually trusted

relationship in order to ensure that the interviewees would feel open and sincere in their responses.

The research questions that were addressed during each interview are attached in the appendix. Interviews with local stakeholders were conducted in Khmer while the interviews with foreign stakeholders were conducted in English. The reason that only 61 interviews were conducted was based on a profound conviction that if the researcher had interviewed more informants, they would have told me the same things. At that time the researcher felt that the level of saturation was reached as the researcher had interviewed all the central players in Cambodian higher education.

All interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees, using a digital tape-recorder. The use of the tape recorder was to record important quotes verbatim, to listen carefully to the interview dialogues and to respond with relevant follow-up questions which being distracted by note taking, and to have a permanent record of the interviews which could be listened again and again during the inscription. The ethical considerations such as confidentiality mentioned early were also explained. The interviewees were told that the letter of permission from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport was obtained before the interviews started (see the letter of permission attached in the Appendix). Student representatives and lecturers were also informed that the researcher had the permission from their universities to interview them. In most circumstances, the interviewees allowed the recordings of the interviews. During interviews, short notes of main points in the interviews were made for the purpose of reminding the researcher when reviewing the tape. Some participants in this study were compensated for their time by receiving a notepad holder which the researcher had brought from Australia. The field-work was conducted in Cambodia from July 24th to September 24th 2009. The researcher contacted the participants and met them individually in order to explain the purpose of the research study, and asked them for their voluntary co-operation. Overall, the researcher found the informants accommodating and cooperative, and access to interviews was smooth with assistance granted by several key informants although two participants apologetically declined an interview on the basis of time constraints. However, they referred the researcher to their deputies for the interviews.

Data coding and data analysis

All the interviews were recorded during the fieldwork. Recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The interviews in Khmer were translated into English by the researcher.

Names of the participants were replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect the participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

As data coding is seen as a prerequisite for data analysis, and coding and analysing data involves a time-consuming and labour-intensive process, the interview transcripts were coded by organizing them into conceptual categories, and themes or concepts using the coding process were created. The process of coding and analysing qualitative data with some examples was adopted from scholars such as Miles (1979), Miles & Huberman (1984), Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000), Basit (2003) and Neuman (2007). Although data coding in qualitative research is seen as an integral part of analysis, literature on qualitative data coding and analysis shows that there are still no clear-cut or agreed upon tools for qualitative data analysis (Basit, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Thorne, 2000). In this respect, Miles (1979) describes qualitative data analysis as an attractive nuisance, and LeCompte (1999) compares data analysis to a tactic of assembling a cut-up jigsaw by turning the interpretation of the jigsaw into a credible research result. Therefore, in order to generate findings that transform raw data into a new research result, the researcher engages in an active and demanding analytical procedure. Although there is no comprehensive tool for data coding, many scholars for example Coffey, Holbrook and Atkinson (1996), Pope et al. (2000), Gough and Scott (2000), Basit (2003) suggest that qualitative data coding can be performed manually and electronically depending on the researcher's preference and skills. At the heart of these two choices is how the researcher can give the reader confidence in the way the coded data are made manageable. However, many scholars seem to be critical of the manual method of data coding. For example, Basit (2003), Pope et al., (2000), Richards (1999) and Spiggle (1994) argue that coding data by hand using multi-coloured pens to highlight main themes and making scribbled comments is messy, frustrating, old fashioned, labour-intensive and time-consuming. Therefore, I turned to the use of computer software for data coding. The widespread use of computer software packages in data coding has led to the growing use of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), which enables complex data organization, coding and retrieval. Among the most-widely used CAQDAS packages designed for qualitative research is the Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Search and Theorizing (NUD*IST) with its latest version known as NVIVO. I preferred to use it as it facilitates coding, shaping, linking and modeling of qualitative data. Many scholars such as Coffey et al., (1996), Binger, Johnston and Brakenridge (2006) also seem to be supportive of CAQDAS. Marshall (2002, p. 59) describes two types of people who perceive CAQDAS differently. The first type of people is described by Marshall as "alchemists" who view the use of CAQDAS as reducing human creativity, and the second group as "good housekeepers" who regard CAQDAS as time-saving tools which enhance theorizing. My own preference fell into the group of good housekeepers who see the advantages of

technology and are supportive of CAQDAS. However, I used the functions of NVIVO in a limited way in the analysis. I mainly used it for coding, searching and retrieving data as it helps reduce the time-consuming and laborious work done in the old manual fashion. I did the analysis myself as a computer package is not capable of linking between theory and data or defining a rigorous structure for analysis (Pope, et al., 2000; Thorne, 2000). Therefore, I had to import large blocks of coded data from NVIVO to Word documents and work with these documents in order to reduce quotes and organize them within the context of my writing. I simply used NVIVO in the process of coding, storing and retrieving data that I would have done manually. Although NVIVO software program facilitates the process of coding, I still needed to identify categories and themes or concepts from the raw data before they were electronically coded. Schmidt (2001, p. 104) suggests that these concepts or themes carry valuable information or content about the phenomena under study". In this study, I used the inductive approach which requires me to read through data again and again in order to spot related those themes or concepts. Thorne (2000) contends that a qualitative study usually relies on the inductive reasoning process to interpret and construct the meanings derived from data. In this respect, the interview transcripts were read many times in order to identify themes and interpret data. The task to find categories and themes in the raw data was a necessity before data could be coded electronically. Initially, the data were read and reread to identify and index themes and categories by centering on particular phrases from the respondents. Once the categories and themes had been identified, the task of coding was started. The rich data were coded by using NVIVO 8.0 Fundamental, which is the most recent version of NUD*IST designed specifically to aid coding and the analyses of qualitative data.

In analysing the data, I looked for themes or concepts that each group mentioned in relation to key questions. The interview transcripts were read again and again until the main categories or themes related to key issues in relation to each questions were identified and then these themes were electronically coded. When data analysis was performed, the coded data for each question was retrieved from each group of the participants. In my case, I had begun to 'code data' in my mind within the interviews, and this process of identifying key themes and coding went on during the transcription period when I was exposed to the interview data for the second time.

The interview transcripts which were in Word format were imported to an NVIVO project and saved it as Rich Text File (RTF), which contained a wide range of information collected over a long period of time. Each theme was coded electronically, and a list of these codes in the NVIVO program called nodes was also prepared. To be exact, in NVIVO, notes are where data about ideas or themes emerging from a project are stored when the researcher is working on it. The themes or main codes were each assigned to a position on the top of tree nodes (tree nodes

are categories, subcategories organized in a hierarchical structure) as NVIVO requires the researcher to make use of coding and tree nodes to extract key patterns, identify thematic areas and search for interrelationships (Dixon, Ritchie, & Siwale, 2006). The views from each group of the interviewees were saved under each tree node. From each tree node, it would be easy to retrieve the coded data for analysis, and data could be ordered from the outset by the questions that were asked within an interview. For the ease of data retrieval, I also made attributes in NVIVO to represent relevant demographic and descriptive information about the participants (i.e. occupation type). This demographic information was stored as 'attributes', and could be used to search data and compare responses from different groups. By retrieving information from the attributes in the analytical phase, the interview responses from each group could be compared and placed in the context of important emergent themes and of both common and conflicting views on the aspects of quality in Cambodian higher education. What is important in this way is that the recurring themes in the data and their relevance to the aims and the research questions could be determined.

The interview data were analysed in four different stages using the method employed by Mullins and Kiley (2002). First, after the data from the NVIVO program had been retrieved, the responses to the same question were analysed by looking for differences and similarities in the responses. The second form of analysis was to look for metaphors in the responses as an indicator of what respondents meant by 'describing some themes'. I thought that interviewees used metaphors to describe what they found to be difficult concepts. The third form of analysis was searching for the words or phrases that interviewees used to describe the themes and then cluster them into categories. The fourth form of analysis was to divide those categories into two groups. Group one contained the responses from local stakeholders while group two held the views from international stakeholders. Doing so would make the task of presenting the findings, which is in the next chapter, easier. The fourth form of analysis was to check for consistency within each response.

Based on the input-process-output framework for assessing quality that was introduced in the previous chapter, I expected indifferently stakeholder groups to view quality in higher education in differently. For example, in Chua's (2004) study, students' and university teachers' and employers' views on quality related to the process and output while government was interested in all aspects in the input, process and output. I used this and other findings from previous research to lead me in looking for the themes from the interviews.

Limitations of the method used

The sample in this study was mainly represented by well-educated and white-collar stakeholders who are involved in higher education in Cambodia. Other stakeholders such as parents and non-academic staff members in universities were not reflected in the sample. The sample was composed of central players in Cambodian higher education who offered to talk to me about the quality of Cambodian higher education. I assumed that the participants mostly represented those who felt comfortable to share their views with me and had something that they wanted to say. It was hard to understand how the views of the interviewees compared to the views of people who fit the research sample criteria, but did not have a chance to express their views. Although qualitative research is criticized for adopting a small sample, the small number of people in this study will not limit the capacity to generate findings as the people interviewed included almost stakeholders in Cambodian higher education. One of the strengths in this study is having these stakeholders express their personal views on the issue of quality in higher education in Cambodia. With the snowball sampling, 61 interviews were conducted, and I felt that with this number I was saturated in data needed to answer the research questions. With a snowball sample, I did wish to speak to a few more people, but I expected that they would sing the same tune about the quality of Cambodian higher education. I believe that the findings of this study do contribute to a more general discussion of the ways in which stakeholders in Cambodian higher education perceive the quality of Cambodian higher education.

With regards to the quality of data collection, qualitative research is often criticized by positivists for being subjective and thus invalid. Like any other qualitative researchers, the researcher does bring to this study various forms of preconceptions and biases. In this sense, the biases can affect the reliability of research findings. In this study, I gathered data by means of interviews. I reviewed the full interview transcript many times until an agreement on the patterns that emerged was reached. The agreed patterns that emerged from the interview data did help the researcher eliminate the biases. This multiple review of the interview transcript served as a safeguard against the researcher biases which Bellamy (1999, p. 58) describes as 'opportunistic interpretation' meaning the researcher selects only what she/he wishes to hear. In this sense, the opportunistic interpretation which affects the reliability of the research findings was eliminated. In the next chapter, which is about the research finding presentation, I safeguarded the reliability of the findings by cross-checking the written data with the oral interviews by listening to each of the recordings several times in order to pick up the opinions expressed by the participants. In essence, the database which I created and maintained includes (1) a recording of interviews, (2) verbatim transcripts of all interviews in Word processor format, (3) notes taken in interviews and post-fieldwork data analysis stored in the NVIVO

software program, and the print-outs of analyses and interpretation of specific comments in the context of each whole interview.

Ethical considerations

Qualitative researchers choose to use themselves as well as other humans as the primary data collecting instruments (K. Punch, 2006). As this study employs interviewing which allows the researcher to gain access to the motives, meanings, actions and reactions of people in the context of their daily lives, the right of the participants must be protected. In this perspective, Fehring (2002) argues that a research study involving human beings requires that the researcher understand and respect the right of participants.

As this study adopts in-depth interviews with human participants, the researcher applied for the ethics approval and received the ethics approval, Register Number HRESC A-105-07/08 from the RMIT Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee on the 16th of December 2008.

Conducting interviewing as a means of data collection can have a great deal of risk attached, as the interview questions might cause harm to the people involved (Patton, 2002). Therefore, there are some risks that the researcher considered because this study involves human beings. According to Saunder (2007), ethical research demands that the researcher avoid causing any physical, emotional and psychological harm to the participants. In this sense, the researcher wished to make clear that this study did not intend to cause neither potential harm nor physical risks. The subject matter did not require the discussion of personal issues which could cause a subject embarrassment or stress.

People often do not give consent to be interviewed because they fear that they could be individually identifiable, and that their anonymity might not be guaranteed by the researcher. As of these concerns, Lincoln and Guba (1994) argue that confidentiality and anonymity resulting from personal interaction between the researcher and researched needs to be safeguarded. In order to protect the participants' anonymity, the researcher used pseudonyms for the informants. Data collected from the participants were treated in a way that protects the confidentiality and anonymity of the informants. The data were stored in a safe place in accordance with the RMIT regulation. Only the researcher and his supervisors had access to these data. However, the participants can have access to the data held about them if they wish to.

Summary

This qualitative research study was conducted for the very purpose of finding out how key stakeholders perceive the quality of Cambodian higher education. A qualitative research design was selected in order to produce the type of data that reflect the stakeholders' experiences, perceptions or opinions on the quality of Cambodian higher education. The research questions required rich, detailed highly descriptive responses which can only be elicited from a qualitative approach. The informal individual in-depth interviews were arguably the most appropriate tool for gathering the descriptive responses from the participants. As this study seeks to understand how the quality of Cambodian higher education is perceived by different stakeholder groups, the phenomenographic inquiry chosen as the methodology is compatible with the study's objectives as phenomenography focuses on the key aspects of the variation in how groups of people experience and understand the phenomenon under the investigation. In essence, the phenomenography emphasizes the interest in collective meanings of a phenomenon rather than individuals. Furthermore, the phenomenography adopts the second-order approach in which the researcher interprets the phenomenon through the participants' experiences, perceptions and feelings. The snowball sampling employed in this study did guide the researcher to reach a number of key informants that he wished to speak to. The adoption of the qualitative approach, the phenomenographic inquiry and the in-depth interviewing really enabled the researcher to acquire the stakeholders' opinions or views on the quality of Cambodian higher education which would provide some clues for a discussion on the quality of Cambodian higher education. The method of data analysis employed was believed to produce the required data for telling a story about what the stakeholders in Cambodian higher education perceived the quality of Cambodian higher education. The next chapter reveals the findings which were drawn from the data analysis.

Chapter 5: Stakeholders' Views on the Quality of Higher Education in Cambodia

This chapter presents the findings which were derived from the analysis of the interview data that reflected the stakeholders' views regarding the quality of Cambodian higher education. The findings were presented in the 'question-answer' style and in a narrative form in which the responses from the data analysis were used to present the stakeholders' views on each question by supporting it with some quotes from the interviewees and information from other sources. Opinions or perceptions of each stakeholder group are presented, and the researcher's interpretations, expectations and hypotheses will also be used in this findings presentation. For question one, the findings will be presented using the views, opinions or perceptions from each stakeholder group, followed by a comparison of perceptions of the quality of higher education in Cambodia between local and international stakeholders. The main purpose of the comparison is to understand different ways in which local and international stakeholders perceive the quality in Cambodian higher education and to find the similarities and differences in their views on the quality of Cambodian higher education. For question two, the findings will present the strategy the Cambodian government has in place in order to improve quality in its higher education. For the last question, the views on the effectiveness of the government strategy from each stakeholder group will be presented separately.

Students' views on quality

Sixteen students in two public universities and two private ones were invited to participate in this study through their interviews. Four were student representatives, and they were in the final year of their bachelor programs. The rest were year three students. Four students had part-time jobs in the private sector. One had a part-time job in his university. They were all full-time students during the academic year 2009. The students selected were known to be a bit outspoken in the classroom. They all had gone through some experiences of academic programs offered in their universities and were considered mature enough to answer the research questions regarding the quality in higher education services. Before the interview started, each student said they participated voluntarily in the interview, and that they would try their best to answer the questions as much as they could. Before jumping to the core questions, the students were briefed with the main purpose of the study so that they were ready for the interviews. The briefing involved the basic elements of the quality aspects in higher education. Below were their responses to the quality of higher education in Cambodia.

When asked to define what quality in higher education meant to them, the students' views seemed to be unanimous. The interview data revealed that the students' perspectives on quality in higher education mostly related to the process and output. For example, they said that a good quality university should have relevant curriculum, well-qualified teachers, adequate learning resources, labs, a library with internet access, good student support services, a transparent exam procedure and a career orientation course so that they could prepare themselves for a career choice after their graduation.

Based on their responses, it was clear that what Cambodian students demanded in a good quality university seemed to reflect the common characteristics of quality in higher education in the developing world. For example, a research study undertaken by (Lacovidou, et al., 2009) which adopted the stakeholder approach to measuring the quality in higher education in Cyprus shows a similar pattern of the students' views on quality in higher education. That study's result reveals that the students identified seven dimensions of quality in higher education which include programs and courses of study, teaching and learning process, student support services, teaching and learning facilities, student examination and assessment, buildings and general facilities and competencies of lecturers and students. Based on the students' perceptions of elements of the higher education experience in developing nations, it is understood that the students' perceptions of quality in higher education in developing nations are a bit different from students' perceptions of quality in higher education in the developed world. For example, students in the developed world, namely in the English speaking nations, view a good quality university as having a good reputation and good prospects for employment for students after their graduation (M. Joseph & Joseph, 1997), and they can identify more aspects of quality in higher education which they claim to be the quality factors in higher education in their countries. However, the perceptions of quality in higher education from the Cambodian students above can be regarded as the common features of higher education in developing nations and those in some Asian nations. Technically speaking, those quality aspects in higher education are thought to be the determinants of what help students learn and develop in higher education (Drew, 2001), and those aspects are parts of what students in the developed world consider to be the quality in their higher education (Clemes, Ozanne, & Tram, 2001; Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006; Gatfield, 2000). For example, a study on quality in higher education from the students' perceptions in an English university in the UK revealed a similar result. According to a study by Hill et al.(2003), the themes emerging in relation to what the students perceived to be quality in higher education include good quality of lecturers, a flexible curriculum, resources of libraries and IT, and a student support system. Comparably, the Cambodian students' views on the quality in Cambodian higher education were not much different from those of the two

studies above. Their perceptions of the characteristics of the quality in Cambodian higher education suggested that they knew what they were looking for in the higher education services they paid for in terms of quality. In general, the ways the Cambodian students expressed their opinions on quality in higher education proved that they were academically mature enough to talk about the quality dimensions in higher education, and that they viewed the quality dimensions from their personal experiences and engagements in the educational process.

When asked to express their opinions on the current quality in Cambodian higher education, most students shrugged their shoulders and shook their heads. Those verbal behaviours indicated that they were not satisfied with the quality of higher education services they were receiving from HEIs in Cambodia. Speaking from the bottom of their heart, the students said that the quality in Cambodian higher education was still very low compared to that of many countries in the region. Most students perceived that most HEIs in Cambodia were run like business enterprises which seemingly competed with each other for revenues mainly coming from tuition fees paid by students. They revealed from their everyday observations that most HEIs seemed to focus more on profit-making than showing concern over the quality. In general, the students seemed to be dismayed by the education services for which they paid, which is consistent with recent media reports of students' views. A 21 year-old female student majoring in finance was quoted by AFP (2008) as saying that, "my education is nearly worthless, and that the low quality of my studies means that I will have a hard time finding a job that pays enough to help my family who invests in my education". Most Cambodian students were quoted as saying that the quality of Cambodian higher education is lower than that of its neighbouring countries in the region (Pov, 2011).

The students interviewed had some points to make regarding their arguments against the low quality of Cambodian higher education. They all seemed to use the quality aspects of a good quality university they mentioned earlier to criticize the quality in Cambodian higher education. The first point was that the students tended to argue that the curriculum in their universities was not quite relevant to the market need, citing the fact that the market developed faster than what their universities were teaching. For this reason, they seemed to know a lot about the relevance between the curriculum and what the country and the market needed. They commented that what was taught in the classroom was not responsive to the market and the economic development needs. In this sense, one student who had a part-time job with the private sector complained that she could not apply the knowledge she gained from her course in her workplace because of the irrelevance between the curriculum and the skills needs in the workplace.

The second point was that they were very critical of their teachers. From their daily contact with their teachers, they assumed that not many teachers in their universities were qualified enough to teach, and that most teachers, especially the older ones, lacked good teaching professionalism as they still used the old method of teaching they received from the older generation. The students' complaint about their teachers was matched with an old, but popular Khmer saying that, "when the students do not learn from their courses, parents often say the teachers are bad". The students explained that most teachers mainly just gave a lecture. They compared their teachers to, "a Buddhist monk who chanted the Buddhist bible to a group of Buddhist believers who did not understand the sacred text". This in English means that the students described their teachers as religious leaders who delivered a sermon that addressed biblical, religious and moral topics to an audience who just listened quietly. Students also claimed that their teachers did not do research to expand their knowledge, disciplines and their teaching professionalism as some teachers were seen using the same textbooks for many years.

The third point made by the students related to learning resources and facilities in their universities. From their time spent looking for reading materials, they complained that their universities did not have adequate learning materials and resources for them to do research, and that they did not have access to the Internet and e-journals. Most students stated that they were told to buy the textbook on each subject from the bookstore in their universities, and that they just read that book. They pointed out that the library in their universities had a small limited number of books. One female student who expressed their frustrations about the learning resources complained that, "it is difficult for me to find the wanted books as the library has a small number of out-dated books only".

The fourth point was that they felt that they learned mainly theories in the classroom, and they had no practical experiments in the labs. The fifth point was that the students complained that their universities did not have a credible exam procedure. They claimed cheating often took place in the exams, and cheating discouraged students from working hard as those who did not work hard could have the same scores in the exams. However, some people insisted that cheating is what higher education students bring along from their high school tenure. The sixth point was that the students complained about the support services. They claimed their universities did not provide any learning support for students when they needed. The lack of student support within HEIs in Cambodia has been raised by the World Bank as a big concern (Sloper, 2004). The last point was that they said that they did not receive any career orientation services which directed them toward a career choice.

The students' reactions to higher education in Cambodia indicated that they did not feel satisfied with the higher education quality services they received. They seemed to compare their demand in the quality in higher education in general to what actually happened in higher education in Cambodia, which they said, did not offer a quality service worthy of the tuition fees they paid. In brief, the student group did not appear to be happy with the quality dimensions of higher education in Cambodia they mentioned above such as the curriculum, the qualifications of the teachers and their teaching methodology, learning and teaching resources and facilities, exam procedure, student support and career orientation services in their universities. Their views on those aspects of quality were highly critical. However, their teachers of whom they were critical may have something different to tell regarding the quality in Cambodian higher education. The section that follows reveals the university teachers' reactions to the current situation of quality in Cambodian higher education. Will they sing the same tune as the student group did or will they have a different story to tell?

Teachers' views on quality

Sixteen teachers from two public and two private universities were interviewed. They were recruited through the researcher's personal contacts. They were all senior teachers who had been teaching for quite a long time. Four teachers had Masters Degrees from Australia while another ten earned their Masters degrees locally. Two teachers earned their PhD degrees through a joint-program with a university in the region. Before the start of each interview, each teacher was also briefed with the primary purpose of the study so as to make them feel ready to answer the research questions. In Cambodia, most university teachers are now known to have been financially better off since the introduction of fee-paying courses in the public HEIs and the emergence of private HEIs. In the public HEIs, the fee-paying program was introduced in 1997 as an incentive for the public HEIs to generate additional incomes in the supplement of the financial support from the government. With an extra pay incentive from that program, the teachers in most public HEIs have enjoyed teaching many classes as a means of making their additional incomes. Now being a university teacher in Cambodia earns both respect and an income to live in decency.

When asked what quality in higher education meant to them, the voices from the teachers were less unified because some shared the students' views while the others perceived that quality should be examined from all the three elements that are input, process and output. However, according to the data collected, most teachers' views on the quality dimensions pointed to the input and process. The teachers believed that a good quality university should have qualified teachers who have research skills, relevant curriculum, adequate learning and teaching

resources, good delivery of courses and content, adequate funds to cover expenses and pay the teachers' salaries, and good governance and a good leader with academic background. The teachers seemed more interested in the quality of the teachers, a decent pay for the teachers, course content, a credible quality assurance mechanism and good governance and leadership in their universities. The Cambodian teachers' views on quality in higher education were similar to those found in the academics' voices on the quality in higher education in the English speaking countries such as the UK and Australia. Previous research undertaken by Taylor, Gough, Bundrock and Winter (1998), Chua (2004) and Watty (2005) reveal that academics define quality in higher education in terms of the transfer of knowledge, good academic training and teaching, a good learning environment, research and a good quality assurance mechanism. In this light, the views from the Cambodian teachers on the quality in higher education also indicated that they knew quite a lot in terms of the aspects of quality in higher education in which they are part of. It would be interesting to hear them expressing their views on the quality in Cambodian higher education in comparison to their mention of what a good university should have.

When asked to express their opinions on the quality of Cambodian higher education, the teachers had a different view from the students. The interview data showed that there was considerable unanimity amongst the teachers with regard to the quality of higher education in Cambodia. Holding a different view from the students, the teachers sounded overwhelmingly supportive and proud of the development of higher education in Cambodia. Despite the fact that the fast growth of higher education in Cambodia had caused mounting concerns over the quality, they had a strong belief that the quality of Cambodian higher education was not too low. They all expressed the view that the quality of Cambodian higher education was acceptable in the context of Cambodia for the time being. In supporting their arguments, the teachers tended to use a historical frame of references to judge and defend the current situation of the quality of Cambodian higher education. Turning the clock back to Cambodia's history, they emphasized the fact that Cambodia had just had peace for the last ten years, and they felt that, "the quality of higher education today is much better than it was 20 years ago".

Two reasons were cited by the teachers to support their positive assessment of the quality of Cambodian higher education. One reason given was that they seemed to view the quality of Cambodian higher education from an employment perspective. From this perspective, they all explained that the quality of Cambodian higher education was not very low since graduates from HEIs were employed by the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Another reason was their argument that the quality of Cambodian higher education was not too low because some countries such as those in Europe, Australia and New Zealand admitted graduates

from Cambodia to their universities for postgraduate studies in those nations. The teachers appeared to be happy that a small number of the Cambodian graduates who went on scholarships to further their studies at the postgraduate level in some English speaking countries. In general, the teachers seemed content with the development of today's higher education in Cambodia. However, when asked about the aspects of quality that would characterise a good quality university, the teachers had a similar story as the students did.

For example, when asked how they thought of the curriculum in HEIs, the teachers seemed to share a similar view with the students. They contended that most HEIs in Cambodia were not capable of developing their own curriculum and that almost all HEIs just copied the curriculum from overseas by making minor changes. They stressed that the imported curriculum within HEIs was not contextualized to fit the local industrial and market needs. They explained that from their experience the irrelevant curriculum imported from overseas in HEIs had resulted in graduates with skills not meeting the industry demand and the nation's development needs.

In regards to the qualifications of the teachers within HEIs, most teachers expressed their dissatisfaction about the quality of the teachers. They believed that less than 50 percent of the teachers were qualified to teach. However, the teachers accepted the fact that there was still a shortage of well-qualified teachers within HEIs throughout the whole country. Because of the lack of qualified teachers, they admitted that most teachers, especially those in the public HEIs, were overloaded with their teaching hours. Due to an inadequate salary from the government, many teachers in the public institutions had to teach in more than one university in order to make supplementary incomes. The excessive amount of teaching left the teachers with little time for research that can improve their disciplines and their teaching professionalism. In this respect, they claimed that most teachers in HEIs had been using the same materials or textbooks to teach the same subjects in different universities.

In regard to the teaching practice, the teachers shared the same view with the students. They admitted that most teachers still used the traditional method of teaching which is in the form of giving a lecture. This old teaching practice requires the teachers to spoon-feed the students with all the information the students needed. The teachers gave a personal view that only young teachers who had been trained overseas employed student-centred activities in the classroom. However, the teachers stated that most young teachers who were recruited through nepotism were not qualified to teach as they did not go through a teacher training course because they went straight to teaching soon after their graduation.

With regard to the learning and teaching resources and the facilities within HEIs, the teachers also seemed to be critical of them as much as the students were. They acknowledged that the learning and teaching resources within HEIs were very limited, and that most universities had a small library that was stacked with out-dated books. One teacher (Sok) complained that “A library is just a library”, meaning that it does not have many books or learning and teaching materials for the teachers to research. Another teacher made a similar complaint about the teaching and learning resources. He said that “When I was doing my Masters degree, I did not find the recommended books in my university library. I had to go to the library in the US Embassy for the reading materials I needed for the assignments”. As regards the facilities, the teachers tended to accept the fact that most universities did not have appropriate buildings which meet expected university standards, and that they did not have suitable equipment or labs for experiments or practical work. The inadequacy of reading and teaching material as well as equipment has become an epidemic which both students and teachers claim to have hindered student learning and the teachers’ careers.

In regards to the design and delivery of courses, the teachers did not seem to be satisfied with the courses offered in most HEIs. They lamented that the course content did not appear to suit the requirements of academic standards and one teacher stated that the course programs did not seem to have a clear objective. The same teacher asked why the DoHE gave the permission to a university to run a course without a clear objective. The DoHE admitted that it did not have people to examine and assess the course program submitted (personal conversation with the DoHE) but more about that later.

With regard to the governance of the university, the teachers were very critical of their leaders who were in the top management, namely the rectors. They argued that the rectors did not have good academic and leadership skills. The teachers in the public HEIs seemed to perceive that their rectors were promoted as a result of good connections with politics, and not on academic merits, whereas the teachers in the private HEIs explained that their rectors were not well-qualified academics, but were influential people who were rich. They claimed that this had a negative effect on the function and operation of HEIs.

In short, the teachers perceived the quality of Cambodian higher education differently from the students. The teachers seemed to accept the current situation of higher education in Cambodia. Their acceptance of the quality in Cambodian higher education was based on the historical ground that higher education in Cambodia was better than it was two decades ago during which it was never subject to any quality assessment. However, the teachers seemed to share similar views on the quality dimensions in higher education such as the curriculum, qualifications of the

teachers, teaching and learning resources, the university facilities and course delivery. The teachers appeared to be satisfied with the development of higher education in Cambodia because they have benefited a lot from this development through their teaching in exchange for good payment. They have lived a better life as a result of their incomes from their overloaded teaching.

The next section is a story about the quality of Cambodian higher education from the top management people in the university in Cambodia. The university rectors, who run and manage the functions of the university in Cambodia, are believed to have more knowledge about the quality of education in the universities under their leadership. They are viewed as a stakeholder group which has more interesting things to tell about the current situation of the quality in Cambodian higher education. Did they agree with the teachers' or students' views on the quality in Cambodian higher education? Or did they have their own story to tell?

Rectors' views on quality

Four informal interviews were conducted with rectors in four universities, two public and two private. One interview was held with a vice president of the Royal Academy of Cambodia, which is a state-run institution that runs postgraduate courses. Two rectors had a Masters degree from Australia while the other two had a PhD degree. One rector in a private university earned his Masters degree locally. Those rectors were recruited through the researcher's personal communication with them. As mentioned in the methodology section, the four universities were chosen because they rank from top to the middle ones.

In Cambodia, a rector in a public HEI has a high social status. He/she is appointed by the King on the request from the Prime Minister. A rector in the public HEIs is now given an honorable Excellency title, and he is understood to have a political affiliation with the government. Since the government allowed public HEIs to run fee-paying courses as an incentive to generate incomes to supplement the teachers' salaries, a rector in the public HEIs has been considered to have a plum job. On the other hand, a rector in a private HEI is appointed by the institution itself. He/she does not have an Excellency title. However, some rectors in the private HEIs have the Excellency title because they are appointed advisors to some high-ranking government officials.

According to the data collected, the rectors' views on quality in higher education seemed to cover all the core elements in the input-process-output framework for quality in education. These views reflect a similar pattern of how university presidents justify their assertions of

quality in higher education in America (Birnbaum, 1994). Furthermore, previous studies undertaken by Harvey, Green and Burrow (1992), Hewitt and Clayton (1999), Chua (2004) with the intention to find out how the university top management views quality in higher education in the UK and Canada reveal that their voices on quality in higher education fall into the whole higher education system focusing on the activities of the input, process and output. They indicate that quality should be examined in light of all the activities. Although Cambodia is a developing nation, the university rectors' views on quality in higher education reflected similar assertions of quality in higher education compared to those expressed by the university top management people in the developed countries. The university rectors' views on the quality in Cambodian higher education gave an indication that they shared a widely perceived view on quality in higher education.

When asked to define what aspects of quality a good quality university should have, their views covered a wide range of the quality dimensions. They said quality in higher education included many aspects such as a good admission criterion, well-qualified teachers, a library with adequate learning and teaching resources, with the Internet access to article journals, good curriculum, good governance and leadership and good quality graduates who meet the employers' expectations. Their views suggested that quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional concept, and they seemed to indicate that they were more knowledgeable about what a university is expected to function in order to become a good quality university in the public eyes. Although the rectors in Cambodia sounded as though they knew a lot about running a university, the public still wishes to hear if their universities have the quality aspects they mentioned above or not.

When asked to give their impressions on the quality in the universities they were running, their views were unified. The interview data revealed that they seemed to be enormously proud of the higher education development in Cambodia. Their views on the quality of Cambodian higher education were the opposite of the students' views. The rectors appeared to sing the same tune as the teachers did. As far as the quality was concerned, the rectors defended the quality of Cambodian higher education with their strong opinions that the quality of Cambodian higher education was not as bad as critics portrayed it. They steadfastly argued that the quality of Cambodian higher education was really acceptable in the current context of Cambodia, a developing nation that had just had full peace for the last ten years. Known to have benefited from their positions, they had some points to make in supporting and defending their university education services and their assumption of the quality of higher education in Cambodia.

Firstly, the rectors stated that the quality of Cambodian higher education was acceptable to various stakeholders. In this sense, one rector (Rith) challenged the critics of higher education in Cambodia by asking, “If the quality of Cambodian higher education is too low, why do parents still send their children to the universities in Cambodia?” They acknowledged that they had a big student intake every year, and they seemed to be happy with an increasing number of student enrolments in their universities. Counter-attacking the criticism over higher education in Cambodia, all the rectors contended that, “if higher education was of poor quality, parents would send their children to study overseas”. This message was meant to be a strong belief that the rectors were very defensive of their university education services.

Secondly, the rectors shared the same view with the teachers that the quality of higher education in Cambodia was responsive to the local market and industry needs. They explained that the quality was not too low because graduates from HEIs in Cambodia were employed by the private sector and NGOs. Lor Socheat, the former rector of the National University of Management, was quoted in the media as saying that, “the graduates from his university are 80 per cent qualified for employment in the world of work, and his university is trying to further improve the quality of the students and teachers” (Pov, 2009). Sok Touch, the rector of Khmerak University, was quoted as saying that the quality of higher education in Cambodia was much better than it was, and that it was not much lower than that of Thailand and Vietnam (Pov, 2011).

Thirdly, their defensive view on the quality of Cambodian higher education was based on their belief that Cambodian graduates could successfully pursue their postgraduate studies overseas. The rectors backed up their assumption by highlighting the fact that some countries such as those in Europe and Australia accepted graduates from Cambodia for postgraduate studies, and they were usually successful in doing their postgraduate studies overseas. The fourth reason was that they seemed to use a historical ground as the teachers did to support their arguments that, “the quality of Cambodian higher education today is better that it was two decades ago”. They assumed that Cambodia’s higher education just lagged behind that of countries in the region, and that the government had made efforts to improve the quality in Cambodian higher education. They all agreed to make a suggestion that further attention be needed to improve the quality to a level comparable to that of the countries in the region. The argument put forward by the rectors that the quality of Cambodia higher education was not poor indicated that the rectors were very proud of the higher education achievement, and were every defensive against any criticism over the quality in higher education services that they universities were offering. They even seemed to defend some aspects of quality in higher education which were strongly criticized by the student group.

For example, when asked how they viewed the entry of students into higher education, the rectors claimed that the Admission Office in the DoHE uses the grade 12 exam results to admit students to their HEIs. However, they believed that high school leavers that enter higher education were still inadequately prepared for university studies as secondary education is still poor. One rector stressed that, “the public targets only HEIs when they talk about the quality of higher education, but they never blame it on the secondary education system which is of poor quality”.

With reference to the curriculum within HEIs in Cambodia, most rectors tended to defend themselves from the criticism that their universities copied the curriculum from overseas and just made minor changes. They explained that the curriculum in their universities was relevant to the market and industry needs as representatives from the industry were usually invited to participate in a curriculum workshop before the curriculum was developed.

The rectors tended to soften their stance on the qualifications of the teachers in their universities. They all admitted to facing a shortage of well-qualified teachers. As a result, they said that teachers overloaded themselves with work as they had to teach at least in more than one university in order to make supplementary academic incomes. They agreed with the teachers that less than 50 percent of the teachers were qualified to teachers while the rest still needed further training in order to upgrade their qualifications. In terms of professional teaching, the rectors also agreed that most teachers, especially old ones, still used the traditional method of teaching while younger teachers who had been educated overseas tended to use the student-centred activities. Yet, the rectors explained that they still allowed both the traditional and the student-centred methods of teaching due to a shortage of teachers, and because Cambodian students were not familiar with the student-centred method. One rector explained that most Cambodian students did not like the student-centred style as they expect the teacher to be a giver of information rather than a facilitator of the learning process. As regards the learning and teaching resources within HEIs, the rectors shared the same view with the teachers and students. They all accepted the criticism that most HEIs in Cambodia had very limited learning and teaching resources, and the library did not have access to electronic journals. In this sense, they admitted that the inadequacy of learning and teaching resources in HEIs became an epidemic in Cambodia, and that only a few universities had subscribed to e-journals, but those journals were not easily accessible as the Internet speed was very slow. With regard to the facilities, the rectors commented that there was an improvement as the ACC had shut down a few universities that did not have proper facilities. As regards the management of the university, the rectors seemed to accept the criticism that they did not have good academic and leadership

skills, but that the lack of those skills was a result of social and political changes that Cambodia had gone through.

In short, the rectors' reactions to the quality of Cambodian higher education indicated that they were a stakeholder group that was enormously proud and satisfied with the development of higher education in Cambodia. They also appeared to be defensive regarding their education services they were providing although they accepted the fact that some general aspects of the quality in Cambodian higher education were still lacking. It was clear that the rectors mainly viewed the quality of their higher education services in a positive way, and they appeared to join the teachers in protecting the quality of Cambodian higher education against the criticism. It is believed that the rectors both in the public and private HEIs earned respect from the public, so they had to protect their educational services that were expected to be of good quality by other stakeholders. Furthermore, as they benefited a lot from their positions, they had to view the quality of higher education in Cambodia from a positive perspective in order to gain public confidence. However, the rectors tended to share a similar view with both the teachers and the students that common aspects of quality in Cambodian higher education needed to be taken into serious consideration as those aspects were still lacking.

The section below is another story about the quality of Cambodian higher education given by the rectors' technical consultants who worked closely under the same roof with the rectors. The university consultants were believed to have followed the development of higher education in Cambodia closely. Did they support the rectors' views or did they have a different story from the rectors?

University consultants' views on quality

In Cambodia, most HEIs have technical consultants who are foreign expatriates. They are mostly from English speaking countries, in particular the United States and Australia. They provide the HEIs with advice regarding academic issues. In most public HEIs, a technical consultant is either hired by the institution or by a project funded by an aid donor agency. However, in a private HEI, a technical consultant is hired by the institution to help it with various kinds of work. Understandably, the technical consultants are directly involved in the operation of the HEIs in Cambodia through their work. In this study, they were viewed as good resource persons as they have monitored the recent development of Cambodian higher education. They were recommended for interviews by a former World Bank consultant for higher education in Cambodia.

During the fieldwork in Cambodia, four informal interviews were conducted with four university consultants. Two worked in public universities and the other two were hired by private universities. The consultants were recruited through the researcher's personal communication. They were briefed with the primary purpose of this study before the interviews started. Below were their genuine reactions to the quality of Cambodian higher education.

When asked to give a definition on quality in higher education in general, their views on the quality dimensions fell to the three elements in the input-process-output framework for quality in higher education. They seemed to be consistent in their responses. From their personal reflections on quality in higher education, they explained that a good quality university should have relevant curriculum, well-qualified and well-paid teachers, adequate learning and teaching resources, exam control committee, good management and leadership and good quality graduates who are qualified for employment. Their views on quality in higher education were similar to those of the university rectors. However, did they think that HEIs in Cambodia had the characteristics of quality they described above?

When asked how they thought of the quality in Cambodian higher education, their voices were strongly critical. They appeared to have a negative view on higher education in Cambodia in general. With their daily experiences and work with their universities, they strongly perceived that there were only a few universities that were trying to show quality in their higher education service. Generally, they tended to regard private HEIs as a business firm which tried to sell courses to students without giving attention to quality. They seemed to hold a critical view similar to that of the students. The university consultants accused most private HEIs of focusing more on profit-making rather than showing quality in their courses. They also commented that private HEIs offered courses that were not matched to the market need or the needs for the development of the country. As a result, many graduates only get employed in fields that are unrelated to their studies. A large number of enrolments are seen in business-related courses which do not respond to the market demand. In this sense, this caused a mismatch between a higher education provision and labour force needs, consistent with views expressed by Ford (2006).

Similarly, the university consultants were also critical of the public HEIs. They believed that public HEIs offered courses that were too theoretical, irrelevant, and unrelated to the needs of the marketplace and the needs of the country. They had strong opinions that the public HEIs were under political influence and were resistant to changes. They all noticed that the government lacked quality control measures to regulate all HEIs. In general, the consultants took a tough stance on the quality of Cambodian higher education. They all argued that it was

hard to tell if the quality in higher education in Cambodia existed or not as they explained that some students in both public and private HEIs allegedly paid money to get their certificates which were not known whether those certificates maintained minimum standards or not.

Below were their views on the quality aspects of higher education they mentioned above. With regard to the curriculum within HEIs, they seemed to share a similar view with the teachers and students. They strongly argued that most HEIs just copied the curriculum from overseas and most Cambodia teachers just compiled the textbooks and make them their own teaching materials. They pointed out that this was the reason why the skills students obtained were not relevant to the market need. They suggested that all HEIs in Cambodia should design a curriculum that responded to the real need of the local market and to the national development needs. In this regard, the 2004 World Bank report expressed the same concern over the curriculum by asking all HEIs to strengthen the curriculum or graduates may become disillusioned in having paid tuition fees for a degree that does not lead to employment equal to expectations (Sloper, 2004).

When asked to judge the qualifications of the university teachers in Cambodian HEIs, the consultants' views were also consistently critical. They claimed that Cambodia had a severe shortage of well-qualified teachers, but had a surplus of unqualified teachers who graduated with local Masters Degrees every year. They perceived that the older generation teachers were less qualified than younger ones who had been educated overseas. From their personal observations, they pointed out that many teachers still used the old method of teaching which involved a lot of rote-learning and memorization. They argued that only young teachers who had been educated overseas and saw what universities in the developed nations were teaching brought back new ideas of teaching. In this regard, they seemed to praise the younger generation teachers for trying to introduce the new teaching method. As regards the learning and teaching resources, they had the same view with the teachers and students as they all claimed that most HEIs did not have adequate learning and teaching resources. They also commented that some universities did not even have a library or lab. They felt that most HEIs did not have proper facilities, and they thanked the ACC for shutting down a few HEIs which underperformed and did not meet the ACC facility requirements, but they suggested that the ACC do its job consistently. In regards to good management and leadership, the university consultants did not believe that university rectors in both public and private HEIs had management and leadership skills to run a university. They argued that the rectors in the public HEIs were deeply involved with politics and lacked academic backgrounds while most private HEIs were run by rich and influential politicians.

In short, the university consultant group appeared strongly critical of the quality in Cambodian higher education. They tended to view the quality in Cambodian higher education from a Western perspective, and they were clearly a stakeholder group who openly criticized the Cambodian government for failing to take effective measures to regulate the fast growth of higher education as well as to tackle the quality issue. They also seemed to be critical of every aspect of quality in Cambodian higher education. Their views were different from the teachers and the rectors who seemed to be not only very defensive, but also supportive of the quality of Cambodian higher education. The university consultants shared similar critical views with the student group on the quality of Cambodian higher education. The section below is another account of the quality of Cambodian higher education from the Cambodian government. Did the government support the rectors or the consultants? And what did the government use to back up its argument if it decides to side with one group over another?

Government's views on quality

The government in this study was represented by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS), the Department General of Higher Education (DGHE), the Department of Higher Education (DoHE), the Department of Scientific Research (DSR) and the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC). As described in Chapter Two, these four organizations are the main arms of the government related to higher education. The DoHE, DGHE and DSR are the arms of the MoEYS, while the ACC, which is the external quality assessor, is the arm of the Council of Ministers.

The researcher was fortunate to have been granted access to conduct informal interviews with senior influential officials within each of the organizations above. These senior people were personally approached for interviews by the researcher. Informal interviews were held with a Secretary of State for the MoEYS, a Deputy Director General of DGHE, a Deputy Director of the DoHE and a Deputy Director of the DSR. Two other informal interviews were conducted with senior officials in the Department of Quality Assurance in the ACC. This person was also known as a good source as they had been involved in the quality assessment programs within all HEIs in Cambodia. Responses from the above interviews with the government representatives in this study would provide some useful clues for an understanding of the quality of Cambodian higher education as these informants had been directly involved in the development of Cambodian higher education.

There was considerable unanimity in the responses of these participants and their views on the quality dimensions were similar to those of the rectors and university consultants. When asked

to define what quality in higher education meant to them, the government representatives echoed that a good quality university had to articulate the characteristics of the quality from the input-process-output framework. They strongly argued that quality in higher education should be examined in light of all the aspects such admission procedures, curriculum implementation, qualifications of teaching academics, learning and teaching resources, facilities, governance and graduates. Their views on quality in higher education cover the full range of the higher education system. The views of the Cambodian government on quality in higher education were thus similar to those of other governments elsewhere. From a general view, governments around the world invest a huge amount of money in higher education in expectations that universities produce highly educated workforces to meet the needs of the economy. Therefore, the government thinks that higher education institutions should respond to skills shortages, have a clear mission and effective links to the employers, and be efficient and effective in the use of the public money while ensuring adequate resources for learning (Harvey, et al., 1992; Hewitt & Clayton, 1999).

When asked how they thought of the quality of Cambodian higher education, there was consistency in their responses. They said they were aware of the criticism from both local foreign critics over the fast growth of HEIs, mainly the private ones in Cambodia. However, they were supportive of the rapid growth of in the number of HEIs as this had widened access to higher education when the government's capacity to absorb the increasing number of higher school leavers was very limited. They expressed a strong sense that the quality of Cambodian higher education was not too low, based on their daily work with HEIs.

Government participants put forward three reasons to support their positive assessment of the current quality of Cambodian higher education. The first reason was that they said the MoEYS, especially the DoHE had invested a lot of time and effort to make sure that higher education was responsive to the market need in Cambodia. In this respect, they claimed that the labour market had accepted the quality of the graduates. The government's view on higher education was exactly the same to that of the rectors. This is consistent with public statements by senior government leaders. For example, in the 2009 Education Congress, the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport stressed that, "the higher education sector in Cambodia has grown noticeable both in quantity and quality, and that higher education institutions, regardless of being private or public, are working together to provide quality services to our students who are valuable assets for Cambodia's development" (Kohsantepheap, 2009). A deputy Prime Minister who presided over the Congress also praised the MoEYS for its work in higher education, which had made significant contributions to Cambodia's economic growth.

The second reason for government participants' positive views was international frame of reference through which they sometimes viewed higher education in Cambodia. In this sense, they argued that there had been an expansion of higher education worldwide before the quality of higher education became an issue. They concluded that Cambodian higher education was following the world trend, and it just lagged behind that of some countries in the region due to the fact that Cambodia had experienced a civil war for almost three decades. They used a historical frame of reference to contextualise the quality of Cambodian higher education. In this view, they contended that the quality of Cambodian higher education was better than it was twenty years ago when Cambodian higher education was going through a lot of transitions in which higher education was never subject to any quality assessment.

A third reason for their positive view was their belief that critiques of the quality of Cambodian higher education were overstated. They explained that there had been no independent survey of higher education in Cambodia that had indicated that the quality of Cambodian higher education was poor. They pointed out that they had heard a lot of criticism over the quality of Cambodian higher education, but the criticism was just an opinion, in their view, not a fact.

Interestingly, while being very positive about the overall quality of Cambodian higher education, when asked to comment on the quality of specific aspects of higher education they had mentioned— such as the admission, curriculum, qualifications of the teachers and their teaching methods, learning and teaching resources and facilities, governance and good quality graduates—their stances on those issues were similar those of the university consultants. Furthermore, what was interesting was that they shifted their defence to the criticism against those aspects. The interview data revealed that they shared the same views with the university consultants on criticizing those aspects.

Regarding the entry of students into HEIs, they seemed to admit that although the Admission Office in the DoHE helps manage students' entry to higher education, there was something that needed to be taken into account. They expressed some concerns over the entry of students into higher education. The first thing was that most high school leavers who passed the national exam were inadequately prepared for their studies in higher education programs as they did not learn very much from high school. The second thing to notice was that there are some alleged irregularities in the exams every year. The irregularities included cheating and bribes from both students and teachers who are assigned to be proctors during the exam period. They claimed that most HEIs tend to compete with each other for fee-paying students who are the main source of their revenues, and competition for this kind of revenue has made many HEIs less selective in the admission, consistent with claims made by Ngoy (2009) and (Leng, 2010).

The government representatives were also very critical of the curriculum in HEIs in Cambodia. They seemed to have a strong and unifying view that most private HEIs brought in the curriculum from overseas without contextualizing it, and that the curriculum was not responsive to the real need of the market demand in Cambodia as the market development moved faster than the curriculum in HEIs. A participant at the DoHE said that from his work experience, he found that most private HEIs just copied the curriculum from overseas and they just submitted it to the MoEYS for approval when they wanted to run a new course. On the other hand, the MoEYS and the DoHE perceived that some public universities sometimes ran a workshop before they developed the curricula. The DoHE explained that as most public HEIs are under different ministries, each ministry designed its own curriculum when it wanted to run a new course and submitted it to the MoEYS for approval. But the MoEYS and DoHE lacked expertise in assessing that curriculum. As a result, the MoEYS just trusted those ministries and gave a temporary approval to the submitted curriculum. However, as far as the curriculum was concerned, the DGHE and ACC explained that there was no process of curriculum development in HEIs in Cambodia, and that the only HEI that developed its own curriculum was the Institute of Foreign Languages, which is located in the Royal University of Phnom Penh. They concluded that in general the curriculum within HEIs was imported from overseas, and those HEIs just tried to implement it in Cambodia without contextualizing it to fit the real need of the local market and the needs of the national development in Cambodia.

With regard to the qualifications of the teachers within HEIs, the MoEYS, DGHE, DoHE, DSR and ACC also seemed to share a sentiment with the university consultants. They unanimously recognized that there was really a shortage of well-qualified teachers in HEIs. An interviewee at the DoHE explained that when HEIs submitted their paper work to run new courses he observed that he found the same teachers in the lists of the teaching staff in different HEIs. He claimed that many teachers were teaching in several HEIs due to the lack of qualified teachers. They all contended that less than 30 percent of the teachers were qualified enough to teach, and these teachers were the younger generation teachers who had received education overseas. There were concerns over the qualifications of the teachers in HEIs as the DGHE asserted that most teachers earned their postgraduate degrees locally where the course programs were dismal (personal conversation with an official in DoHE). They seemed to view the older generation as incompetent, saying that these teachers still used the traditional old method of teaching. In this sense, the Secretary General of the ACC admitted that the ACC was concerned about the poor teaching within HEIs, and that the ACC was making a law that requires all HEIs have appropriate standard of teaching (Pov, 2009). On the other hand, they described the younger generation teachers as qualified enough to teach as these people brought back new teaching

innovation from the developed nations where they had received their education. They perceived that the younger generation teachers were trying to introduce the new teaching methodology which involves the student-centred activities. However, Samnang (2010) reported that the student-centred activities existed only on paper and most teachers rarely applied this approach to their teaching. As of the lack of qualified teachers, the government said that most teachers were overloaded with their work as they taught many hours in more than one institution in order to supplement their academic incomes, leaving little time for research on their disciplines. They explained that due to a meagre salary from the government, the teachers in most public HEIs sought to make extra incomes in private HEIs because they were offered a better pay. It is now believed that most university teachers who have a Masters degree from an English speaking country are being paid from \$10 to \$15 per hour in private HEIs (personal conversation with a staff member in the ACC). Therefore, most teachers in the public HEIs did not have a sense of commitment to their professional teaching careers in the university they are assigned to teach as they turn more attention to teaching in private universities.

In regards to the learning and teaching resources within HEIs, government participants seemed to show their dismay. They claimed that most HEIs had very limited learning and teaching resources both in English and Khmer, and that most HEIs had only small libraries which were stacked mainly with out-dated books. They also argued that most libraries did not have access to the Internet and e-journals.

As far as the facilities were concerned, they all agreed that most private HEIs did not have suitable facilities and did not have equipment or labs for students to do experiments. As a result, the ACC had shut down a few institutions that failed to meet the ACC facility requirements. However, they stated that although many public HEIs had labs, the equipment for experiments in those labs was too old, and only the public HEIs that received financial aid from an aid agency had proper equipment and labs for experiments. In regard with the governance within HEIs, the government claimed that HEIs had some autonomy, and that the government would not let HEIs have full autonomy as HEIs were not yet ready to show their accountability. With regard to the quality of the graduates, the government accepted the fact that graduates lacked critical and analytical skills as a result of the rote learning they were accustomed to.

In summary, in general the MoEYS, DGHE, DoHE, DSR and ACC who represented the Cambodian government seemed to be supportive of the overall development of higher education in Cambodia. They seemed to throw their support behind the rectors in giving a generally positive assessment of the quality of Cambodian higher education. However, they were very critical of the specific aspects of the quality of Cambodia's higher education. Their views on

these aspects were similar to the views of the university consultants. Although they seemed to be very supportive of the current development of higher education in Cambodia, the government participants lamented the poor quality of particular elements within HEIs. According to their assessment of the quality of Cambodian higher education overall, it was clear that they seemed to support the rectors' views. Both the government and the rectors used a historical frame of references to defend the quality in Cambodian higher education. However, when offering their opinions on the quality aspects in higher education, the government views were as critical as the university consultants.

Donors' views on quality

As stated in Chapter One, the donors in this study were represented by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and AusAID. The World Bank and ADB have been directly involved in higher education in Cambodia through their financial aid programs while AusAID has been a major scholarship provider for Cambodian students and government employees to undertake postgraduate studies in Australia. Among the three donor agencies, the World Bank has played the biggest role in trying to reshape and restructure the higher education system in Cambodia. The trio has their representative offices in Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. Four informal interviews were conducted with the representatives of these organizations. Two informal interviews were held with former and current World Bank consultants to the DoHE. One interview was conducted with an ADB program manager in charge of an education project in Cambodia. Another interview was held with an AusAID representative office in Phnom Penh.

When asked to define what quality in higher education meant to them, their perceptions of quality fell into the three elements of the input, process and output of higher education. Their perceptions of quality in higher education were similar to that of the government. They all said that quality in higher education could not be defined from a single perspective, but from all the elements of the input-process-output framework. One participant (Warner) explained that, "Quality does not mean that a university just focuses on teaching students and giving exams to students, but the university must offer courses that were responsive to the community needs, and it must teach students how they can expand their horizon". The donors, like the university consultants, seemed to view the quality in higher education from a Western viewpoint as they were all educated in English speaking nations. For example, when asked what characteristics a good quality university should have, there was consistency in the donors' views on quality. Their responses unanimously indicated that a good quality university should have well-qualified teachers, sufficient learning and teaching resources, relevant curriculum, a suitable campus and

facilities, institutionalized well-documented quality assurance procedures, full autonomy and good quality graduates. The donors' views on quality in higher education were similar to the university consultants' views which covered almost every aspect of the quality dimensions in higher education. We wonder if they would say that HEIs in Cambodia had the quality characteristics they mentioned above.

When asked to give their impressions on the quality of Cambodian higher education, it was interesting to find that their views were unified and were strongly critical of the quality of Cambodian higher education. They perceived that the quality of Cambodian higher education was still very low compared to that of some countries in the region. There seemed to be an agreement among the donors that the quality of Cambodian higher education was poor beyond description. They argued that only a few universities were introducing quality, but in a *de facto* laissez faire regulatory environment, most HEIs were run like a business organization. In this sense, they explained that most HEIs in Cambodia provided minimum education quality as they aimed mainly to make profit rather than focusing on quality by searching for revenues in a context of fierce competition for fee-paying students. An officer at the ADB was quoted in the media stating that, "if the low quality of higher education still continues it will affect Cambodia's economic development" (AFP, 2008). The donors also tended to view Cambodia as a developing nation which did not have the human resources to effectively run the universities. In this aspect, they argued that most HEIs in Cambodia did not have qualified teachers to teach and qualified people to run a university. They also described the Cambodian government as incapable of controlling the universities because there was little regulation to put the increasing number of HEIs under control. As a result, they felt that more universities were run like certificate shops in which students would just pay their tuition fees and collect their certificates at the end of their programs. In general, the donors appeared to have a negative view on higher education in Cambodia because the higher education sector in Cambodia had been growing uncontrollably.

When asked how they would describe some aspects of quality of higher education in Cambodia such as curriculum, the qualifications of the teachers, learning and teaching resources and facilities, institutionalized well-documented quality assurance procedures, full autonomy and good quality graduates, they all seemed to hold a negative view on those aspects. The interview data revealed that the donors all seemed to be critical of the curriculum within HEIs. They said that in general the curriculum was poorly developed and was not well targeted on priority and national professional skill development needs. Moreover, they argued that most HEIs just copied the curriculum from overseas, simply using standard British or American textbooks without contextualizing the content. Previous studies by the World Bank (Bumatay, 2009;

Orivel, 2009) express similar concerns on the curriculum in HEIs in Cambodia, and point out that the capacity of HEIs in Cambodia to design their own curriculum was lacking. As a result, the donors explained, students learned skills that were not responsive and relevant to the local market needs.

As far as the qualifications of the teachers were concerned, the donors' views were as critical as the views of the university consultants. The donors argued that overall there was a chronic shortage of well-qualified and experienced teachers in all HEIs. They claimed that in the race to accumulate a good personal income through funded supplementary teaching hours, many teachers seemed to be interested in teaching many classes with poor quality instruction without giving any attention to research. They categorized university teachers in Cambodia into two groups. They stated that many teachers especially the older generation teachers were not qualified enough to teach and still stuck to the old method of teaching which involves the teacher giving a lecture to students. On the other hand, they all seemed to turn their attention to the younger generation teachers who had returned from their overseas studies. They believed that the young generation teachers who had been educated overseas were better qualified to teach as these teachers seemed to bring in new teaching concepts and encouraged interactive activities in the classroom.

In regards to the learning and teaching resources within HEIs in Cambodia, the donors complained that most HEIs lacked good libraries and learning and teaching resources. They cited inadequate revenues both from the government and from fees driven low by competition for students as the main cause for this inefficiency of the resources in most HEIs. Critical of the learning and teaching resources within HEIs, they echoed that only a few HEIs had a library that had access to the Internet and e-journals, mentioning a few leading private universities as examples. In regard to the facilities, the donors commented that some public HEIs that had been established for a long time inherited excellent land and buildings and were able to make effective use of the donor and fee resources to renovate and construct new facilities such as buildings and labs and to equip those faculties with appropriate technology. On the other hand, they said that only a few private HEIs were able to acquire or buy land, construct or renovate buildings and install adequate equipment in labs. In most circumstances, they stated that most private HEIs which rented buildings did not have adequate facilities.

With regard to the institutional quality assurance within HEIs, the donors claimed that nearly all HEIs in Cambodia did not currently have the capability to develop institutional quality assurance procedures. Without the institutional quality assurance in place, the donors argued that it was very difficult for the ACC perform institutional quality assessments. With regard to

governance of HEIs, the donors believed that HEIs did not have full autonomy as the MoEYS still exercised considerable control over their operations. In regard to the quality of graduates, the donors stated that only a small number of them were suitably qualified for employment. This view is in line with Ford's (2003) claim that only 30 per cents of graduates were able to find work. The donors agree that most graduates lacked critical and analytical skills. An officer at the ADB was quoted in the media expressing the concern that, "Cambodia will have trouble luring foreign investment if it does not start producing more qualified graduates" (AFP, 2008).

To summarise, it was clear from their responses that the donors viewed the quality of Cambodian higher education in very similar terms as the university consultants. With their Western experiences, they tended to look at higher education in Cambodia in a comparative perspective, and were very critical of every aspect of quality of Cambodian higher education. They viewed Cambodian students as not hard-working and teachers as unprofessional. While overall they were more critical, their views on particular aspects of quality in line with the views by other stakeholder groups, in particular the curriculum, qualifications of the teachers and their teaching methodologies, learning and teaching resources and facilities, institutional quality assurance procedures and the quality graduates.

Employers' views on quality

The employers in this study were involved in the recruitment of graduates from HEIs into the world of work. They were categorized into two groups. The first group was made up of local employers while the second group comprised foreigners who were human resource managers in multinational corporations in Cambodia. The foreign employers were recommended by a graduate recruitment network in Cambodia. Three informal interviews were conducted with human resource managers in three different multinationals in Phnom Penh. One interview was held with an independent company which recruits graduates from HEIs in Cambodia for employers. One interview was held with the human resource manager in a large private telecommunication company. Two were conducted with the directors of the personnel departments in two governmental ministries. They all had been in their jobs for a long time, and had extensive experience in the staff recruitment. Some of the employers had been members of the ACC assessment team and one foreign employer was involved with higher education through their projects with the MoEYS. Access to those employers was arranged through the researcher network in Phnom Penh.

When asked how they thought about quality in higher education, the employers' views pointed mainly to the output (graduates) in the input-process-output framework and there was

considerable unanimity in their responses. As they had been recruiting many graduates, they were more interested to see that a good quality university should produce good quality graduates who had skills demanded by employers and seemed to disregard the inputs and processes of higher education. Their views are consistent with previous studies that have indicated that employers view quality in higher education in relation to skills and attributes that graduates possess. Joseph and Joseph (1997a), Hesketh (2000), Harvey (2000) and Warn and Tranter (2001), have identified employer concerns with the competency of graduates and the skills, especially analytical and problem-solving, and transferable skills that they need for actual job performance. Therefore, the views of the employers in this study on the quality of education services were similar to those in other parts of the world.

However, when asked how they thought of the quality of Cambodian higher education, there were different perceptions between the employers in the governmental agencies and those in the private sector. The employers in the governmental agencies seemed to throw their support behind the current status of higher education in Cambodia while those in the private sector seemed to be very critical. The employers in the governmental agencies shared their views with the rectors and the teachers that the quality in higher education in Cambodia was not too low, and that it just needed more attention to improvement. They cited two reasons to back up their argument that the quality of Cambodian higher education was not too low. The first reason given was that they judged the quality in higher education in Cambodia from a historical view. They strongly argued that never before had there been a massive number of students flocking to HEIs in Cambodia. One employer in a governmental ministry claimed that, “if there was no quality in Cambodian higher education, parents would send their children to study overseas”. From this view, they believed that the quality of Cambodian higher education did exist at a level satisfactory and acceptable to parents who are generally known to pay their children’s tuition fees.

The second reason given by public sector employers to support their positive views was that staff members in their ministries had willingly pursued their studies in HEIs in Cambodia. In this regard, they argued that there was no country in the world like Cambodia where government employees flocked to university to enroll themselves in various courses in order to upgrade their qualifications and productivity in the workplace. One employer in the governmental agency commented that, “from my observations as the director of the Personnel Department, I noticed that many staff members in my ministry who had undertaken their studies in HEIs in Cambodia improved their work productivity”. He proudly said that those staff had learned new skills and expanded their knowledge as a result of their studies. This view indicated

that HEIs in Cambodia ran courses or programs with quality that led to an improvement of work productivity of the government servants in their ministries.

However, the employers in the governmental ministries tended to be critical of the graduates who were full-time students. In Cambodia, a governmental ministry takes new recruits almost every year, and graduates who wish to get employment in the governmental ministries have to sit for exams. A personnel director said that his ministry usually had difficulties recruiting graduates because they did not do well in the exams. He explained that their scores were so low that the exam committee had to review the marking of the exam papers many times in order to get the required number of the new recruits. He questioned how the graduates could go through their four year bachelor programs or two year Masters Programs if they had learned so little. Such doubts denoted that the employers in the governmental ministries were not satisfied with the quality of the graduates. In short, the views of employers in the governmental ministries were not different from other local stakeholders groups such as the teachers, rectors and the government who seemed very supportive of higher education in Cambodia. The employers in the governmental ministries appeared to be strongly defensive against criticism that the quality in Cambodian higher education was very poor, but accepted that graduates lacked the skills required.

By contrast, the employers in the industry sector viewed the quality in higher education in Cambodia from a negative perspective. From their experiences as employers who had recruited many Cambodian graduates, they tended to say that there was not much improvement in the quality in higher education. They held the same view with the university consultants regarding the running of a university in Cambodia. They contended that higher education in Cambodia had become business-oriented with most HEIs becoming like a business enterprise which focused more on profit than paying attention to quality. They had a very critical view on graduates from HEIs, and they all said that the graduates lacked the skills the employers demanded. In this perspective, they all complained that they had to make many interviews with many applicants in order to select the qualified graduates for the vacancies. From their personal experiences in interviewing graduates, they all complained that graduates from HEIs did not have skills that met the demand of employers, and that graduates lacked both critical and analytical skills as a result of a habit that students expected their teachers to spoon-feed them with information they needed without having to challenge the teachers in the classroom. From the reactions of the foreign employers to the quality in Cambodian higher education, it was clear that these employers were very critical of the quality in Cambodian higher education, and they had their own reasons to support their argument against the employers in the governmental ministries who were satisfied with the development of Cambodia's current higher education.

Although the employers in the governmental agencies and those in the industry sector had a different view on the quality of higher education in Cambodia, they all had a lot in common to tell regarding the aspects of quality such as the curriculum, qualifications of the teachers and their methods of teaching, learning and teaching resources and facilities within HEIs in Cambodia. In regards to the curriculum, both the employers in the governmental agencies and those in the industry sector held the same view on it. They all believed that the curriculum was not responsive to the market need, and they suggested that the curriculum needed to be strengthened. They made a suggestion that there should be a more standardized curriculum nationwide as HEIs in Cambodia are under the supervision of many different ministries. This meant that each HEI had a different curriculum which did not meet a standard and which was not responsive to the industry demand. With regard to the qualifications of the teachers in HEIs, they had the same view as the other stakeholder groups. They assumed that HEIs Cambodia suffered a shortage of well-qualified and experienced teachers. In this sense, they commented that there was only a small pool of qualified teachers, but these teachers were wanted by many universities, so they taught many hours in more than one institution without having enough time for research and development. They also said that more teachers still used the old method of teaching which involved the teacher talking more than the students do. The old teaching methodology was a legacy from the French style of teaching which were passed to them many years ago. As far as the learning and teaching resources were concerned, they all seemed to be very critical as they stated that these resources were still lacking in most HEIs. They claimed that although most universities had a library, the library did not have adequate reading materials such books or article journals. They said that some universities did not have basic facilities and most did not even have IT labs for experiments. They tended to argue that the lack of learning resources and IT facilities made students rely heavily on the teachers to provide them with inadequate information.

To wrap up, it was clear that the employers in the governmental ministries and foreign employers in Cambodia had a conflicting view on the quality in Cambodian higher education. The employers in the governmental ministries seemed to be supportive of the current quality of higher education, while the foreign ones were very critical. However, they both made critical statements on the same specific aspects of quality in Cambodian higher education, and they both commented that graduates lacked critical and analytical skills.

Academic professional associations' views on quality

The Cambodian Higher Education Association (CHEA) was established in the early 2000s when the number of Cambodian HEIs was skyrocketing uncontrollably. It represents all HEIs in Cambodia, but its main elements such as the President and Secretary of this association are mainly drawn from private HEIs and at the time of this study, the President of CHEA was the rector of a private university. Foreign critics have always accused the CHEA of not being independent from politics (Ford, 2003) as its President and other senior members also have roles as advisors to the Council of Ministers. The Cambodia Independent Teachers Association (CITA) has been established for a long time and has been very active in challenging the government for reform of both general and higher education. The CITA is known to have a strong connection with the main opposition political party as its president and senior officials have a tendency toward the opposition party. Four interviews were conducted with these academic unions. Two informal interviews were held with senior members of the CHEA, and two interviews were conducted with two senior officials in CITA who are very vocal critics of government policy on both general and higher education.

The interview data revealed that the CHEA's view on quality in higher education was similar to that of the government and the rectors while the CITA's view was the same as the university consultants'. However, when asked to define quality in higher education meant to them, they both said that quality in higher education should be defined in light of all the aspects of the input-process-output. The themes emerging from the interviews indicated that a good quality university should have good criteria for student selection, good qualifications of the teachers, adequate learning and teaching resources, good management and good quality graduates.

When asked to comment on the quality of Cambodian higher education, the CHEA had a similar view with that of the government and the rectors who supported the current situation of Cambodian higher education. Supportive of the government, the CHEA sang the same tune about the quality of Cambodian higher education as the government and the rectors did. It contended that the quality of Cambodian higher education was not too low or too bad, and it strongly believed that the quality was acceptable within the context of Cambodia. It had two reasons to support its argument that the quality in higher education in Cambodia was not low. These two reasons were exactly similar to those of the rectors and the teachers. According to the interview data, the first reason given was the claimed that the outputs of higher education, which it referred to graduates, got employed in many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and in the private sector. CHEA respondents claimed that, "if the graduates are not of quality, they will not be employed". The second reason was that the CHEA stated that the quality of

Cambodian higher education was not too bad as many countries in the world accepted graduates from Cambodia for their postgraduate studies in those countries. It further argued that if the quality was too low, Cambodian graduates would not successfully complete their postgraduate studies in those developed nations.

The CITA, on the other hand, was very critical of higher education in Cambodia. It claimed that it was hard to describe the quality in Cambodian higher education as the high school leavers who enter higher education were mostly academically weak because they did not learn much at high school. Therefore, the CITA explained that in terms of quality, higher education in Cambodia could not stand in comparison with that of the countries in the region. It argued that most HEIs in Cambodia were like business firms which were trying to make fast money from fee-paying students. CITA accused HEIs in Cambodia of dragging students into a higher education that suffers from weak management and poor teaching because it is geared to more toward profit than quality learning. The President of the CITA has complained publicly that every year on the national exam days, most universities give away fliers to high school students in order to attract them to study in their universities (Chansy & Foster, 2010). The CITA respondents explained that the government had failed to take action to control HEIs that offered poor course programs, and consequently, HEIs took this opportunity to make profit rather than focusing on quality. The CITA asserted that most HEIs were run by highly influential and rich politicians, and that laws which negatively affected their interests were not implemented.

In general, the CHEA looked at the quality of Cambodian higher education from a positive perspective, and its view on the quality was exactly the same as that of the teachers, rectors and the government who were proudly supportive of the rapid growth of higher education in Cambodia. However, the CITA sounded very critical of the current situation of higher education in Cambodia. The CITA's views on the quality of Cambodia higher education were similar to those of the students and the university consultants. However, when asked to express their opinions on the aspects of quality of higher education they mentioned, the CHEA and CITA seemed to hold similar views on some aspects.

In regards to the curriculum within HEIs, the CHEA appeared to agree that the curriculum in most HEIs was copied from overseas, but it said that the curriculum was contextualized to fit the context of Cambodia. In regard to the qualifications of the teachers, the CHEA and CITA sang the same tune. They believed that the teachers who had been educated overseas were better qualified than those who earned their qualifications locally. They pointed out that the overseas-educated teachers were qualified to teach and were trying to introduce new teaching techniques in the classroom. However, they admitted that HEIs suffered a severe shortage of well-qualified

teachers. They stated that many teachers were still not qualified enough and these teachers needed more training to upgrade themselves to the level of the university teachers.

The CHEA's and CITA's views on the learning and teaching resources within HEIs were as critical as that of the other stakeholder groups. They all seemed to agree that nearly all HEIs in Cambodia had limited learning and teaching resources. They both commented that though each university had a library, but the library did not have sufficient reading materials for students to read, and most resources were mainly in English which was hard for students to read because of the language barrier. With regard to the facilities, they appeared less critical of them as they stated that more universities were investing a lot of money in upgrading their university facilities after the ACC has shut down a few universities which were underperforming. In general, they contended that the physical facilities were improving.

In regards to management within HEIs, the two academic unions had different views. The CHEA, which is close with the government, believed that the most rectors had good management and academic background while the CITA, which is close with the opposition party, strongly argued that most rectors lacked those skills, alleging that university management was closely related to politics and the ruling party. The CITA added that the rectors in Cambodia were not capable of bringing any initiatives to improve the quality of their education services. They thought that a few rectors, especially those from overseas, had new initiatives but they did not want to challenge the government for fears of consequences and safety of their positions and businesses. However, regarding concerns over graduates, both the CHEA and CITA expressed the same view with other stakeholder groups. They claimed that most graduates had not learned the skills demanded by the industry, and explained that graduates lacked both critical and analytical skills due to the fact that the teachers did not encourage any form of criticism in the classroom. The CITA argued that about 20 percents of graduates were qualified for employment.

To wrap up, the CHEA sounded very supportive of the current situation of higher education in Cambodia whereas the CITA was very critical. However, in regards to the aspects of quality in Cambodian higher education such as the curriculum, the qualifications of the teachers, learning and teaching resources and facilities, management and graduates, both CHEA and CITA accepted that those aspects of quality in Cambodian HEIs were still lacking, and they needed further attention and improvement.

Themes emerging from stakeholder interviews

The responses from all the stakeholder groups in this study indicated that different stakeholders held different perceptions of quality in Cambodian higher education. Each stakeholder group came up with their personal arguments. However, it was interesting to find that all the stakeholder groups shared similar sentiments about the characteristics that determined quality in higher education in general. Through the interview data eight common themes emerged. These themes reflected the stakeholders' perceptions of the quality aspects were admission, curriculum, qualified teachers, learning and teaching resources, infrastructure, good university governance and leadership, employment outcome for graduates and institutional quality assurance. These themes are presented in the table below in order to show which groups prioritised which particular themes.

Table 2. Aspects of quality in higher education of major concern to stakeholders

	Students	Teachers	Rectors	Consultants	Government	Donors	Public Employers	Private Employers	CHEA and CITA
Admission			✓	✓	✓				✓
Curriculum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Qualified teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Governance & leadership		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Employment outcomes			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Institutional QA				✓	✓	✓			

As illustrated in this table, the most common aspects cited by all stakeholders in relation to quality in higher education were the curriculum, qualifications of teachers, learning and teaching resources and the infrastructure. The other aspects of quality included governance and leadership and the employment outcome for graduates. Only four stakeholders groups—rectors, university consultants, government and CHEA and CITA—pointed to admission standards. The least mentioned aspect of quality was the institutional quality assurance, which was only mentioned by university consultants, government and donors.

Local and international stakeholders' views on quality of the Cambodian system

This section presents the comparison of different perceptions of the quality in Cambodia higher education between local and international stakeholders. The local stakeholders included the university students, university teachers, rectors, employers in the governmental ministries, the government which is presented by the MoEYS, DGHE, DoHE, DSR, ACC, CHEA and CITA. On the other hand, the international stakeholders were made up of foreign employers in the multinationals and those in the private sector, the university consultants, and the donors, who were represented by the World Bank, ADB and AusAID. The main purpose in this section is to understand the differences and similarities of their views and the ways the quality in Cambodian higher education was perceived.

The interview data indicated clearly that there were different ways in which the quality in Cambodian higher education was perceived by local and international stakeholders. All local stakeholder groups, except the students and the CITA, seemed overwhelmingly supportive and proud of the development of higher education in Cambodia. Despite there is mounting concern over the quality of Cambodian higher education, the local stakeholders still had strong opinions that the quality of Cambodian higher education was not too low, and that it was acceptable in the current context of Cambodia. Based on their past experiences, the local stakeholder groups tended to view the current situation of quality of Cambodian higher education from a historical frame of reference. Looking back to the past, they argued in favour of the quality of Cambodian higher education by saying that Cambodian higher education today is much better than it was 20 years ago. Seemingly proud of the quality in Cambodian higher education, the local stakeholders dismissed the criticism over the quality of Cambodian higher education by foreign critics. All the local stakeholder groups except students and the CITA highlighted the fact that Cambodia had just had peace for the last ten years. They all came up with the same conviction that Cambodia has just reached the stage of the mass system of higher education and stressed the significance of the civil war Cambodia had experienced in explaining the current conditions, making Cambodia's higher education lag behind that of other countries in the region. In brief, the local stakeholder groups who had undergone many historical transitions were very proud of their higher education system.

The students, on the other hand, were very critical of the quality of the higher education services they were receiving from HEIs in exchange for their tuition fees. Unsatisfied with the education services for which they paid, the students strongly argued that the quality of Cambodian higher education was still poor, and they described most HEIs as business enterprises which competed with each other for fee-paying students who are their main source of incomes while not paying

much attention to the quality. The students cited profit-making, inadequacy of learning resources, the lack of qualified teachers and poor facilities in most HEIs as their evidence against the low quality in higher education in Cambodia. The students seemed to base their views on the quality from a modern perspective because they had not experienced the historical, social and political changes that the other (older) local stakeholder groups had. The students grew up in the era of technology, which enabled them to see how the world's higher education looks like. They paid tuition fees from their parents' pockets, and were very demanding of the education services they paid for.

The CITA's perceptions of the quality in Cambodia higher education were more highly critical. Its views were not based on historical perspectives, but on what these respondents saw as the current deficiencies in the management of the higher education system and individual institutions. The CITA openly attacked the government for its failure to control and tackle the quality issue of higher education.

Unlike the local stakeholders who were divided, the international stakeholders were unanimous in their critical view of the quality of Cambodian higher education. They all seemed to make a joint statement that the quality in Cambodian higher education was not only poor, but was also "terrible", claiming that only a few universities were introducing quality, but in a *de facto* laissez-faire regulatory environment, in which most HEIs were run like business firms. They all tended to use a Western frame of reference to view the quality in Cambodian higher education. Judging the Cambodian higher education system from their experiences gained from the Western perspective, they all seemed to believe that HEIs in Cambodia provided a minimum quality of higher education services as most HEIs did not have enough capability to run higher education programs. Based on this perspective, the international stakeholder group described the quality in Cambodian higher education as unsatisfactory, pointing out that there was little regulation to control HEIs. They, therefore, claimed that most HEIs had a free reign to focus more on profit than quality. As a result, they described most universities as a certificate shop where students just paid their tuition fees and they mostly would get their certificates issued at the end of their courses. Western news agencies tend to view higher education in Cambodia in the same way. According to AFP (2008), 70 percent of Cambodian students are not worried about working hard and just enrolled themselves in HEIs to get their certificates. Based on this perception that students will pass regardless, international stakeholders felt strongly that it was difficult to decide if those certificates meant that the recipients had met academic standards or not, as students graduated with the same certificates. In this sense, foreign employers from multinationals complained that they had difficulties selecting the right applicants for the advertised posts, and that they had to interview many graduates before they could pick the right

applicants who were considered qualified for the vacancies, and as a result they tended to take a negative view of the quality of HEIs.

The table below shows the different frames of references used by local and international stakeholders to view the quality in Cambodian higher education. Students and CITA are excluded from the local stakeholder group as they held a different frame of references from what the local stakeholders did.

Table 3. Stakeholders' frames of references

	Local stakeholders	International stakeholders	Students	CITA
Historical	/			
Western		/		
Modern views		/	/	/
Critical views			/	/

Summary

The quality in Cambodian higher education was viewed differently in the input-process-output framework for quality in higher education by the stakeholders. The students' perspective of quality pointed to the process and output while the teachers' perspective shared the same pattern. The university management, university consultants, government, donors and the unions (CHEA and CITA) believed that quality in higher education is determined by aspects of activities in the input-process-output framework. The employer group considered quality in terms of process and output. The findings support the argument that stakeholders have different perceptions of quality in education.

However, on a general view, the local stakeholders (except the students and CITA) supported the current status of higher education and viewed the quality in higher education from a historical frame of references. The students who were critical of the quality of Cambodian higher education seemed to be very critical as they viewed it from their daily interaction with HEIs. The CITA was very critical too as it viewed the quality of Cambodian higher education from the opposition view. The teachers and rectors, the government, CHEA and local employers appeared to be defensive of higher education services. The local stakeholders who were supportive of higher education in Cambodia based on their views on profound convictions that the quality of Cambodian higher education today is better than it was in the past.

The international stakeholders, on the other hand, perceived the quality of Cambodian higher education from the Western frame of references. Judging the Cambodian higher education system from a Western frame of references, they were highly critical of the quality of Cambodian higher education.

However, the local and international stakeholders seemed to have a similar stance on the quality aspects in Cambodian higher education as they all tended to shrug and shake their heads to the aspects of quality of Cambodian higher education such as the curriculum, qualifications of the teachers and teaching methods, learning and teaching resources, facilities, university management and leadership and the quality of graduates. These aspects were described as disconcerting. From the comparison of perceptions of the quality in Cambodian higher education between local and international stakeholders, there was a clear indication that most local stakeholders were supportive of the development of Cambodian higher education while the international ones were very critical. To conclude, it is clear that different stakeholder groups held different perceptions of the quality in Cambodian higher education. Some were supportive while others were very critical of the higher education in Cambodia. The next section will seek stakeholders views on the strategy the Cambodian government has developed so far in order to improve the quality of Cambodian higher education.

Chapter 6: Stakeholders' Views on the Effectiveness of Government's Efforts to Improve Higher Education Quality

This chapter will reveal what strategy the Cambodian government has in place in order to achieve quality in its higher education according to the responses from the participants. This chapter will also present how the participants react to the government strategy to ensure the quality of higher education. When asked to identify the strategy or actions taken by the government to achieve quality in higher education, all responses from the participants indicated that the Cambodian government appeared to have a genuine interest in the improvement of quality in higher education. The one exception was the students, who stated that they had no idea about government strategies for higher education, and so the responses in this chapter exclude this group.

The interview data revealed that participants felt that Cambodia had taken a lot of measures in response to concerns over the quality of higher education. Participants were aware that the Cambodian government had established many rules, regulations and laws designed to improve quality in higher education, and all were aware of the Education Law, the Supreme National Council for Education, the National Framework for PhD assessment, the code of practice for teachers and the establishment in 2003 of the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC). However, according to the interviewees, the government strategies outlined in Chapter Two did not appear to have had a significant effect on the quality of higher education.

The MoEYS, they felt, had taken a positive step toward improving the quality of higher education. According to the interview responses from the university rectors, the university consultants, and the DoHE, the MoEYS had recently instructed all HEIs to develop their own institutional quality assurance units (IQAU) in response to the external quality assessment from the ACC. The main aim of this initiative is to make the HEIs themselves able to develop their capability to improve quality. The MoEYS had also developed a national curriculum framework for the all HEIs in Cambodia. In the future, although HEIs are under the management of different ministries, they would have to use a unified framework for the curriculum.

This chapter will reveal how stakeholders in Cambodian higher education view the government's strategy to ensure quality in its higher education. Participants focused on policy implementation, management of HEIs, ACC management, ACC staff, institutional quality assurance units (IQAU) and IQAU staff. The ACC and IQAUs were considered as catalysts

which the participants believed could lead to quality improvement in higher education in Cambodia. Below the views on the above themes are presented from all stakeholder groups, except those of the student group which acknowledged they had no knowledge about the Cambodian government strategy for higher education.

Policy implementation

According to the interview data, the Cambodian government policy, regulations and law on higher education did not appear to contribute very much to the quality of higher education because the implementation of the policy, regulations or law was not effective. Most stakeholder groups seemed to make similar comments about the weak and lax policy implementation. Based on the data collected, the teachers, rectors, university consultants, the government, donors, employers appeared to share similar sentiment on the government policy. They stated that any law or policy on higher education sounded very good or even perfect on the paper only, but in practice, that law or policy was never effective because there were many factors deemed to affect the policy implementation. As a result, there was not much improvement in the quality of higher education. There were some factors that were considered as the barriers to the policy implementation in higher education in Cambodia, according to the participants.

The first factor that was mostly cited was the lack of human and funding resources to carry out the policy on higher education. All the stakeholder groups seemed to accept the fact that the Cambodian government did not have enough qualified and experienced people and funding to make the policy implementation successful. The implementation of any plan or strategy on higher education depended mainly on both financial and technical assistance from donor agencies. In this sense, the teachers contended that usually a project or plan on higher education was forgotten or stopped its operation when it stopped receiving both technical and financial assistance from donors. The MoEYS also agreed with that view by admitting that it did not have well-trained and experienced staff to carry out the policy. However, the Cambodia Independent Teachers Association (CITA), which has a close relationship with the opposition party, had the opposite view. CITA strongly argued that Cambodia had qualified people to carry out the policy on higher education, but those people were not given the authority to do their job as the power was in the hands of a few people in the government. CITA also argued that the policy is usually intended to honour those in power. The CITA view on the policy implementation was similar to a view that in Cambodia, there is a culture in which people who have status in the traditional hierarchy provide them with more power than those involved with the implementation of education policies (Ayres, 1999).

The second reason why the policy implementation failed, according to the interview data, was due to the fact that the government did not set any strategy to measure the policy implementation. All stakeholders pointed out that when there was no strategy to implement a policy, and that is why it failed. In this regard, they argued that the government policy on higher education did not achieve the desired level of quality in higher education. The CITA further argued that the government gave no attention to the policy implementation as there is a tradition that law reinforcement was never made. The lack of law reinforcement was cited by the (CITA) as a lack of a sense of responsibility to reinforce the policy, and as a means to protect the interests of some high-ranking officials in the government. The CITA argued that it is not unusual to learn that people never pay attention to any law or policy implementation because there is an absence of law reinforcement as Education Law does not impose a penalty for those who fail to comply. As there is an absence of a clear legal framework or strategy for policy implementation, the donors claimed that any policy or reform depends mainly on technical assistance from aid donor agencies. Without assistance from donors, the attempts to reform or implement the policy are like a boat without a compass drifting in an ocean. Furthermore, there is a confusing mechanism over who should lead the reform or policy implementation (Chealy, 2006). This means that there is a lack of interest in designing a mechanism for implementing the education policy at all levels in the MoEYS.

The third factor described by all stakeholder groups as a barrier to the policy implementation was a lack of commitment to carrying out the higher education policy. For example, the teachers said that the MoEYS did not seem to show enough commitment to implementing the policy or law on higher education. One teacher in a public HEI (Sok, male) commented that the MoEYS did not take an active role in responding to the policy implementation. Sok continued to explain that, “everything depends on the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister criticizes an issue, the MoEYS or DoHE starts to turn their attention to that issue, but the attention fades away soon”. The view by the teachers that the MoEYS lacked a commitment to reinforce the government policy was supported by CITA. For example, Rong Chhun, the President of CITA, had no faith in the Cambodian Prime Minister, who urged the MoEYS to strengthen the quality of Cambodian higher education. Rong Chhun argued that the government was not seriously committed to its action to get things done (Pov, 2009). The CITA President described Hun Sen’s words to improve things as, “tadpoles crying in a clay pot”, meaning that what Hun Sen said would never be materialised as the government lacked its commitment to get things done (Khmermachassrok, 2008). In a similar vein, one rector in a public HEI echoed the government lack of commitment to fixing problems in higher education. That rector admitted that, “we know what is going wrong with the quality of our higher education, but we are not committed

enough to fixing it”. The lack of commitment to carrying out the policy is also found in almost all governmental agencies, not just in the higher education sector. The lack of commitment is also reflected in the fact that there have been many workshops and seminars on higher education. “When a workshop is over, the MoEYS never considers the recommendations from the workshop, and most are usually forgotten”, stated one participant. The views from the donors on this point were unanimously consistent and similar to that of the CITA. The donors claimed that all management levels in the MoEYS seemed to lack commitment to implementing the policy. One donor representative explained that, “the decision-makers seemed to be accountable for honouring the policy only rather than their use as cosmetic camouflage for de facto policy”. However, the view that Cambodia lacked commitment to policy implementation was rejected by some participants. Participants who are supportive of the government defended the government against the accusation that it lacked commitment to improve its higher education and willingly failed to implement education policy or law. For example, the MoEYS, ACC and CHEA argued that the government, especially the MoEYS, has made a lot of efforts to implement the government policy on higher education. They added that the policy or law did not work because of the lack of financial incentives to make people involved in the policy implementation committed to their work.

The fourth factor which hinders higher education policy implementation is the political interference. The groups which stated that politics was interfering with the policy implementation were the teachers, university consultants, donors, and CITA. These groups argued that the policy implementation was sometimes crippled by political interference as some government officials ran private universities. They pointed out that those government officials who ran private universities did not want the policy on higher education implemented as the policy affected their interests. In this regard, a university consultant contended that when the DoHE issued an order to HEIs to follow the instructions from the MoEYS, some HEIs ignored that order as they were owned or run by high-ranking politicians. Political interference on any policy implementation is not a strange case in Cambodia. Furthermore, political influence on education policy can be traced through Cambodia’s past tradition. Traditionally, the leaders in every regime have designed education policies just to gain popularity and to legitimize their leadership (Ayres, 2000a), but in practice, politics often meddles with the policy implementation. In a similar vein, the donors tended to believe that the political influence on the policy implementation was sometimes against the content of the policy statements. For example, one donor representative commented that the proposal to set up the ACC was drafted with the intention of having a government-funded body which was independent from the government in order to accredit HEIs on the basis of technical and professional grounds, but because of political interference, the ACC was created by an untouchable Royal Decree which

caused controversy over its independence and credibility. In other words, the policy implantation also goes against the policy statements which make the policy implementation a failure. For example, in 2003, the MoEYS issued a directive which required that students enrolled in Masters Programs write a thesis, and that they are not allowed to sit for exams. In practice, most HEIs that offer postgraduate programs run a Masters program by coursework.

The last, but not the least, factor which affected policy implementation on higher education was the fact that the policy on higher education was created by foreign donors. In this respect, the university consultants and donors argued that as the MoEYS lacked well-qualified and experienced administrative staff to draft the policy statements on higher education, the policy on higher education was substantially initiated or developed by foreign experts who brought in some concepts from elsewhere and tried to put them into practice in Cambodia without contextualizing them. As a result, the problems identified by foreigners usually related to a diverse range of foreign advisors who drafted the policy statements which government leaders claimed to be their policies without realizing the ramifications (McNamara, 1999).

In summary, according to the views from the stakeholders in Cambodian higher education, the policy implementation on higher education was crippled by a number of factors such as the lack of human and financial resources, strategies and commitment, political interference, and the policy statements which were written by foreign experts without realizing the real context in which the problems occurred. The table below summarizes the factors affecting policy implementation on Cambodian higher education.

Table 4. Stakeholders' views on factors affecting the government policy on higher education

	Teachers	Rectors	Consultants	Government	Donors	Employers	CHEA	CITA
Lack of financial, human resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lack of strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of commitment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Political interference	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Policy development by foreigners			✓		✓			

Management of higher education institutions

In Cambodia, public HEIs are under the managerial arms of different ministries as discussed in Chapter Two. The stakeholders commented that the system is fragmented and that there is no consistent coordinating body for HEIs between the ministries that run HEIs and the MoEYS. Some participants argued that as the rectors in public HEIs under different ministries are appointed by parent ministries, those rectors in most circumstances listened to their ministries in order to secure their positions rather than abiding by the policy or directives from the MoEYS. This issue of having no coordinating body for HEIs in various ministries was also raised in a study by O'Mahony (1999), who explained that the MoEYS had little or no horizontal linkage with HEIs not controlled by the MoEYS, and that those HEIs only responded to the ministries to which they belonged. This still seems to be the case. Consequently, there is no coordinating body for facilitating the policy on higher education. This fragmented higher education system makes it very hard for the MoEYS and DoHE to reinforce the policy or directives on higher education. For example, in some cases, the MoEYS and DSR have no access to the programs offered by different ministries. For a real instance, the Royal Academy of Cambodia is under the direct control and management of the Council of Ministers, and it also runs postgraduate

programs which involve research activities although it does not specialize in research. In principle, the government directive states that the DSR controls all postgraduate programs in HEIs in Cambodia. But in practice, the DSR does not have access to the postgraduate programs run by the Royal Academy of Cambodia, which reports its work directly to the Council of Ministers. This causes inconsistency in implementing the policy on higher education. In this respect, the MoEYS and DSR have to turn a blind eye to the programs run by the Royal Academy of Cambodia as the Council of Ministers is more powerful.

As the public HEIs are under the management arms of different ministries, MoEYS turns its attention to private HEIs because they are all under its juridical management. However, the private HEIs were not a good thing to control as they are sometimes not scared of the MoEYS (personal conversation with a staff member at the DoHE). The private HEIs know how to deal with MoEYS, which grabs its control over the private HEIs through the DoHE, which looks after undergraduate programs, and through the DSR, which oversees the postgraduate programs. Some participants accused these two departments of treating private HEIs as a permanent source of their supplementary incomes as their salaries from the government are not adequate. As a result, the private HEIs are sometimes accused of bribing these two departments in exchange for turning a blind eye to their poor programs at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

In brief, the government policy did not consistently work as public HEIs are under different supervision of different ministries. Those not under the arms of the MoEYS seem to listen to their parent ministries rather than abiding the regulations from the MoEYS. Private HEIs, although under the sole management of the MoEYS, did not seem to care too much about the government policy either because they know how to deal with the DoHE and DSR when these two departments throttle them for not abiding by the rules or regulations from the MoEYS.

Accreditation Committee of Cambodia Management

The Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) was established in 2003 after most HEIs had gained university status. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the ACC main aims are to ensure and promote academic quality of Cambodian higher education to a level consistent with international standards, and to determine the organizational structure, roles, functions and duties regarding the administration of the accreditation process. However, because of political interference, the ACC was created by a shielded Royal Decree which has caused controversy over its independence and credibility in its accreditation work. The following is an account of the ACC management from the stakeholders in Cambodian higher education.

According to the data collected, all the stakeholder groups seemed to hail the ACC as a positive step for Cambodia, which has never had a quality assurance body before. Cambodia now has the ACC, which is supposed to improve its higher education which has never been subject to any quality assessment. With the ACC in place, most stakeholder groups seemed to agree that the ACC at least has put all HEIs on high alert because the government was pressing all HEIs for the quality of higher education. They had strong opinions that HEIs are under pressure to show their accountability in higher education services as the ACC now acts as the police who keep an eye on HEIs all the time. Nevertheless, there were mixed views on the ACC management. The interview data indicated that most stakeholder groups claimed that the ACC was not an independent and professional body, so it did not perform its jobs effectively. For example, the teachers, university consultants, the donors, the employers in the multinationals and CITA expressed a strong belief that the ACC was influenced by politics. They gave two reasons why the ACC was under political influence. The first reason cited was the fact that the ACC is located in the compound of the Council of Ministers. In this sense, they claimed that as the ACC operated under the roof of the Council of Ministers, it could not avoid the conflict of interests. The second reason was that they said top management people in the ACC were appointed on political grounds, and they were the people who had close relationship with the ACC president, who is a powerful politician with two private universities. In this view, they raised their concerns over the inconsistency in the ACC work. They suggested that the ACC be an independent body.

The other stakeholder groups such as rectors, MoEYS, DGHE, DoHE, DSR, the ACC and CHEA, on the other hand, had a different impression on the ACC. They said that the ACC was an independent body. In response to the criticism that the ACC was under political influence because the ACC office sits in the Council of Ministers, they strongly argued that the ACC was independent, and they also viewed the ACC office, which is located in the compound of the Council of the Ministers, as the only neutral place to operate as HEIs are under the management arms of many different ministries. Similarly, in response to the ACC which is headed by a powerful politician, the CHEA hit back by saying the ACC president was a neutral person because he is not from the ministries that run universities, and that the ACC President would report the ACC work directly to the Prime Minister.

In summary, there was tension from stakeholders in Cambodian higher education over the ACC management. It was clear that those critical of the ACC were mainly international stakeholders and those who have a tendency toward the opposition party in Cambodia. These people viewed the ACC as a body influenced by politics. On the other hand, those who sided with the government seemed to be supportive and in defence of the ACC, and they viewed the ACC as

an independent body. It would be interesting to find out what they think of the qualifications of the ACC staff. The section below reveals the personal views from stakeholders in Cambodian higher education on the ACC staff members who carry out the quality assessment work within HEIs in Cambodia.

The ACC Staff

The ACC staff members, except those in the top management, are recruited mainly from HEIs in Cambodia. Their quality and experiences are doubted. Based on the data collected, most stakeholders expressed their dissatisfaction with the ACC staff. Most stakeholders shared the same view that the ACC has not done very much in terms of the institutional quality assessment in HEIs in Cambodia as what the ACC has done is to give provisional accreditation to the Foundation Years in most HEIs.

All the stakeholder groups, except the ACC itself, seemed to perceive that the ACC staff were not experienced and qualified enough to assess academic programs within HEIs. Even the participants from the MoEYS, who claimed that the ACC was an independent, were also critical of the ACC staff. They strongly argued that the ACC was not as professional as quality assurance bodies in other countries in the world because the ACC staff members, especially the assessment teams, were people who did not have experience in accreditation. This view was also shared by other groups such as the university consultants, donors and CITA, which asserted that the ACC staff was incompetent as they were not appointed on academic merits. The view that the ACC staff was not qualified for their jobs was consistent with previous studies on the ACC. For example, Ford (2003) expresses the same concern over the capacity of the ACC staff, saying that though some ACC staff members have high qualifications they are not the right people in the right job because they lack experiences. The CITA, which is the most critical of the ACC staff, also shared this view. It pointed out that the ACC staff members were not experienced and qualified for the quality assessment in academic programs, and that the ACC staff just wrote good reports about HEIs run by influential politicians in order to please them and to secure their positions in the ACC.

The only group that saw the ACC as competent and qualified for its work was the ACC itself. Participants from the ACC appeared to be very proud of their work, and to be defensive against the criticism that it was not a professional quality assurance body. Reacting to that criticism, the participants from the ACC explained that it would be in a better position to perform its quality assessments in HEIs as it was receiving training from foreign experts who had extensive experience in the accreditation assessment. The ACC also defended its assessment team by

arguing that the ACC assessment teams, which, it claimed, were made up of various key stakeholders in Cambodian higher education, would be better qualified for their jobs with the experiences it had gained from its assessment work. However, the ACC accepted that it had not done enough since it was founded, explaining that the ACC was just less than ten years old.

In a nutshell, most stakeholder groups did not appear to be satisfied with the qualifications of the ACC staff as they believed that top management people in the ACC were appointed on political connections with the government, not on academic merits. For this reason, they lacked the expertise in the quality assessment of academic programs in HEIs in Cambodia. This led to different expectations amongst stakeholders for the future role of the ACC in its capacity to improve the quality of Cambodian higher education. For example, according to the data collected, the teachers, rectors, the ACC and CHEA appeared optimistic about the future role of the ACC as they thought that the ACC, although it has not done much so as to improve the quality of Cambodian higher education, was a positive step toward quality improvement in Cambodian higher education. On the other hand, other stakeholders such as those from the MoEYS, university consultants, donors, employers in the multinationals and CITA had little hope for the future role of the ACC as they thought that the people in the ACC were not the right ones. The university consultants, donors and the CITA demanded that the government need to reform the ACC by putting people with academic backgrounds in the ACC management and assessment levels, and that the government must have the political willingness to do so. The table below summarizes how the stakeholders viewed the ACC management and its staff.

Table 5. Stakeholders' views on ACC management and staff

	Teachers	Rectors	Consultants	Government	Donors	Employers	CHEA	CITA
Too influenced by politics	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
ACC as independent body		✓		✓			✓	
ACC staff not qualified or experienced	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Institutional Quality Assurance Unit Management and Staff

The institutional quality assurance units (IQAU) within HEIs have been initiated by the MoEYS to help HEIs build their own internal quality assurance mechanism and to help them prepare for the institutional assessment by the ACC. When asked how they thought of the IQAU, all the stakeholder groups seemed to throw their support behind the idea. They all shared a view that the IQAU was a good sign that HEIs were starting to build their capacity to develop an internal quality assurance unit. The stakeholder groups that appeared very enthusiastic about the IQAU were the rectors, the university consultants and the MoEYS. The rectors explained that the IQAU would assist their universities in making preparations for the external quality assessment by the ACC. The university consultants agreed with the rectors by arguing that the IQAU would help HEIs improve their education services. To support this, the university consultants raised an example of a few universities that had developed the IQAU. They claimed that HEIs should be able to build their own IQAU as the external assessment by the ACC was not reliable enough. The MoEYS and DoHE also shared the view of the rectors and the university consultants. They explained that the MoEYS had a role to play in helping all HEIs develop an IQAU which would prepare HEIs for the ACC assessment. The DoHE had a strong opinion that in the future all HEIs would be required to have the IQAU in place before they are entitled to apply for the accreditation status from the ACC. In short, all the stakeholder groups appeared to be supportive of the MoEYS initiative to have all HEIs build their own internal institutional quality assurance units. However, they also raised questions about HEIs' inability to develop the IQAU as those HEIs lacked expertise.

The IQAU staff members who are supposed to develop the IQAU caused a lot of controversy and concerns amongst the stakeholder groups. According to the data collected, almost all the stakeholder groups did not express confidence that HEIs would be able to develop the IQAU. The groups that did not believe that HEIs would be able to set up the IQAU were the teachers, the university consultants, the donors, and the CITA. These groups strongly argued that it was impossible for HEIs in Cambodia to build the IQAU as they did not have people who specialized in quality assurance. For example, the teachers, university consultants and the CITA did not believe that HEIs would be in a position to develop the so-called IQAU because they all had an impression that the university top management people, namely the rectors and vice-rectors did not have academic background or good leadership. These groups also claimed that the top management people in almost all HEIs, regardless of being private or public ones, had a strong affiliation with politics. Therefore, they assumed that it would take years to make the dream of an IQAU becoming a reality within HEIs in Cambodia.

The rectors who manage the operation of their universities had a different view, however. They seemed to believe that it would take a few years to respond to the MoEYS demand that they have to develop the IQAU. Although they acknowledged that the IQAU would be a hard job as they lacked qualified people, they said optimistically that they would try their best to develop it. The MoEYS also appeared optimistic that HEIs would be able to establish their IQAU offices, claiming that the IQAU is a requirement from the MoEYS that wishes to strengthen the internal quality assurance within all HEIs. The MoEYS seemed to have confidence in HEIs in developing the IQAU as there were a few HEIs that had already developed the IQAU. However, the MoEYS does not provide a framework from which to develop IQAU for compliance sake.

In summary, as far as the IQAU staff members within HEIs are concerned, stakeholder groups had different views on it. Most stakeholder groups did not have confidence that HEIs could develop it as they lacked expertise. The only groups that appeared confident were the rectors and the MoEYS. All in all, there was an indication that all the stakeholders groups were supportive of the IQAU within HEIs as they believed that it would help HEIs develop their internal quality assurance mechanism which would help them improve their quality education services as well as prepare themselves for the institutional quality assessment by the ACC. However, stakeholders also had doubts about the HEIs' capacity to develop the IQAU. Most of them did not believe that the IQAU was going to happen due to the fact that HEIs lacked people with quality assurance expertise.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings on the stakeholders' views on the government strategy for higher education and how its effectiveness contributed to the quality of higher education in Cambodia. The findings were derived from the interview data, which provided some clues to answer the research question on the effectiveness of the government strategy to ensure the quality of higher education. It was clear that all the participants held strong and different opinions on the Cambodian government strategy for higher education, and they offered many valuable insights into an understanding of the current culture in which the strategy was affected by many factors. This chapter comes to the conclusion that the government strategy to achieve the quality of higher education has not been effective as its effectiveness were hampered by lax policy implementation, the management of HEIs, the ACC mismanagement and the ACC staff, the IQAU management and the IQAU staff. A much needed discussion on the findings on the government strategy will decide why the current government strategy for higher education was not effective. The discussion will suggest some possible ways for Cambodia to implement its strategy for higher education.

Chapter 7. Discussion of Key Findings

This chapter presents a discussion of the stakeholders' responses to the quality issue of higher education in Cambodia, derived from the findings presented in Chapters Five and Six and elicited through the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in Cambodian higher education. This chapter also discusses the implications arising from the findings. The central argument of the thesis will be advanced by linking it to the literature review. Further literature will also be needed to support or refute the findings. The stakeholders' opinions or views need to be interpreted in order to find the strengths and weaknesses of their responses. The researcher's observations and interpretations will be used to critique the respondents' views before making an attempt to answer each question. An analysis of the combined views on the quality of higher education in general will lead to a conclusion of the perceived quality of Cambodian higher education. However, the conclusion is based on the examination of all the aspects of Cambodian higher education and the effectiveness of the government strategy in ensuring the quality of higher education. This conclusion will lead to a possible discovery of the perceived quality in Cambodian higher education. Based on the real quality characteristics which arise from the discussion, it will suggest a quality assurance system that Cambodia should adopt to improve the quality in higher education as well as to respond to the stakeholders' perceptions of quality in higher education.

Question 1. How do stakeholders perceive the quality in Cambodian higher education?

According to the findings presentation, the perceptions of quality in Cambodian higher education varied greatly among the stakeholders as the results revealed a great divide of perceptions of the quality of Cambodian higher education. The international stakeholders seemed to jointly make critical statements on the quality of Cambodian higher education while the local stakeholder groups, except students and CITA, appeared to be unanimously supportive and proud of it. The students and CITA appeared to be joining with the international stakeholder group. Therefore, in this discussion section, attempts will be made to find out how the perceptions given by different stakeholders relate to the current quality situation of Cambodian higher education.

As evidenced in the findings, most local stakeholder groups argued that the quality of Cambodian higher education was acceptable within the current context of Cambodia. They looked at it from a historical frame of reference by saying that it is better than it was three decades ago when higher education in Cambodia was never subject to any form of quality

assessment. They pointed to the employment outcome for graduates and the admission of Cambodian graduates to postgraduate programs in some English speaking countries as evidence to support their argument about the current quality of higher education in Cambodia. The international stakeholders, on the other hand, were very critical of the quality in Cambodian higher education, and they described HEIs as certificate shops which focused mainly on profit-making rather than the quality. They looked at the quality in Cambodian higher education from a Western frame of reference by claiming that HEIs were run unregulated, and that Cambodia did not have qualified people to run a good quality university.

To be fair, one cannot only use a few perspectives as quality indicators in higher education. As discussed in the literature review in Chapter Three, quality in higher education cannot be defined from a single perspective. Instead, it needs to be examined in light of all the core aspects in the input-process-output framework for quality in higher education. Although the quality of Cambodian higher education was perceived in different ways, there was an agreement among the stakeholders over the common features of quality in higher education as discussed in the literature review. To give a fair picture, the quality of Cambodian higher education will be discussed in light of the core aspects of quality in higher education identified in Chapter Six which include admission, curriculum, qualifications of academic teaching staff, learning and teaching resources and facilities, employment outcome for graduates, institutional governance and leadership, and institutional quality assurance, and the effectiveness of the government strategy for higher education. The implications arising from the discussion on these core aspects of quality of Cambodian higher education and on the effectiveness of the government strategy will help determine the current quality situation in Cambodian higher education. The results from this discussion will also be compared to the characteristics of higher education in the developing world before a conclusion on the quality in Cambodian higher education can be drawn

Entry of students to higher education

As noted in the literature in Chapter Two, the journey that high school leavers make to higher education involves a lot of mysteries and controversy. According to the findings presentation, there seemed to be an agreement among the stakeholder groups that high school graduates did not have adequate academic background before they entered higher education, and that their poor knowledge was the result of their learning habits, poor teaching and the irregularities of the year 12 exams. As noted in Chapter Two, high school leavers were inadequately prepared for their studies in higher education. This is because high school teachers are not committed to their

teaching due to low salaries. High school teachers who receive about US\$ 60 a month find it very hard to make ends' meet. As evidenced in the findings, almost all the rectors interviewed complained that high school graduates did not have enough academic background to cope with their studies in higher education. As also seen in the findings, the president of CITA was highly critical of high school graduates, and he claimed that high school students did not learn much at high school as the teachers were poorly paid, and most resort to taking a second job in order to survive. When they have another job, they normally do not have time to concentrate on their teaching duties, and the second job causes a threat to the quality of high school education. In Cambodia, 90 per cent of more than 100,000 teachers nationwide take other jobs in order to survive as they cannot depend on their low salaries (Khemera, 2011). There have been suggestions from both non-governmental organizations and civil society that the government raise the salaries for high school teachers so that the teachers can show more commitment to their teaching career. However, nothing much has been done to raise high school teachers' salaries. Beside the second jobs, some teachers have private tutoring to make supplementary incomes. Therefore, they have no time to research or instruct properly, and there is no commitment to transferring their knowledge to students. To address the issue of low salaries, Rong Chhun, the president of CITA, has repeatedly asked the governments to pay teachers up to US\$ 240 per month so that they can live a decent live and have time for research, but the government only tries to raise salaries by as much as 20 per cent per year (Khemera, 2011).

In regards to the irregularities of the year 12 exams, some students are believed to pay bribes during the national Year 12 exam period in order to get higher scores with the hope of getting a scholarship into a HEI. There are allegations that some students buy their high school certificates in order to gain admission to a HEI. This reflects a notion that Cambodia's secondary education is of very poor quality. Every year, secondary education produces inadequately prepared high school graduates who are not ready for the challenging academic programs in HEIs. Understandably, due to the weakness of secondary education, most Cambodian high school students do not have appropriate academic backgrounds to cope with more demanding courses in higher education.

Although the Admission Office in the DoHE sets admission criteria for high school leavers who wish to get a scholarship to pursue their studies in HEIs, it does not really mean that those high school graduates who win the scholarships are academically prepared for the challenging courses in higher education. Though the admission criteria sound transparent, it involves a lot of cheating which happens before high school students reach the entry point of higher education. Cheating in the Year 12 exams usually causes concerns for HEIs that absorb a large number of high school graduates every year. Due to low salaries, high school teachers usually regard the

national Year 12 exam period as an opportunity to make money. Every year, there are allegations that the teachers who are assigned to be proctors accept bribes from students in exchange for letting students cheat in the exams. Although the MoEYS has made efforts to stop Year 12 certificate buying since 2009, cheating still takes place in most circumstances. For example, in the 2010 national Year 12 exams organized by the MoEYS, cheating was so rampant that the president of CITA wrote to the Minister of Education, asking it to annul the results (Kuntheart, 2010). In response, the MoEYS launched an investigation into the cheating allegations. As a result, in the late 2010s, some teachers and staff in the MoEYS were suspended, and some received a warning letter from the MoEYS with some relocated (Kuntheart, 2010).

In the 2011 national Year 12 exams, cheating still took place and some exam proctors were caught taking bribes in exchange for allowing test-takers to cheat in the exams (Sokhorn, 2011). As a result of the weakness of secondary education, the ACC demands that all HEIs run the Foundation Year programs for the first year students so that they earn some basic knowledge and are ready to take up their courses in higher education. To address the issues of poorly prepared students, there are some approaches that need to be considered. One possible approach to improve the quality of secondary education is to pay the teachers a decent salary to live on so that they have time for research, to instruct properly and to have commitment to their teaching career. Another approach is perhaps to stop cheating in all forms in the Year 12 exams by imposing stiff punishment for proctors who are caught allowing students to cheat. The last, but not least, approach is may be to review and restructure the curriculum in high school so that students will be academically better prepared for their studies in higher education.

Curriculum

Cambodia's Education Law states that HEIs shall teach students the skills needed for the development of the country. However, all stakeholder groups raised concerns over the curriculum within HEIs. There was an agreement among other stakeholder groups that the curriculum was not relevant to the market and the national development needs. There is literature on curriculum which proves that relevant and effective curriculum is an important indicator of quality in higher education as it develops the qualities and skills that employers seek in graduates (Arredondo & Rucinski, 1998; Blackwell, Bowes, Harvey, Hesketh, & Knight, 2001; Massy, 2003; Nygaard, 2008; Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998; Porter, 2004). Based on the findings, Cambodian HEIs have the curriculum which is irrelevant to the current market and national development needs of Cambodia perhaps because it was copied from overseas. Further

literature that supports this belief includes previous studies by Innes-Browns (2006) and Ngoy (2009) that make similar observations on the curriculum in HEIs in Cambodia. The lack of relevant curriculum is really a problem, and can be traced through a historical perspective that has existed since the colonial times as higher education in Cambodia, as in other developing nations, is the legacy of the colonizers who were mainly Westerners (Altbach, 1998).

From the historical perspective, looking back to its independence from France in 1953, Cambodia copied the curriculum from France for its HEIs in the 1960s. In the 1980s, Vietnam and some former communist nations designed the curriculum for higher education in Cambodia. The curriculum developed by Vietnamese and Russian teachers did not respond to the economic recovery, but focused on political education and training (Clayton, 2005; Duggan, 1996). Since the late 1990s, Cambodia has changed as a result of the introduction of the free-market economy. Thanks to this abrupt change, many HEIs have copied the curriculum from overseas by compiling materials from the British and American standard books which does not respond to the contextual needs of Cambodia. Today, the concept of education from the past still influences higher education in Cambodia. The vast majority of students entering higher education have never done any experiment, and they are accustomed to rote-learning of large amounts of theory. For the time being, the popular slogan in most universities today starts with the notion that, “the emphasis is not on how to teach, but what to teach” (Chamnan & Ford, 2004, p. 349). Resource deficiencies have obviously contributed to the lack of practical subjects and laboratory courses. There is still a general preference among university lecturers for theoretical courses. The approach used by some teachers to improving the quality of their courses is to include more theory of greater difficulty rather than to improve the relevance for students. Therefore, the argument put forward by the participants that HEIs in Cambodia were not capable of developing their own curriculum is a real one although some rectors claimed that they were able to develop their own curriculum. Their claims were viewed as a defence against their course provisions which are based on copied curriculum from overseas.

As evidenced in the findings, the majority of the participants were confident that the curriculum in most HEIs was copied from overseas. According to the theory of curriculum development, the developer needs to provide teachers with clear materials and specific directives (Schwartz, 2006). As noted in the findings, the DoHE that controls all HEIs and the ACC, which does the quality assessment in all HEIs, strongly argued that nearly all HEIs are using British and American textbooks which are not relevant to the real context of Cambodia. In this sense, the 1997 National Action Plan that made a general description of poor academic programs in higher education in Cambodia at that time can still remain as evidence for comments on the situation of higher education in the 2000s. According to the National Action Plan, academic programs in

Cambodian higher education were not necessarily related to national development and labour market needs and demands (Chamnan & Ford, 2004). As a result, degree holders from some programs are in surplus while new programs required for present and future demands are still few. For example, there is an over-supply of graduates in the areas of management, law, economics, accounting and tourism while the government calls on HEIs to focus on agriculture, engineering and other sciences (Cambodia-herald, 2012).

The 1997 National Action Plan's description of programs in Cambodian HEIs at that time still remains the case for Cambodian higher education today as it is not unusual to learn that the curriculum within HEIs in Cambodia is not responsive to the market demand and the development needs of the country. The literature on Cambodian higher education, for example, Ford (2006), Innes-Brown (2006) and Leng (2010) produce results which are consistent with the above claim. For the time being, UNESCO has been helping the MoEYS develop textbooks for primary education only. No aid agency has so far helped HEIs in Cambodia to develop their own curriculum. Therefore, it is not uncommon to learn that HEIs are not able to develop their curriculum. Without the ability to do so, almost all HEIs have no choice, but to copy the curriculum from overseas although they realize that it is not responsive to the market and the national development needs. Consequently, many higher education programs in Cambodia are mainly driven by the demands of fee-paying students rather than by job prospects, leading to a higher rate of unemployment amongst graduates. For example, most HEIs focus mainly on the business-related programs rather than targeting the real development needs of Cambodia, leaving other much needed subjects in limbo. As a result, there is a surplus of graduates in business often without preparation in workplace skills while in the professions needed such as medicine, agriculture, law, pharmacy and architecture numbers are inadequate to meet the demand for highly-skilled professionals (Innes-Brown, 2006; Ngoy, 2009). As a result, most graduates are usually employed in areas not related to their courses.

There have been initiatives to make reform in the curriculum, but that reform is hampered by many factors. The first factor is understandably the lack of funding. Although most universities in Cambodia charge fees, it is still difficult for them to raise adequate funds to restructure their courses as the revenues from the tuition-fees go mainly for teachers' salaries and administrative expenses. Another factor is the lack of human expertise in curriculum development. As seen in the findings, the DoHE admitted that it lacked staff which specialized in curriculum assessment; so when a HEI submitted a course program, the DoHE just gave its approval.

However, there have been a positive sign of curriculum development in just a few HEIs that receive assistance from aid agencies. For example, some well-targeted programs have begun in

the bachelor programs in the English language in the Institute of Foreign Languages at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). This English bachelor's program has been seen as a real contribution to the national development needs of Cambodia, which target English training. So far, the MoEYS has attempted to make English as the second language in Cambodia, but the attempt to do so has been a failure due to the objection from France which has a close relationship with the former king of Cambodia (Clayton, 2000, 2008). Now there is a project funded by the World Bank to review the curriculum for HEIs in Cambodia. However, the result is still a long wait as nothing actually has been produced.

In summary, although Cambodia's Education Law demands that HEIs teach students the skills needed for the country's development needs, students still do not learn the required skills as the curriculum is not responsive to the real needs of Cambodia. The lack of relevant curriculum is caused by the absence of qualified people, lack of funding, and the inability of the MoEYS to help HEIs develop the curriculum. As a result, HEIs copy the curriculum from overseas and courses offered by HEIs do not meet the country's targeted skills because the curriculum are not contextualized to meet the skill demands in Cambodia. Consequently, there is a mismatch between the academic programs and what employers look for in prospective employees. In short, it seems that HEIs in Cambodia are providing a plethora of quasi-academic courses that have no apparent relevance to development needs of the country. Although higher education functions as part of the international knowledge system, it is rooted in its own culture and it is supposed to serve its national development needs (Altbach, 1998). Therefore, in order to improve the relevance of higher education courses, the MoEYS of Cambodia and other stakeholder groups should work cooperatively with donor agencies to develop the curriculum that is responsive to Cambodia's development needs. So far, there have been major donor agencies, namely the World Bank that tries to make curriculum reforms in Cambodian higher education, but their attempts are seen as a failure in Cambodia because, in a general sense, the World Bank lacks an understanding of local conditions when it introduces a reform in a Third World country (Spring, 2009) where periphery universities are located. In this sense, the partnership between the World Bank and local stakeholders in Cambodia higher education is needed to develop a curriculum framework for all HEIs. With technical assistance from donor agencies and the industry sector, the MoEYS should utilize this curriculum framework to ensure a minimum level of both teaching and learning in all universities in Cambodia. Cambodia should follow Vietnam where the Ministry of Education and Training has developed a curriculum framework for all universities in Vietnam with the main purpose of ensuring a minimum level of teaching and learning quality (Le & Nguyen, 2010).

Qualifications of academic staff

As the higher education sector is growing rapidly, the central question here is whether those higher education institutions are really able to respond to the student needs and satisfy the demand of national and social development. There has also been a concern over the quality of the teachers within HEIs in Cambodia. As noted in the findings, there is a unanimous agreement among all the stakeholders that Cambodian HEIs experienced a severe shortage of well-qualified and experienced teachers. The shortage of well-qualified teachers in Cambodia is also noted in the literature. However, Cambodia has a surplus of unqualified university teachers as HEIs produce a lot of local postgraduates every year whose qualifications are actually questionable (Ngoy, 2009). The lack of professional careers amongst university teachers does affect the quality of higher education, and has led to outdated knowledge and practice (Chamnan & Ford, 2004). The teachers' lack of effectiveness and adaptability can affect their teaching careers which affects student learning. The lack of teachers can be traced from both historical and current perspectives. From a historical lens, history has still left a legacy on the academic staff of Cambodian higher education. Many senior administrators and teachers still remain loyal to the languages and theoretical teaching styles from the 1960s. The impacts of the Pol Pot regime are still evident in the surviving teachers. Massive deficiency of human resources in higher education has existed as the result of the mass killing in the Khmer Rouge era, which mainly targeted well-educated intellectuals. At the time of the Vietnamese liberation in 1979, it was estimated that less than about 300 persons who had post-secondary education survived (Sloper & Moock, 1999). After the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, university staff who were sent for training in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and who make up the majority of the current universities' lecturers today were educated mostly in Vietnam, Russia and the former communist bloc. Most of them now become university academic staff members who speak the language in which they received their education. However, resource deficiency and the lack of opportunity for them to upgrade their studies in Cambodia following the fall of the former Soviet Union and the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops have left those faculty staff with no means of upgrading themselves beyond the levels of skills they had received. They mostly had earned a bachelor degree from the former communist bloc, but some of them have upgraded themselves to a Masters Degree in local HEIs that run postgraduate programs with questionable quality courses. Their local qualification upgrades are perceived as a means to secure their positions and pay increases within their institutions as their Masters Degrees make a little difference from their bachelor degrees.

From the current perspective, the Cambodian government has made tremendous efforts to address the problem of the shortage of qualified academic staff through donor-funded

scholarship schemes which have, to some extent, begun to solve the shortage of university teachers. So far the government has sent many university staff overseas for postgraduate studies through bilateral cooperation programs in both English and non-English speaking countries. There are about 3000 Cambodians nationwide who have received overseas postgraduate education and training (Ngoy, 2009), but these educated people are now working in various governmental agencies. However, those with overseas qualifications are being absorbed by the fast growing private HEIs where their advanced skills are needed and adequately rewarded, and their salaries and promotions are valued on their academic merits. At the moment, those with Masters Degrees from English speaking countries have now enjoyed the opportunity to teach many classes at more than one institution. As a result their teaching is of poor quality because they do not have enough time for research which plays a vital role in improving the areas of their expertise.

Since the introduction of fee-paying courses in 1997, many public HEIs have been in a better position to create incentives for the teachers who receive a small salary from the government. Now incomes in some public HEIs are very attractive for academic staff members who are well-prepared to give lectures on the hourly-paid basis. Currently, teaching in HEIs is one of the best paid employment prospects in Cambodia, and a Masters Degree qualification is seen as the sole precondition for a higher rate of payment which ranges from \$10 to \$15 for part-time lecturers in public and private HEIs. In the public HEIs, many teachers now see the pay incentives as an opportunity to maximize their incomes by becoming obsessed with teaching as many classes as possible without showing concerns over the quality of their teaching. Some teachers even teach more than forty hours a week, with some working simultaneously in several institutions. Interested in making additional incomes from extra teaching, most university teachers have overloaded themselves which severely affects the time availability for preparation and research. The teachers in some public HEIs earn an attractive income from teaching many classes. For example, the faculty members in the National University of Management, which is a public institution, used to earn the highest income compared to other government employees in the whole country. Some taught more than forty hours a week, leaving little time for preparation and research. One teacher told the Cambodia Daily in 2006 that she earned more than US \$2000 a month from teaching. In the same year when the teaching hours at NUM were reduced by the university management as a means to improve the quality of teaching, most teachers went on strike, demanding the sacking of the rector. As they do not have time for research, most university teachers are believed to use the same textbooks to teach in many institutions and pass on the same out-dated knowledge to students. Consequently, their teaching is neither productive nor effective as teachers are not committed enough to their teaching duties. This adversely affect student learning.

At the moment, there are two types of university teachers in the public HEIs. The teachers who are the faculty members on the government payroll are known as full-time teachers. Most of them upgrade their qualifications to Masters Degrees through their university postgraduate programs. Those who are from the governmental agencies or private sector and who teach part-time in the public HEIs are commonly called part-time teachers. The part-time teachers are mainly those who are trained overseas, especially former AusAID-funded students with the Australian qualifications. Although they have an overseas qualification, the part-time teachers are often discriminated against in the public HEIs, and they do not have the same pay for the same work. They normally get a lower wage for the same work done by their full-time counterparts who are the faculty members who mainly earn Masters Degrees by courses-work locally.

As mentioned earlier, not only do Cambodian HEIs lack well-qualified teachers, but there are a large number of post-graduate students from local HEIs every year whose qualifications are in doubt. Even the government itself does not recognize the quality of local postgraduates. As noted in the literature, in a 2009 graduation ceremony, the Prime Minister of Cambodia strongly criticized the quality of the local postgraduates, namely PhDs, and demanded that tough action be taken to improve the quality of postgraduate programs in Cambodia. There is a small number of PhD holders who did their postgraduate studies in English speaking nations. It is estimated that about six percent of teachers in HEIs in Cambodia have PhD qualifications from overseas (Chen et al, 2007), but there are many PhD holders who earn their qualifications locally. Most of the teachers in most HEIs are employed through nepotism. It is not uncommon to learn that most university rectors employ their relatives to teach in their universities although they know that their relatives are not qualified enough to teach. Some bachelor programs are taught by those with a bachelor degree. A participant at the DoHE expressed his concern over the spill-over effects on the future of higher education in Cambodia as unqualified teachers, especially those with local Masters or PhD degrees are teaching in most HEIs. Now it is not easy to apply for a teaching position in HEIs, and it is not easy for a teacher with an Australian qualification to apply for a teaching position in HEIs if they do not have good connections. Most HEIs prefer to hire local bachelor degree holders as their labour is cheaper. This has led to the deterioration of the quality of teaching in HEIs and the quality of courses offered is apparently weak as they are taught by teachers who are not qualified. So far, the MoEYS and the ACC have been tight-lipped about the Masters Degrees by coursework and PhD qualifications earned locally, and neither have they established regulations for academic teaching staff in HEIs. However, the DoHE has made efforts to register all the teachers who are teaching within all HEIs in Cambodia so that the MoEYS can know how many teachers are in all HEIs.

The qualifications and the teaching styles of the teachers in Cambodian HEIs can accurately describe the situation of many teachers in Cambodian higher education, except those who have been trained overseas and those who have sufficient language skills to access the international knowledge base. As evidenced in the findings, all stakeholder groups were very critical of teachers' qualifications in HEIs. As for the teaching methods employed by the Cambodian university teachers, there was an agreement among the participants that most Cambodian teachers still employ the old teaching style. In this regard, Cambodia's past also needs to be looked at. It is not surprising to find out how Cambodia's past has influenced the current system of higher education. A long tradition of higher learning containing a reservoir of academic values seems to be presenting the current system with the teaching methods unchanged (Chamnan & Ford, 2004). The tradition of oral transmission of Buddhist teaching which involves the reciting of religious texts can be still found in the teaching styles used in many modern classrooms in HEIs today. As noted in the findings, the chanting of lessons by teachers and rote-learning is a widely adopted approach. As a result, this teaching style makes students lack critical and analytical skills or the ability to apply theory to practical real-world situations. In this sense, it is not uncommon to learn Cambodian graduates lack critical thinking skills and analytical problem-solving skills that employers value. There are three possible reasons for this lack of professional skill.

The first reason is that university teachers do not undergo pedagogical training before they start their teaching career. They usually start up their teaching soon after their graduation. Therefore, they lack the professional teaching skills in facilitating the learning process. This lack of professional teaching has a negative impact on their teaching career. Most teachers employ the old oral transmission of teaching as they are not pedagogically trained how to use student-centred activities which are believed to encourage critical thinking and problem solving skills. Only teachers who have received overseas training or who have sufficient English can understand the concept of student-centred activities.

The second reason is that some teachers, especially older generation ones, still stick to old teaching practice. As evidenced in the findings, this teaching style is described as chanting a religious bible to a group of faithful. It is hard for them to change their teaching style as this is the legacy they have inherited from the French and Russian education systems. This teaching style is mainly employed nationwide as it is preferred by most students who expect their teachers to provide them with the information they need. This old teaching style is hard to change as there are no teacher-training courses for university teachers. So far there have been many efforts to train high school teachers only (Duggan, 1996), and the number of high school

teachers is still not enough. High school teachers are usually known to undergo pedagogical training at the National Institute of Education (NIE) for one year before they are assigned to teach in high school whereas university teachers mostly start their teaching careers without undergoing any pedagogical training. When higher education was reopened in the early 1980s, there was a small pool of higher education teachers who were sent for teacher training in Vietnam, but they were trained in political education, not how to teach in higher education.

The third reason is that the teachers who understand how to use the student-centred activities in the classrooms are still unable to apply that teaching technique as classrooms are usually overcrowded with many students. It is also hard for teachers to make arrangements for the student-centred activities as classrooms mainly have fixed table arrangements. Teachers who employ the student-centred method in most circumstances receive negative feedback from students who think that the teachers do not know to teach.

In short, HEIs in Cambodia are facing a severe shortage of well-qualified teachers. There are a small number of qualified teachers who have overseas qualifications, but these teachers are needed by the increasing number of private HEIs. In a general sense, most teachers teach many classes in different institutions simultaneously without sufficient time for research. There are a larger number of teachers who prefer the old teaching style. Only a small pool of teachers that undergo teacher training seems to have professional careers in their teaching. With a severe shortage of well-qualified teachers, HEIs have no choice, but to employ those with local Masters Degrees only to make up the imbalance between student numbers and inexperienced academic staff. The lack of qualified teachers in Cambodia in the era of massification of higher education reflects a common feature of higher education in developing nations (Lim, 2001), countries in Asia (Harman, 1996), and countries in Africa (Mohamedbhai, 2008). The mass system of higher education usually results in a fast growth in the number of students entering higher education. This has a serious effect on teaching and learning as the increased enrolment is faster than the availability of academic staff. As a result, due to the shortage of the teachers and the inadequate salary from the government, most teachers in developing nations are forced to hold down a number of other jobs or to teach in different institutions in order to moonlight or to supplement their incomes. Therefore, a very important condition for quality is absent as they do not have enough time to update and improve their lecture notes, delivery modes and reading lists that produce effective teaching. Cambodia seems to share this pattern in its higher education. As teaching becomes an important issue in quality assurance in higher education (Martens & Prosser, 1998; J. Thompson, Cook, Cottrel, Lewis, & Miller, 1998), the Cambodian government should take concrete measures to deal with the teacher issue and to reduce the negative effect on teaching and learning. One possible approach is, perhaps, to set a national

testing standard for teachers who wish to teach in HEIs as it is done in the Philippines (Ordonez & Ordonez, 2009). Another possible approach is to establish a national framework for academic rankings for academic staff through the promotion of innovative teaching methods that include research and development as part of the teaching and learning process as it is done in Thailand (Muangkeow, 2009). Another possible approach is to make a requirement that every university teacher undergo a teacher training program so that they can develop some teaching skills necessary for their careers. In order to achieve this, the government, namely the MoEYS should establish a teacher-training institute for higher education teachers.

Learning and teaching resources and facilities

As higher education expands in Cambodia, resources and facilities become really very concerning issues in almost HEIs in Cambodia. As seen in the findings, all the participants viewed adequate learning and teaching resources and facilities as an aspect of quality in higher education, and they all argued that the learning and teaching resources in Cambodian HEIs were very lacking and limited in both public and private HEIs. As evidenced in the findings, students and teachers complained that they had difficulty finding reading materials they needed. Even the government which included the MoEYS, DoEH and the ACC recognized that both learning and teaching resources are still inadequate in all HEIs. Libraries are, in most circumstances, filled with out-dated textbooks, usually in English. Textbooks in Khmer are hard to find as they were mostly destroyed in the Khmer Rouge regime. Electronic journals are seen as a luxury as most HEIs do not subscribe for them. Though there are a few universities that subscribe to electronic article journals, access to the journals is limited as the Internet speed is very slow. In a general sense, as evidenced in the findings, students are usually told to buy course books or class handouts from the university bookshops that are run by close relatives of the rector. The lack of learning and teaching resources impinges on the chance for students to research and expand their knowledge and hampers the self-directed learning that students are supposed to do during their university tenure. However, there has been a significant move to improve and upgrade libraries, both in terms of reading materials and periodical collections and online access in a few universities. For example, The Hun Sen Library at Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) and the Toshu Fukami (Haruhisa Handa) Library at the University of Cambodia, both have over 30,000 titles. The Hun Sen Library is planning to subscribe to online article journals.

Laboratory sessions for subjects such as chemistry and physics are often hampered by the lack of facilities although facilities for teaching computer sciences in some universities have recently been well-resourced. In most circumstances, public HEIs that receive financial assistance from

an aid agency have improved their facilities. A few private HEIs have also invested in facility upgrading. Classrooms in many universities have air-conditioning, but they are not spacious enough and are mainly overcrowded. Student-teacher ratios vary greatly depending on the subject being taught. Driven by profit-making, most universities put in at least 40 students per class. Since the ACC shut down a few universities that had poor facilities, HEIs are under pressure to upgrade their facilities. Other HEIs such as Pannasastra University receives funding from the US and is developing its multi-campus educational facilities. Norton University, which is also a private university, has made a big investment in facilities by building a new campus. These two private HEIs are perceived to have better standards of teaching and learning facilities and are considered to be moving toward international parity. However, facilities in most HEIs need more improvement.

In summary, most HEIs in Cambodia still do not have adequate learning and teaching materials for both students and teachers. Most HEIs do not have a proper library, and most libraries are stacked with mostly out-dated textbooks. The lack of these resources limits the capacity of self-directed learning which is perceived to be the fundamental of higher education and is considered to be a central concept and practice of adult learning (Garrison, 1997). The lack of teaching and reading resources also affects the quality of teaching which requires adequate reading materials. To address these concerns, Chickering and Gamson (1991) proposed that adequate teaching and learning resources be put in place to create opportunities for faculty members and students to embrace and reflect on their shared purposes. Therefore, there is a need to upgrade both the libraries and facilities in both public and private HEIs. In order to make improvements in the teaching and learning resources as well as academic facilities, the ACC should establish a regulation that rules out minimum required teaching and learning resources within all institutions.

Employment outcome for Cambodian graduates from HEIs

The higher education system in each country produces different output which normally refers to graduates. As noted in the findings, some participants took the employment outcome as a quality indicator for higher education, and those who argued that a good quality should produce graduates who were qualified for employment were the rectors, university consultants, government, donors, employers, CHEA and CITA. The employment perspective was used by the rectors, employers in governmental ministries and CHEA to make a point that the quality of higher education in Cambodia was not low as graduates from HEIs were employed in the private sector and NGOs. This means that graduates learn skills that are required by the world of

work. However, that claim was rejected by other stakeholder groups such as international employers and CITA who argued that graduates did not learn the required skills, and are perceived to lack both analytical and critical thinking skills. As evidenced in the findings, the international employers complained that they had to interview many graduates before they could find the ones for the advertised vacancies. A study which interviewed more than 63 employers reveals a similar result that graduates from Cambodian HEIs lack analytical and critical thinking skills, the ability to reflect and apply knowledge to problem-solving as the result of their failure to achieve tertiary learning skills (Ngoy, 2009). Less than 30 percent of graduates get employment, and they are usually employed in areas which do not relate to their studies (Ford, 2003). The lack of these skills has its underlying roots which can be examined from both historical and cultural perspectives.

From the historical perspective, the legacy of the French system from French colonial times still has an impact on the higher education system in Cambodia. In this system, teachers tend to be instructors rather than mentors, and classrooms are mainly controlled by the teachers. Any form of challenging the teacher is rarely encouraged. During the 1980s, Cambodia was part of the communist bloc. Cambodian students were mainly taught political education and Marxist-Leninist ideology. Their brains were then filled with the communist mentality. Today, Cambodia is driven by a change in market economy coupled with an authoritarian democracy (Chealy, 2006). Although Cambodia's constitution states that Cambodia adopts pluralism of political parties and democracy, not all forms of criticism are tolerated in Cambodia. Most teachers are not supposed to be critical, and by the same token, they do not want to take the risk of encouraging students to become critical learners. As a result, university students become passive learners.

From a cultural perspective, Cambodia's society shows great respects for older people, authoritative leaders and teachers. In particular, Cambodia's society tends to show greater respect for teachers. Therefore, students tend not challenge their teachers in classroom because of the traditional respects for teachers. This cultural heritage has been passed on for many generations, and it represents a cultural norm of many of the students from Southeast Asia. Cambodian students seem to share a common Chinese and Confucian heritage background which traditionally values knowledge and encourages respect for those who teach it (Chalmers & Volet, 1997). Because students give too much respect for teachers, they normally perceive that challenging the teachers is not a culturally accepted move. Culturally, Cambodian students also expect their teachers to spoon-feed them with all the information they need in the classroom. In this fashion, self-directed learning which is the core scaffolding of university study does not exist. Rote-learning become a common feature for Cambodian students who

adopt a surface approach to learning which is described by Chalmers and Volet (1997) as learning with an intention to learn information to simply reproduce information. Critical and analytical thinking which is a type of learning characterized by an intention to learn information so that it is meaningful and can be understood is still a new concept to Cambodian students. Most students depend mainly on textbooks selected by their universities as the course books for their subjects. It is not uncommon to see students buy their course books from the university bookshops. Most students do not like going to the library to research and learn from more books or materials as they believe that their exam questions will come from the course books they are told to buy. This belief is caused by the culture that teachers encourage classroom activities through giving questions and answers. Students expect their teachers to give them questions from the textbook before exams take place. Until now, students still hold an obstinate belief that they would feel a sense of betrayal and truncation in their studies if their teachers did not tell them what would be in the exam (Innes-Brown, 2006). Cheating in exams which they carry from high school still takes place in higher education. Most students do not work hard enough for the exams as they rely on copying the exam answers from their friends. Cheating has become a norm in almost HEIs. Students usually complete their higher education studies without having gained the necessary skills that make them employable. There are a few institutions such as the Institute of Foreign Languages, which adopts student-centred activities in classrooms. Graduates from this institute are believed to be critical thinkers.

In short, the employment outcome for graduates is not a fair argument for supporting the quality of Cambodian higher education as most Cambodian graduates lack critical and analytical skills. The lack of such skills is the result of both cultural and historical legacies that shape the way students are expected to learn and behave. Students tend to learn information to simply reproduce information without having to make it meaningfully understood. They are not encouraged to become critical thinkers due to the fact that Cambodia's society tends to show greater respect for teachers. The lack of both critical and problem-solving skills is contrary to what employers are looking for among graduates. In order to encourage any form of critical thinking, it takes time to change the ways students are taught. In the most practical sense, the student-centred style of teaching needs to be encouraged in order to create an atmosphere in which students become critical learners. Alternatively, student-centered teacher training is a practical solution to address the problem of graduates lacking both critical and analytical skills which are the core element in the university studies.

Institutional governance and leadership

Recently, the demands imposed on universities from outsiders have increased as a result of the movement from elite to mass system of higher education. As a result, there are some concerns over the relationships between HEIs and the government. Governments have been called upon to give universities autonomy in terms of legal, administrative and financial decisions in order for them to be the strong actors they need to be (Bladh, 2007). Neave and van Vught (1994) define autonomy as the condition under which academics determine the way their work is carried out. Institutional autonomy can be described in terms of dependence or independence on different perspectives which involve the relationship between higher education institutions and the government (Bladh, 2007). Nowadays, the territories of governance and leadership in higher education lie at the interface between the internal and external worlds. As higher education is a heterogeneous sector that is difficult to categorize (Bladh, 2007), authority can be centralized or decentralized, and the purpose can be either cultural or utilitarian.

In Cambodia, institutional governance and leadership within HEIs have caused an ongoing debate over the degree of autonomy enjoyed by universities. According to the findings, the governance and leadership in university was regarded as a quality aspect in Cambodian higher education. As noted in the findings, the teachers, rectors, university consultants, government, donors and CITA contended that a good quality university should have good governance and leadership, and there was tension over the university governance and institutional autonomy in HEIs in Cambodia. Based on the findings, some participants tended to say that HEIs had too much autonomy while HEIs themselves tended to argue that their autonomy is strictly limited. In Cambodia, universities do not have good governance and leadership as higher education is politicized (O'Mahony, 1999), and the political influence is believed to limit the institutional governance and autonomy in HEIs. The politicized system of higher education also limits the academic freedom universities are supposed to enjoy. However, although autonomy in HEIs is arguably controversial in Cambodia, some signs of positive and negative changes have been observed in the university governance and management in recent years.

An example of a positive change is that the Cambodian government has decided to make public higher education institutions become public administrative institutions (PAIs), granting them more autonomy in financial decisions within their institutions. So far most public HEIs that have received the PAI status enjoy more autonomy in allocating funding in their institutions. With this status, a public institution that is under the supervision of the MoEYS has more authority to manage itself under the direction of a governance board rather than the direction from the MoEYS. However, there are a few public HEIs that are still refusing to accept the PAI

status. For example, the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), which is the oldest HEI, has refused to become a PAI because this university does not regard it as a necessity. Private HEIs are also encouraged to have governing boards and decisions regarding the routine operation and finance now rest in the hands of the board members.

However, some negative aspects of governance in the current higher education system can also still be observed. An example of a negative change is the appointment mechanism within the public HEIs. Technically speaking, the appointments of top management people such as rectors or vice rectors and deans are made by the government without open and transparent evaluation process of competencies and academic merits. The posts of rectors and vice-rectors in the public HEIs are linked to politics rather than academic achievements, and sometimes these posts are appointed on a power-sharing basis between the parties that lead the government. Previous studies by O'Mahony (1999), Ford (2003) which claim that higher education in Cambodia are politicized still seem to be the case. In most cases, rectors and vice rectors are arguably seen as senior members of the ruling parties. They are not appointed on academic grounds, but on a political basis. These staff appointment arrangements in the public HEIs make senior academics that are not well-connected with politics lose their commitment to their work. As a result, some senior lecturers in the public HEIs turn their attention to teaching in private HEIs that offer them better pay incentives and reward their qualifications. Another example of a negative change is that HEIs in Cambodia are mandated to carry training programs only. However, they are not given the right to confer degrees. For example, as noted in Chapter Two, any degree must bear the signatures of the rector of the institution and the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport. For HEIs under different ministries, a degree is approved by the institution and signed by its parent ministry. No university degree or diploma in Cambodia is valid unless it bears the signature and the stamp of its parent ministry (see also Chapter Two). This reflects a lack of delegation of authority to HEIs to take their responsibility to confer degrees to students and to show their accountability in their action.

In private HEIs, the rectors do not seem to be involved in politics. But in reality, most rectors in private HEIs are elements of politics as they hold a political position. As evidenced in the findings in Chapter Six, most participants argued that most rectors in private HEIs were appointed as advisors to high-ranking officials in the government. From the administrative perspective, private HEIs seem to enjoy a higher degree of autonomy than the public counterparts do. From the management angle, they both are controlled by the DoHE which is an arm of MoEYS. All HEIs have less academic freedom as the result of limited institutional autonomy. Each institution is required to submit a proposal to run course programs to the DoHE. Even a course advertisement needs an approval from the MoEYS. Most HEIs complained about the bureaucratic process which they have to follow. This form of control by

the MoEYS limits the academic freedom that HEIs are supposed to enjoy. However, a participant argued that, “if the MoEYS does not take firm control over the courses offered in all HEIs, HEIs will have a free rein to run courses of poor quality without showing their accountability”.

In short, both private and public HEIs in Cambodia are not given full autonomy to run their operational daily activities. Consequently, this affects the academic freedom that HEIs are supposed to enjoy. The power of institutional governance falls in the hands of the MoEYS which affects the power and decision-making of universities. However, this is seen as a common characteristic of university governance in Asia where academic freedom is partially restricted (Altbach, 1998). Due to a three decade civil war, Cambodian higher education has just reached the stage of mass system of higher education. During this transition, the politicization of universities seems to be a similar problem found in many Asian countries. Institutional governance becomes insoluble as the decision making usually flows out of universities into the hands of political authorities whose authority is not based on the role of higher education, but on the political process (Teichler, 2010). Top management people in HEIs such as rectors in both public and private HEIs in Cambodia are apparently involved in politics, and they do not appear to have academic background. But the fact that university leaders or rectors in Cambodia do not have academic background is also a characteristic of higher education in developing nations. This is consistent to the claims by the teacher and university consultant groups who contended that the university leaders in Cambodia lacked good governance and leadership skills. The lack of these skills in a practical sense affects the quality of running a good university. However, it is a common issue of higher education in developing nations. It is hard to impose change in institutional governance in universities in Cambodia as in some developing nations, the governments usually put people in top university management just to serve its purposes (Mohamedbhai, 2008). Therefore, in order for HEIs to have good governance and leadership, the MoEYS should give HEIs more autonomy, and the government should create criteria for the appointment of rectors within both public and private HEIs.

Institutional quality assurance

According to the findings presented in Chapter Six, some participants claimed that an ideal university should have a good internal quality assurance (IQA) mechanism. The institutional quality assurance within HEIs is viewed as an important element in quality assurance in higher education. As seen in the findings, the university consultants, the government and donors hailed the IQA as an important aspect of quality in higher education, and they claimed that a good

university should have an IQA unit to monitor and assure the quality of its education services. In this regard, the MoEYS has instructed all HEIs to establish their institutional quality assurance unit (IQAU). It was also regarded by other participants as a good sign for Cambodian higher education because it would help HEIs to start developing their internal quality assurance mechanism as well as help HEIs prepare for the external quality assessment by the ACC. Unfortunately, as evidenced in the findings, most participants did not have confidence in the HEIs' ability to build such a needed internal quality assurance mechanism as they did not believe that HEIs in Cambodia had people with expertise in developing the IQAU. Based on their belief, it is clear that HEIs in Cambodia do not have the IQAU. As the rectors within HEIs are people who do not have academic background, the idea of internal quality assurance is a new concept for them. As a result, the university top leaders must understand the reason for internal quality and must be committed to it. One of the conditions is that if the university management is involved in the process of establishing the IQAU, it should have the support of adequately well-trained academics. However, as noted in the findings, most participants were not optimistic that HEIs in Cambodia would be able to develop an internal quality mechanism due to the lack of people with expertise or experiences in quality assurance. There are a few universities in Cambodia such as Norton University, Build Bright University and Panhasatra University that have their internal quality assurance mechanism established with technical assistance from foreign staff (Innes-Brown, 2006). Most HEIs do not have the internal quality assurance mechanism yet as people in the IQAU office are not capable of making the IQAU a reality. People in the IQAU in most HEIs are only teaching staff members who do not understand the process of IQA development. In order for the universities to be able to produce the IQAU, there should be a change in the top university management people. Rectors or vice rectors in both public and private HEIs should be academics with higher qualifications and experiences in academic affairs. Another possible approach is that the MoEYS should make the internal quality assurance mandatory for all HEIs.

Summary

Based on the literature review and the discussion of the findings on higher education in Cambodia, it is obviously clear that Cambodian higher education is characterized by inadequately prepared students due to the poor quality of high school education, out-dated curriculum with courses not being relevant to the market and national development needs, a severe shortage of well-qualified academic staff, the lack of proper educational infrastructure, the influence of politics which limits academic freedom and autonomy, graduates with skills not being relevant to employment needs, and the lack of internal quality assurance. The above

characteristics are currently perceived to be the critical factors affecting the quality of Cambodian higher education. However, the quality aspects are the common characteristics of higher education in developing nations (Lim, 2001) and nations in Asia (Harman, 1996) and Africa (Mohamedbhai, 2008). Although there were different views among the stakeholders on the current situation of quality of higher education, the discussion reveals that there were many areas of agreement on the poor aspects of the quality of Cambodian higher education between local and international stakeholders. Therefore, a general assumption is that at this stage, Cambodian higher education has just reached the mass system of higher education phase where most of the world entered this period more than three decades ago. From the view on higher education in the period of massification, the actual development of higher education in each country reflects its unique historical, social, economic, cultural and political characteristics of that country. In every advanced nation, the problems of higher education seem to be associated with its growth. The growth and expansion of higher education cause these problems in parts of higher education such as “in finance, governance, administration, recruitment of staff and students, curriculum...and the maintenance of standards” (Teichler, 2010, p. 88). Based on that trend, Cambodian higher education seems to follow that pattern and suffers similar problems during this period of massification. However, it would be interesting to hear how the stakeholders viewed the effectiveness of the government strategy in ensuring the quality of its higher education during the period of massification of higher education. The next section will discuss the stakeholders’ views on the effectiveness of the government strategy to ensure the quality of higher education.

Question 3. How do stakeholders view the effectiveness of government strategy to ensure the quality of higher education?

As higher education becomes critical for development, the quality of higher education is also of importance, and the government has to establish a strategy to tailor its higher education in order to achieve the quality. As evidenced in Chapter Two and noted in the findings, the Cambodian government has established regulations and rules on higher education. The government has the ACC and Education Law in place. The MoEYS has initiated IQAU within all HEIs in Cambodia. However, the strategy did not appear to make much contribution to the quality improvement in higher education because it was not effective. As seen in the findings, the participants could identify the factors that affect the effectiveness of the government strategy to ensure the quality of higher education. Those factors were the policy implementation, the management of HEIs, the ACC management and the ACC staff, and the IQAU management and the IQAU staff.

Policy implementation

According to the findings, the government policy or law on higher education sounded excellent only on paper, but the implementation was not effective. As a result, little has been done to ensure the quality of higher education. As evidenced in the findings, the participants pointed to some barriers which hampered the policy implementation on higher education. Those barriers included the lack of human and funding resources, lack of strategies for the policy implementation, lack of commitment, political interferences, and the policy statements which are written by foreigners. These five factors are believed to be inter-related when the policy on higher education was put into practice.

With reference to the lack of human and financial resources to carry out the policy on higher education, mixed views were obtained from the participants, according to the findings. However, there was a consensus that the Cambodian government did not have qualified people and funding to make the policy implementation a success. The MoEYS and DoHE accepted the fact that the MoEYS still faced a shortage of well-qualified people. Due to the lack of these resources, Cambodia has depended totally on technical and financial assistance from donor agencies. In most circumstances, a policy execution ceases when it stops receiving funding or technical assistance from foreign donors, namely the World Bank and ADB. Usually, these two agencies provide the MoEYS with human technical consultants who help guide the policy implementation when there is a project funded by one of the two financial institutions. The aim of the technical assistance, however, is not to train local Cambodian staff in the MoEYS for the project sustainability. Rather, it is mostly perceived to aim at helping the MoEYS implement the policy for the period of the project only. As a result, when it stops receiving technical and financial assistance from donor agencies, any effort to implement the policies ends up in a failure as people involved in the policy implementation are less motivated to commit themselves to their work due to the lack of financial incentives. With an inadequate salary from the government, staff involved in the policy implementation is usually less motivated to carry on the project. Therefore, any project to implement the policy on higher education is usually left unattended or forgotten or even abandoned. In other words, when a funded-project to carry out the policy is put into practice, only top management people or senior staff members are involved in the implementation process, and these people are not usually the right ones. Although they hold high positions, they are the people whose appointments are based on political faithfulness, and they often see a donor-funded project as a lucrative business because of the supplementary incentives they receive from the project. As the people involved in the policy implementation are not the right people, the argument put forward by CITA that Cambodia did have qualified people, but they are not given the power to do their jobs seems to be a reasonable judgement. Furthermore, the donors claimed that the MoEYS really has some

overseas-educated people, but they are rarely included in any project. As a result, when a donor-funded project stops receiving funding and technical assistance from donors, that project eventually ceases its operation due to the lack of human resources to carry on the project. In this sense, in order to help the MoEYS implement any policy on higher education more effectively, one possible approach is to put highly educated staff in the policy implementation as they could help to keep the project going on after funding or technical assistance from donor agencies is over. Moreover, the government should increase both the expenditure on higher education as well as the salary for staff in the MoEYS so that they can be more motivated to carry their jobs in an effective manner.

In regards to the lack of a strategy to implement the policy on higher education, the participants seemed to argue that the Cambodian government failed to set a strategy to ensure whether the policy was successfully implemented. As noted in the findings, all stakeholders claimed that when there was no strategy in place to implement a policy that policy would end up as a failure because there was no indication that the desired results were being achieved. The teachers, CITA, university consultants and donors agreed that Cambodia failed to set a strategy for the policy implementation. The lack of strategy is caused mainly by the lack of human resources in developing a clear framework for the policy implementation. When a reform on the policy on higher education is implemented, there is a confusing mechanism over how the policy should be implemented. As a result, the intended policy is never implemented or failed to achieve the minimum result. Therefore, due to the absence of a strategy to monitor the policy implementation on higher education, any attempt to implement an intended policy is usually not materialized and subsequently seen as a failure, a waste of time and efforts. The failure to achieve the quality of higher education in Cambodia is comparably similar to the implementation of educational policies on higher education in some developing nations worldwide which do not have strategies for the policy implementation of higher education. For example a study by Psacharopoulos (1989, p. 190) which is drawn from a handful of African nations reveals that there are three reasons why an intended policy on higher education was seen as a failure: (1) the intended policy was never implemented in the first phase, (2) even if an attempt was made, it failed to be completed or achieve the minimum critical mass to have an impact, (3) although the policy was implemented, it did not have the intended effect.

Due to the lack of strategies to measure the implementation of educational policies, the policy implementation never has an intended effect on the quality of higher education. As noticed in the findings, Cambodia does not only lack the strategy to measure the implementation of educational policy, it also lacks a long-term plan for higher education which plays an important role in the planning of the skilled workforce. From the historical perspective, since

independence from France, the overall implementation of educational policy was never measurable as the educational policies do not follow a well-planned path to implementation (Ayres, 1999). Therefore, due to the lack of both a strategy and a long-term plan, the policy implementation is never realized in practice. To improve policy implementation on higher education, one possible approach is that the MoEYS should work with donor agencies to create a flexible long-term plan for higher education through which the policy implementation can be measured and have an intended effect on quality improvement in higher education. Currently, Cambodia has worked with the World Bank in developing the 2020 vision for higher education in Cambodia. However, the 2020 vision remains a draft as the government has not yet approved it.

From another perspective, the policy implementation on higher education is not effective as the result of the lack of commitment to carry through the policy. As evidenced in the findings, most participants, local and international alike, agreed that Cambodia had a nice-sounding policy or law on higher education, but the government lacked commitment to reinforcing the policy and law on higher education. As seen in the findings, one rector admitted that “we know what going wrong with the quality of our higher education, but we are not committed enough to fix it”. The lack of commitment to law reinforcement becomes common in all the governmental agencies, not just in the higher education sector. In particular, all the management levels in the MoEYS seem to lack both commitment and motivation to carry out the policy implementation. The DoHE is seen as a weak body in reinforcing the policy or regulations on higher education. Some participants, as noted in the findings, explained that in Cambodia the rules or laws that affect the interests of those in power never receive attention or are never implemented. This seems to be the case. Further literature supporting this argument is Ford (2003) who states that in most cases, laws that challenge powerful, politically vested interests, have been obstructed or if a new legislation is passed then the actual enforcement is weak. In this view, Education Law or policy on higher education is slowly implemented as they affect the interests of those who run universities. For example, as some private universities are run by some influential politicians, the policy or law on higher education are not usually implemented because they affect the interests of those in power. Therefore, educational policy on higher education has no effect. The lack of commitment to reinforcing the policy is an indication of the weak reinforcement of the rule of law in Cambodia. From the perspective of path dependence, Cambodian leaders have used education to establish their legitimacy in building the Cambodian nation-state, and each transition reflects the leaders’ political imperatives of education quality (Ayres, 2000b). Consequently, the educational policy was never implemented. From the historical angle, Cambodia has always ignored technical advice and recommendations from donor agencies (Ayres, 1999). Ayres’ (1999) argument is consistent with what the university consultants and

donors explained about how the government ignores donors' advice. For example, the university consultants and donors claimed that in 1997 the Higher Education Task Force submitted a proposal with some useful recommendations to the Council of Ministers to restore Cambodian higher education, but no response has been heard so far, and the recommendations in the proposal have been left unrealized.

In short, the Cambodian government seems to lack commitment to see that the policy on higher education is implemented successfully. As a result, the policy on higher education does not make any significant contribution to quality improvement in higher education. In order to make a successful attempt to implement the policy on higher education, the Cambodian government, especially the MOEYS, must make full commitment to implementing the policy through a tough stance on law reinforcement. In this sense, one possible approach is to introduce serious penalties for those who fail to implement the policies and fail to follow the Education Law.

Policy implementation on higher education was hampered by political interference from the government. There was tension over the political interference in the policy implementation. As noted in the findings, all the international stakeholder groups and some local ones such as the teachers and CITA expressed a profound conviction that the policy on higher education did not take effect as there was political interference. However, some local participants argued that politics did not affect the policy implementation on higher education, and they said that the policy was not well implemented because Cambodia lacks both human and funding resources to carry out the policy. In a general sense, the public thinks that politics in most cases meddles with every aspect of social establishment in Cambodia. Even the words of comedians convey a political message to the audience (Wallace, 2011). In Cambodia, some private universities are run by influential politicians who do not wish to see the policy on higher education implemented as it affects their business. The argument made by the university consultants in the findings that some private universities did not pay attention to the order from the MoEYS as their rectors had some high-ranking government officials behind them is still the case. Normally, laws or policies that affect the interests of government officials are rarely implemented whereas some laws or policies that do not affect their interests seem to get much attention from the government. Therefore, political interference into any law or policy reinforcement is not unusual. From the perspective of path dependence, Cambodian leaders in every regime have designed educational policies to gain popularity and to legitimize their leadership, but because of political interference, educational policies never work when implemented. Sometimes, because of political influence, the policy implementation on higher education goes against the content of the policy statements. As evidenced in the findings, originally, the proposal to establish the ACC was intended to have a government-funded body

independent from the government in order to accredit HEIs on technical and professional grounds. However, because of political interference, the ACC was created by an untouchable Royal decree and was put in the arm of the Council of Ministers. Most stakeholders did not believe that the ACC was an independent body. In 2003, the MOEYS issued a directive for HEIs that offer Masters Programs in Cambodia. The directive requires that students enrolled in Masters Programs have to write a thesis in the final term, and that students are not allowed to sit for exams. However, most HEIs at the moment offer Masters Programs by coursework. Another example which shows that politics interferes with the policy statements is that by law, for those who wish to pursue their postgraduate studies must have a bachelor degree. In practice, at some private universities, students without a bachelor degree can also be allowed to enrol in postgraduate programs because the government has issued a directive stating that senior government officials who have worked for more than ten years are entitled to enrol in a postgraduate program without a bachelor degree. The three examples above indicate that policy implementation on higher education in Cambodia is affected by political interference which creates inconsistency and hampers the effectiveness of the policy. As a result, any effort to improve the quality of higher education in Cambodia is usually useless. The DoHE that is supposed to reinforce the policy on higher education is less motivated to implement any policy or law as it learns that not many HEIs will abide by it. Therefore, the argument put forward by most informants that politics impinges upon the policy implementation on higher education was the truth and is consistent with the statement by O'Mahony' (1999) that higher education in Cambodia is politicized. The effects of the politicization of policy and policy implementation are common in Cambodia because of the endurance of the country's hierarchical political culture. Because of that culture, administrators who are supposed to implement educational policies are unwilling to question those with political power about their irrational and illogical reversal of the policies (Ayres, 1999). Therefore, in order for any policy or law on higher education to take effect, the government must be serious about the law reinforcement by not allowing political influence on the policy implementation on higher education when it is put into practice.

The last factor which is perceived to affect the policy implementation on higher education is the policy statements which are written by foreign donors. Due to the fact that the MoEYS lacks well-qualified and experienced administrative staff to draft the policy statements on higher education in Cambodia, the policy is usually developed by foreign experts who bring concepts and models from other countries to put them into practice in Cambodia without contextualizing them to fit the situation in Cambodia. Foreign experts who draft the policy statements are mainly employed by donor agencies such as the World Bank and ADB. In this sense, McNamara (1999) claims that the problems identified by foreign experts usually relate to a

wider range of the foreign advisors who draft the policy statements, and that the Cambodian government leaders usually claim the policy statements developed by foreigners to be their policies without realizing the ramifications. In this way, the policy contents do not relate to the real issues of Cambodian higher education. As a result, when the policy on higher education is put into practice, it does not work very well as the content is not relevant to the problems and issues of Cambodian higher education. In this fashion, when the policy statements do not relate to the issues or priorities of Cambodian higher education, those policy statements are like the wrong medication prescribed to the patient. However, the possibility of the government putting the higher education policy into practice is likely in the short-term and any reform on higher education is under pressure as reform is often linked to ongoing aid. The government usually has no choice, but to accept the reform in higher education introduced by donors in order to avoid the risk of the withdrawal of aid funding (O'Mahony, 1999). Hence reform which involves policy implementation on higher education usually ends up in failure as it does not relate to the context of Cambodia. From the perspective of institutional management, the policy statements created by foreigners lack a partnership between donors and indigenous Cambodians. From this perspective, it is advisable that the donors need to understand the issues identified by indigenous Cambodians. This requires a strong partnership between aid donor agencies and MoEYS and HEIs in spelling out the real challenges faced by Cambodian higher education. Failure to encourage indigenous Cambodians to participate in developing the policy statements will result in an educational policy that will not be accepted by the Cambodian government as the educational policy lacks the stickiness and a sense of ownership. For example, in 1997, the donor agencies developed a proposal to restore Cambodian higher education, and the proposal was submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval. The Cambodian government did not respond to the proposal as it viewed that the proposal was developed by outsiders and lacked stickiness. Therefore, in order for the policy implementation on higher education to be more effective, one possible approach is that donor agencies should encourage a partnership between Cambodian scholars and HEIs in developing the policy statements on higher education which reflect a compromise between the donors and indigenous Cambodians over the content of the policy statements. Another option is to have the policy on higher education that reflects the reality on the ground as the policy statements jointly developed by Cambodians and donors through partnership could be responsive to the context of higher education in Cambodia.

Management of higher education

Cambodia is a country where its higher education institutions are managed and supervised by different ministries. This managerial style is originally rooted in the system developed in the former Soviet Union 30 years ago with the main purpose that graduates from the ministries that ran HEIs would be automatically guaranteed employment in those ministries after their graduation. This scenario remains the case in Cambodia, but the difference is that graduates now are no longer guaranteed employment. According to the findings, the management of HEIs in Cambodia was cited by the participants as an issue affecting the Cambodian policy on higher education. Today, public HEIs in Cambodia fall into the hands of 11 ministries.

As the public HEIs are controlled by different ministries, the system is fragmented, causing MoEYS to have a lot of difficulties in reinforcing the law or policy on higher education. MoEYS and DoHE usually complain that as the higher education system is fragmented there is no coordinating body between the ministries that run HEIs and the MoEYS. Therefore, there is no consistency in the policy implementation. Most participants argued that as rectors in the public HEIs were appointed by parent ministries, they in most circumstances seem to listen to the ministries they belong to rather than following the regulations from MoEYS. This multiple ministry control of public HEIs in Cambodia is similar to that in Vietnam where line ministry control of the public higher education system remains a deeply entrenched feature (Khanh & Hayden, 2010). In other words, as higher education in Cambodia is politicized, rectors in the public HEIs have to listen to their ministries in order to secure their positions. Therefore, they tend not to abide by the policy on higher education and directives from the MoEYS. In this perspective, the fragmentation of higher education in Cambodia limits the MoEYS' power to reinforce the policy on higher education. The Council of Ministers has two HEIs under its supervision. The MoEYS and the DSR have no access to the postgraduate courses run by the Royal Academic of Cambodia because it is under the direct control of the Council of Ministers. By law, the DSR is supposed to look after all postgraduate courses nationwide. However, the DSR is denied access to the Royal Academy of Cambodia. There is nothing the MoEYS can do to gain access to postgraduate courses run by the Royal Academy of Cambodia because the Council of Ministers is the most powerful body. There has been an effort to put all HEIs, regardless of being public or private, under the managerial arm of the MoEYS. For example, in 1997, there was a recommendation from a working group that higher education in Cambodia should be placed under a single ministry which could be the Ministry of Education or a new ministry which deals exclusively with higher education (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). However, that effort was seen as a failure because of intense bureaucratic resistance from the ministries that ran the public HEIs. In a general sense, a public HEI in Cambodia has been viewed as a

lucrative business since the government allowed it to introduce fee charges in 1997. As seen in the findings, some participants said that profit is the motive behind the refusal to place all higher education under the MoEYS. Therefore, eliminating the fragmented system of higher education in Cambodia will not be a simple matter as the ministries that run public HEIs are believed to reap considerable gain from this system. For example, it is believed that personnel departments within the ministries that run HEIs can make their own recommendations for academic senior staff appointments, including the position of the rector without consultations with MoEYS. It is common knowledge that the position of rector in the public HEIs involves a kickback which is part of corruption in Cambodia, a nation racked by rampant corruption. Cambodia was ranked 166 out of 180 countries in the 2008 Corruption Perception Index of the Transparency International, making Cambodia the 14th most corrupt nation in the world and the second most corrupt country in Asia behind Burma (Phy, 2010). Therefore, it is not uncommon to see corruption taking place in Cambodian higher education because pervasive corruption has been well-rooted in almost business transactions in most Asian nations (S. H. Lee & Oh, 2007; Welch, 2011). With Cambodia's GDP per capita standing at US\$830 in 2010 (UNDP, 2011), and low public sector wages, Cambodian people have to find extra sources of incomes by working a second job or accepting bribes and embezzling from the national budget in order to make ends meet. Everyday, Cambodian civil servants complain about rampant corruption within the public sector, where bribes are required for nearly all public services, and it is believed that the higher education sector is no exception. A leading Cambodian analyst, Lao Mong Hay, was quoted as saying that a large number of civil servants are trapped in their allegiance to the ruling party, forcing them into acts of corruption in order to keep their jobs (Kimseng, 2011). In this sense, some scholars, for example, Nissen (2012, p. 273) claim that people in Cambodia are "culturally intimate" with corruption, and this intimacy enables people to deal with corruption in everyday life. Due to corrupt practices, the ministries and top management of HEIs that are not controlled by the MoEYS are allegedly making a lot of personal gain. Because of the fragmented system and lax law reinforcement, some HEIs that are not under the umbrella of the MoEYS deliver poor quality courses and award degrees that are not highly regarded. In a general sense, corruption in the field of higher education, namely in Asian nations, is believed to have a negative impact on the quality of education (ADB, 2012; Hayneman, 2004; Welch, 2011). Therefore, corruption in Cambodia, which has become a culture, plays a part in deteriorating the quality in Cambodian higher education. Although the Cambodian government has recently established the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) aimed at curbing corruption in the public sector, it remains to be seen whether this institution will have a significant impact on higher education quality.

The fragmentation of higher education in Cambodia poses a major problem of developing a national policy on higher education between the MoEYS and those running HEIs. In order to have consistency in the policy implementation on higher education, all HEIs should be controlled and managed by the MoEYS, except a few HEIs that run training courses for police and military purposes which are beyond the capacity of the MoEYS. This is what some for communist countries have done so far. For example, Hungary, which was a member of the former Soviet bloc, has demolished the multiple ministry control of its higher education system since 1993 (Khanh & Hayden, 2010). Vietnam, which remains a communist state in southeast Asia, seems to embrace change in its higher education. From a historical view, modern development of higher education in Vietnam follows the system of higher education of the former Soviet Union. Under this system, higher education was under the control of different ministries. In responding to the change of socio-economic policy, the higher education system in Vietnam began a series of many important policy initiatives in keeping with national policies for innovation. In this way, since early 1990s all higher education institutions in Vietnam have changed from the fragmented system to being under the management and supervision of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOT) with a few ministries dealing mainly with specialist mono-disciplinary institutions (Dao, Thiep, & Sloper, 1995). Although thirteen ministries are responsible for public HEIs in Vietnam, three ministries with main responsibilities across the higher education system are the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Investment (Hayden & Thiep, 2010). Cambodia should follow Vietnam in terms of the management of HEIs as Vietnam and Cambodia have similar social and political status. The Cambodian government also needs to delegate more authority to MoEYS in order to effectively implement the policy aimed at improving the operation of all HEIs in Cambodia. MoEYS should be given the power as enacted in Cambodia's Education Law, which states that the MoEYS shall determine all the fundamental education programs within all HEIs in Cambodia.

ACC management and ACC staff

The ACC, which was established in 2003 after most higher education had gained a university status, has been hailed as a positive sign for Cambodia where HEIs had never been subject to any quality assessment before. The ACC has been viewed by the participants as the police who will make all HEIs bite the bullet in order to show their accountability in their education services. With the ACC now in place, Cambodia is supposed to tailor its higher education in response to the national development needs of Cambodia. However, there were mixed views among the participants on the ACC management and ACC staff. The discussion here is centred

on whether the ACC contributes to the quality improvement in higher education or not by looking at the ACC management and ACC staff.

According to the findings, most stakeholder groups such as the teachers, university consultants, donors, employers and CITA argued that the ACC was neither a professional nor an independent body. They claimed that the ACC was influenced by politics. However, the participants who are supportive of the government gave a different view. For example, the rectors, MoEYS, DoHE, DSR and the ACC argued that the ACC was a body independent from politics. Moreover, CHEA and the ACC itself argued that the Council of Ministers was the only neutral place as HEIs in Cambodia fell under different supervisions of many ministries. The different views from different stakeholder groups mean that the independence of the ACC is questionable. The view that the ACC was not an independent body was supported by two reasons. As noted in the findings, the first reason was the location of the ACC which is in the compound of the Council of Ministers. The second reason was that the ACC top management people were appointed on political grounds. Those people had a close relationship with the ACC President, who is a well-known politician. As higher education in Cambodia is politicized, it is hard to assume that the ACC is free from political influence. Previous studies, for example, Ford (2003) reveals similar finding about the ACC. Ford (2003) claims that the ACC is under political influence from the government as top management people are recruited from those who have political connections with the ACC president. Originally, the 2001 World Bank mission was intended to create an ACC independent from the Cambodian government and consisting of various representatives from ASEAN, the government, commerce and industry, together with the rectors, teachers and students (Innes-Brown, 2006). In 2003, the government set up the ACC with fewer representatives, and all appointments to the ACC were made by the government who brought the ACC under the supervision of the Council of Ministers. The immediate effect of the change in the ACC led to the World Bank loan withdrawal from the ACC as the World Bank thought the ACC was not an independent body. Furthermore, the ACC is headed by a highly influential politician. Therefore, in the public eyes, the ACC cannot be seen as an independent body because the notion of an independent ACC would challenge the well-established tradition of hierarchy and power in Cambodia. In this view, the claim that the ACC was influenced by politics was reasonable enough. The view by the rectors, MoEYS, DoHE, DSR and the ACC itself that the ACC was an independent body was regarded as an opinion intended to support the government interference into the ACC work. The argument put forward by CHEA and the ACC that the Council of Ministers was a neutral place for the ACC to operate independently sounded practical in paper only. Although the Council of Ministers is seen as neutral place for the ACC, it is unlikely that the ACC is independent. Like many developing nations, Cambodia has a long history of autocratic leadership and decision-making which often goes against the policy

statements. In short, the ACC is not seen as an independent body as it is made up of people who have close affiliations with politics. The ACC operation cannot avoid political influence from the government as it is located in the compound of the Council of the Ministers, which in the public eyes, is the most powerful body in the hierarchical structure of the government. Political interference is believed to affect the ACC operation and cause inconsistency in its quality assessment work in all HEIs. In this sense, the ACC is not effective and efficient, and it is a waste of time and effort to have the ACC that is not a useful instrument for improving the quality of the higher education sector. Comparably, if the ACC is like a paper tiger as described by Ford (2003), the official accreditation that Cambodia is striving for may have little impact on quality improvement in the higher education sector in Cambodia. Therefore, in order for the ACC to fulfil its quality assessment work more effectively, the Cambodian government must make the ACC an independent body headed by a president who is not involved in politics, and the government must be willing to move the ACC office out of the Council of Ministers in the order to gain confidence from the public that the ACC is immune to political interference.

In a nutshell, the ACC is neither a professional nor an independent body. From the perspective of human resources management, people are the most valuable asset in an organization as its success or failure depends mainly on the staff. The ACC is not only criticized for not being independent, the ACC staff members are also criticized for their incompetence in their jobs. It is true that the ACC staff is not experienced and qualified enough to do the academic assessment within HEIs. The view that the ACC staff members were incompetent was reasonable. The incompetence of the ACC staff was the result of the ACC staff appointment method which was mainly based on political basis, not on academic merits. Allegedly, the top management in the ACC are those who have strong connections with the government. The ACC members have been appointed by the government without a clear nomination procedure outlined in the ACC legislation (Ford, 2003). Although some ACC staff members have high qualifications, they still lack experience in assessing academic programs within HEIs. Most assessment teams are teachers recruited mainly from HEIs. As a result, the ACC has made limited progress in accreditation work. So far what the ACC has done is giving provisional accreditation to the Foundation Years in most of HEIs. The ACC has not yet started to accredit the bachelor programs while most universities are offering Masters Degrees. Some are running Doctoral degree courses. None of the postgraduate programs has been accredited by the ACC. This leaves HEIs that run the postgraduate programs with an opportunity to enjoy offering postgraduate courses that vary from bad to worse. The only group that saw the ACC staff as competent and qualified was the ACC itself. The participants from the ACC defensively argued that the ACC had some qualified staff and that the ACC would be in a better position to perform its job as the ACC staff were being trained by foreign experts how to carry out the quality

assessment in HEIs. However, though the ACC staff members are training, they are still not qualified to carry out their jobs as they are not the right people in the right job. Therefore, the ACC is still unable to make good progress in its operation.

From the arguments put forward by the participants, it can be viewed that the ACC staff members are not well-qualified and experienced enough to perform their jobs. This is due to the lack of a clear staff recruitment procedure. Top management people are mainly appointed on political basis rather than academic merits. Most assessment teams are recruited from teaching staff from HEIs whose qualifications are dubious. The incompetence of the ACC staff does affect the productivity of the ACC, and eventually makes the ACC a body which is not professional. In order for the ACC to perform its work more effectively, the government must have the guts to restructure the ACC and recruit people with academic background to replace those who do not have qualifications. Although the ACC is perceived to be influenced by politics, it will make more progress in its work if the ACC is a professional body which is staffed with people who have high academic qualifications.

Institutional quality assurance unit management and staff

Among the themes which received attention from the participants regarding the government strategy for higher education in Cambodia were the IQAU within HEIs and the IQAU staff. Worldwide, universities in many countries have established their internal quality assurance to safeguard their higher education. However, the MoEYS in Cambodia has just initiated the concept of IQAU within all HEIs with the main purpose that it will help HEIs to develop their own quality assurance mechanism to ensure their education products as well as to prepare themselves for the external quality assessment from the ACC. According to the findings, the participants gave different views about the IQAU. The main discussion here is centred on the possibility of the IQAU within HEIs.

As evidenced in the findings, most stakeholder groups seemed to be enthusiastic about the IQAU. They viewed it as a good sign for HEIs, saying that all HEIs should start building an internal quality assurance unit. However, there were doubts among the participants about how HEIs would be able to develop the IQAU. Although MoEYS and DoHE would play a role in helping HEIs develop the IQAU, the question is how the MoEYS will help as MoEYS itself lacks people with expertise in the internal quality assurance mechanism. HEIs would not be able to develop an internal quality assurance mechanism as the HEIs' ability to create such the IQAU is very limited. Therefore, it was impossible for HEIs to develop the so-called IQAU. Two

reasons why the IQAU was impossible was raised in the findings. The first reason was that the top management people in universities such as rectors or vice rectors were not academic people. In Cambodia, public universities are headed by people with close connections with politics while private universities are owned by rich and influential politicians. The rectors or vice-rectors in both public and private HEIs do not have the capacity to build the IQAU. The MoEYS itself has not yet set an IQAU procedure for HEIs to follow. The second reason was the IQAU staff within HEIs. In Cambodia, there are a few universities that have an IQAU office. These universities usually get technical assistance from foreign experts in designing the IQAU. Most HEIs are just making preparations for the IAQU, and are not starting to develop it yet. In most circumstances, the IQAU office in HEIs is staffed with teachers who have limited knowledge about the IAQU. The IQAU office is not usually serious about the quality of its education services. It is established under the pressure from the MoEYS and just to show that the university has the IQAU. Although MoEYS makes the IQAU compulsory for every HEI to develop it, it will take years for HEIs to form it as HEIs lack well-qualified academics. That was the reason why most participants were not optimistic about the IQAU.

In short, based on the discussion of the views from the participants, it clearly is impossible at the moment for most HEIs to develop the IQAU to strengthen the quality of higher education. The impossibility of the IQAU is due to the lack of people with expertise in IAQU as top management people such as rectors or vice-rectors do not have academic backgrounds, and the fact that HEIs also lack staff with the capacity to develop the IQAU. Therefore, in order for HEIs to be able to develop the IQAU, they should seek help from foreign experts through joint-cooperation program. Alternatively, the rectors or vice-rectors should be appointed on academic merits so that there will be a possibility for HEIs to create the IQAU.

Summary

The government strategy to ensure the quality of its higher education does not contribute significantly to quality improvement in higher education as in most circumstances it is not effective. The ineffectiveness of the government strategy is caused by weak policy implementation, the fragmented higher education system, the mismanagement of the ACC, lack of a working institutional quality assurance mechanism in each HEI and corruption. The policy implementation on higher education was affected by the lack of human and financial resources to put the policy into practice, the lack of commitment to carrying out the policy, political interference and the policy statements which were written by foreigners. The management of HEIs which falls into the hands of different ministries causes inconsistency in the policy

implementation as there is no coordinating body between the MoEYS and those running HEIs. The ACC is neither a professional nor an independent body as it is viewed to be under the political influence. The ACC staff members do not have experience in quality assessment as top management people in the ACC are appointed on a political basis, and the ACC assessment teams are not qualified enough. The IQAU within each university is still impossible as HEIs lack people with expertise to develop it.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This research began with the intention of exploring how the quality of Cambodian higher education is perceived by key stakeholders. The beginning of this research coincided with the time of the rapid growth of HEIs in Cambodia where higher education was under heavy scrutiny. This study has allowed the researcher to talk to different stakeholders personally and obtain their views on the current higher education system of Cambodia. The different views given by the stakeholders have led to an understanding of the current status of Cambodian higher education. The purpose of the study is consistent with the main purpose of sociology which tries to understand things differently from natural sciences. Becker (1982, p. X) claims that “sociology does not discover what no-one ever knew before in this differing from the natural sciences. Rather, good social science produces a deeper understanding of things that people are pretty much aware of”.

As mentioned in the rationale for this study in Chapter One, in order to improve the quality of higher education in Cambodia rather than simply importing standard templates and process from overseas, this study sought to understand and respond to the ways in which the quality of Cambodian higher education is perceived by both local and international stakeholders. As this study comes to an end in this chapter, the threads will be drawn together. This chapter closes with some theoretical reflections on the methodology section, a summary of the findings on the quality aspects and the government strategy for higher education in Cambodia and a discussion of the implication of the study for the good practice management in higher education institutions in relation to quality improvement and quality assurance in higher education in Cambodia. The implications of this study are directed at key players in Cambodian higher education who are the HEIs, the ACC, the policy-makers which include the MoEYS, DoHE, DSR and the government and the donor agencies, namely the World Bank which has just started a project aimed at improving the overall aspects of quality of Cambodian higher education. The involvement of these four key player groups could lead to a quality assurance mechanism that is more likely to help improve the current situation of Cambodian higher education. Finally, this chapter will end with suggested areas for future research.

Theoretical reflections

In a broad sense, this study represents a contribution to higher education in Cambodia, moving beyond mere description to explanation and understanding of the issues concerning the quality. The distinctiveness of this research lies in the stakeholder approach to quality in higher

education and the methodological assumption. This study is also unique in its focus on experiences, feelings and views from the participants, and relatively consistent with the use of qualitative research. The stakeholder approach to quality chosen in this study is also unique as it builds an understanding of the quality of Cambodian higher education on all the various views from different stakeholder groups. The stakeholder approach appears to achieve the objective of the study which to understand how the quality of Cambodian higher education is perceived by different stakeholders. Other approaches to understanding the quality of Cambodian higher education could not have achieved this goal as they fail to incorporate conflicting views, and the findings on the quality of Cambodian higher education from other approaches could have been lacking. In this sense, the quality management techniques from the industry such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and performance indicators would not have been useful for this study as they can be only applied to processes involving material measurable outcomes. They are not viewed as practical tools for assessing quality in higher education. TQM is suitable only for dealing with administrative work, and it is criticized for not recognising of people's different insights and for failing to address the challenges facing most higher education institution today. In essence, the stakeholder approach to understanding quality in Cambodian higher education appears to be a practical choice as it is able to engage with the diverse interests of the various stakeholders involved in Cambodian higher education.

This qualitative research study was conducted in order to produce the type of data required by this study which focuses on the stakeholders' experiences, insights and opinions as the research questions require rich, detailed highly descriptive responses which can only be elicited from a qualitative approach. The informal individual in-depth interviews were seen as the most appropriate tool for gathering the descriptive responses from the participants which reflected their personal authentic opinions or views on the quality of higher education in Cambodia. The phenomenographic inquiry chosen as the methodology in this study is consistent with the study's objective as phenomenography focuses on the key aspects of the variation in how groups of people experience and understand the phenomenon under the investigation. Furthermore, the phenomenography adopts the second-order approach in which the researcher interprets the phenomenon through the participants' experiences, perceptions and feelings. An inductive approach adopted in this study was seemingly best suited for the study's objective. In retrospect, the strengths of this approach lie in the inter-relatedness of the use of the qualitative method and phenomenography. The only weakness is that in the phenomenography the researcher seems to rely mainly on the interpretations of the stories told by the participants without seeking other sources of information. However, the information given by the participants was also compared to other sources. In short, this approach has far more pros than

cons. The section below summarizes the responses to the research questions which are the results of this research.

Summary of the findings

This study was framed around three questions regarding quality issues in Cambodian higher education:

1. How do stakeholders perceive the quality of Cambodian higher education?
2. What strategy has the Cambodian government developed to ensure the quality of higher education?
3. How do the stakeholders view the effectiveness of the government strategy to improve the quality of higher education?

This study expected that eliciting the views from the participants would lead to an understanding of the ways in which the quality of Cambodian higher education was perceived by influential stakeholder groups. Below is the wrap up of the stakeholders' reactions to each question. With these reactions and the aspects of perceived quality of Cambodian higher education found in the literature, it is possible to draw a conclusion on the quality of Cambodian higher education and on the government strategy for higher education. Eventually, the implications from the conclusion will decide what measures need to be taken to improve the quality of Cambodian higher education, and who the implications should be directed to.

Question 1: How do stakeholders perceive the quality of Cambodian higher education?

Interestingly, the stakeholder approach to quality this study employs shows that stakeholders came up with different perspectives of quality in higher education. The input-process-output framework for quality in education appears to reveal that stakeholders in Cambodian higher education conceptualized quality with regard to higher education in different ways. The student group viewed quality as relating to the educational process (e.g. quality of teachers, courses, resources) and output while the university teachers viewed the quality in the same way as the students did. The university rectors, university consultants, the government, donor agencies and academic unions perceived quality as relating to the whole education system which includes the input, process and output. However, the employers' perspective of quality pointed mainly to the output which refers to the skill the students bring to the workplace. The stakeholder approach to understanding quality in higher education from the input-process-output framework for quality in education produces various perceptions of quality which are consistent with the UNESCO (1998) declaration on quality in higher education. Based on the stakeholder approach and the

input-process-output framework for quality, the aspects of quality in Cambodian higher education were characterized by irrelevant curriculum, a shortage of well-qualified teachers, inadequate resources, improper infrastructure, and poor governance and leadership in HEIs. The quality aspects identified by the participants share some commonalities with other studies that employ the stakeholder approach to understanding quality in higher education other developing nations elsewhere in the world (Lacovidou, et al., 2009) for quality of higher education in Cyprus, and previous studies that seek to understand quality in higher education in developed nations (Chua, 2004; Hewitt & Clayton, 1999). Therefore, the input-process-output framework of quality in higher education serves as an entry point for quality assessment as it addresses the question of different perceptions of quality in higher education in relation to various perspectives of quality. The distributions of the quality attributes given in the input, process and output differ among the recipients of the higher education services. The results of this study suggest that in order to satisfy the needs of each group, higher education institutions must pay attention to all the aspects of higher education in response to the demand for quality from different stakeholder groups. As mentioned early, studies that use other approaches to understanding quality may produce results which come from a few perspectives which are lacking. For example, as mentioned in Chapter Three, the Total Quality Management philosophy has been applied universities in Europe, the United States and some countries in Asia (Kanji & Tambi, 1999), but the education sector is not comfortable with the Total Quality Management approach (J. Barnard, 1999). In fact, a lot of practices are adopted by universities in the world in order to achieve a high level of quality in education; however, the integrated approach of using many techniques in the quality measurement process is commonly practiced in successful firms (Ahmed & Rafiq, 1998; Chua, 2004). Therefore, the combination of the stakeholder approach and the input-process-output framework for quality in education serve as a model for understanding how the concept of quality in higher education can be understood. In this sense, the question that needs to be addressed is: how different perceptions of quality from different stakeholders can be evaluated and reconciled?

The combination of the stakeholder approach and the input-process-output framework for quality in Cambodian higher education, as well as the inclusion of international stakeholders in this study have made this study a unique one as it incorporates the various views from both local and international stakeholders. From the perspective of path dependence, quality issues in Cambodian higher education have been mainly identified by donor agencies (Sloper & Moock, 1999) without the participation of local Cambodians which is contrary to the concept of institutional stickiness. As a result, this study produces new attributes of quality of higher education in Cambodia between different stakeholder groups which have not been discussed in previous studies. The new aspects of quality of Cambodian higher education found in this study

include poor admission to higher education due to poorly trained high school graduates, poor quality graduates and the lack of institutional quality assurance. This study did not only produce some new aspects of quality in Cambodian higher education which have not been discussed by previous studies, but also significantly reveals how the quality of Cambodian higher education was perceived by local and international stakeholders. The international stakeholders were unanimously critical of the current situation of Cambodian higher education, whereas the local stakeholders, except the students and CITA, were very proud and supportive of it. The international stakeholders seemed to take a negative view on the quality of Cambodian higher education, looking at the Cambodian higher education from a Western frame of reference. The local stakeholders, on the other hand, mostly seemed to have a positive view of the current situation of Cambodian higher education, looking at it from a historical frame of reference, and claiming that the current quality situation of Cambodian higher education is better than it was twenty five years ago. However, the differences between local and international stakeholders over the quality of Cambodian higher education can be bridged through the commonalities between local and international stakeholders. Locals and internationals, regardless of how they viewed quality, reached an agreement over the poor quality aspects of Cambodian higher education. As seen above, those poor quality aspects include poor quality of high school students, irrelevant curriculum, a shortage of well-qualified teachers, inadequate learning and teaching resources, improper facilities, poor governance and leadership in HEIs, poor quality of graduates and lack of internal quality assurance. Some of the poor quality aspects of Cambodian higher education found in this study have also been identified by previous studies on Cambodian higher education (Chamnan & Ford, 2004; Chen, et al., 2007; Ngoy, 2009).

As noted in the discussion, HEIs in Cambodia did not have relevant curriculum as most curricula are copied from overseas by using British and American text books. They were not responsive to the national development and the market needs. As a result, graduates were employed in areas outside their expertise. The main implication is that HEIs should establish an effective market system by conducting a tracer survey and regular consultations with employers and recent graduates in order to adjust curriculum to meet the needs of Cambodia's society. In a similar vein, the MoEYS is also required to train the staff in the DoEH, which lacks the expertise in assessing the course programs in HEIs.

HEIs in Cambodia also need to address the shortage of well-qualified teachers in order to improve their teaching careers. HEIs should focus on upgrading academic faculty and creating incentives for them so that they are committed to their teaching professionals. HEIs should establish teaching awards to increase the visibility of good practices and encourage excellence in teaching which is practiced in many countries in the world. For example, Mexico has a

program that recognizes outstanding members of academia and provides opportunities and higher salaries to talented scholars (El-Khawas, 1998). The MoEYS should set up a teacher training centre for those who are assigned to teach in university. HEIs also need to improve their teaching and learning resources as well as the facilities which can benefit both the teachers and students. Most importantly, the government should consider a decent salary for teachers in the public HEIs.

The other aspects such as poor quality of high school leavers, leadership and governance in HEIs and institutional quality assurance also bear the implication for the HEIs and the MoEYS. The MoEYS needs to address the issue of poor high school graduates in two possible ways. First, the MoEYS should consider an increase in high school teachers' salaries as demanded by the Civil Association organizations. High school teachers demand that they have a decent salary to live on in order to avoid seeking a second job which affects their teaching commitment. According to a new survey, low salaries are causing a decline in high school education quality in Cambodia (Kakada, 2011). Second, the MoEYS should work with aid donor agencies to review and redevelop the curriculum in high school by making the curriculum relevant to the study in higher education. The HEIs can contribute to helping high school leavers by running an introductory academic course for high school graduates when they enter higher education in their first year.

As most teachers complained that their rectors did not have management and leadership skills because they are not academics, the MoEYS needs to consider the issue of leadership and governance in HEIs. The appointment of senior management people in the public HEIs should be based on academic merits rather than a political basis. The quota of power sharing between the ruling parties in senior managerial positions in the public HEIs should be ended. In regards to the governance in HEIs, the MoEYS should give HEIs a higher level of autonomy so that they enjoy more academic freedom. Cambodia is not different from countries in the former Soviet bloc, where higher education was heavily centralized within the central system. However, those countries seem to move one step ahead of Cambodia in terms of autonomy given to HEIs. For example, universities in the Czech Republic have enjoyed a higher level of autonomy, and the role of the Ministry of Education has been reduced to the coordination of the activities of higher education institutions (Holenda, 1994). In order for Cambodia to guarantee greater autonomy for HEIs, there needs to be a law that stipulates autonomy for HEIs as it is done in some Latin American countries. For example, the 1999 constitution in Venezuela guarantees universities autonomy, giving universities greater freedom to appoint their own authorities, designate personnel and administer the budget (Holm-Nielsen, Thorn, Brunner, & Balan, 2005). With regard to the IQAU, HEIs and the MoEYS should develop a guideline for

the institutional quality assurance Unit (IQAU). Both HEIs and the MoEYS must be fully committed to making it happen as it is an important instrument for helping HEIs prepare themselves for the external assessment by the ACC. Both HEIs and the MoEYS must work with aid donor agencies to develop an IQA framework as HEIs for the time being are obviously unable to develop the IQA without assistance from aid agencies. In essence, this study, which seeks to understand the quality of Cambodian higher education from the voices of key stakeholders, will draw a conclusion of the quality of Cambodian higher education after it examines the Cambodian government strategy for higher education and its effectiveness to ensure the quality in the section below.

Question 2: What strategy has the Cambodian government developed to ensure the quality of higher education?

This study found that the Cambodian government has paid great attention to the quality of Cambodian higher education. The Cambodian government has established a lot of rules and regulations aimed at ensuring the quality of its higher education. The Cambodian government has also established Education Law for the first time in history, the Supreme National Council for Education, the National Framework for PhD assessment, and the code of practice for teachers. The government now has the ACC in place. The MoEYS, which plays a very important role in controlling most HEIs in Cambodia, has taken a positive step toward achieving the quality of higher education by issuing an instruction to all HEIs to develop their own institutional quality assurance units (IQAU) in response to the external quality assessment from the ACC. All in all, it appears that the Cambodian government has shown an interest in ensuring the quality of its higher education in the era of the massification period. However, the government strategy which includes law and policy on higher education sounded almost perfect on paper only, but they did not appear to make any significant contributions to the quality improvement in higher education as they were not effective. In the next section, further explanations regarding the ineffectiveness of the government strategy will be recapped.

3. How do the stakeholders view the effectiveness of the government strategy to improve the quality of higher education?

As evidenced in question two above, the Cambodian government has made its efforts to improve the quality of higher education by establishing a lot of regulations and issuing many directives intended to ensure the quality of higher education. However, that strategy does not appear to be effective. There were many factors that affected the effectiveness of the strategy to

achieve the quality of higher education. Based on the results from the discussion in Chapter Seven, the factors identified as the obstacles to the Cambodian government strategy for achieving the quality of higher education were the policy implementation, the management of higher education, the ACC management and the ACC staff, and the IQAU management and IQAU staff. The following section summarizes the views from the participants on those factors.

The policy implementation has not been successful as it is hampered by the lack of human and funding resources, the lack of strategies for implementing the policy, the lack of commitment, political interference, and the policy statements which are written by foreigners. Although there were mixed views on the lack of human and finding resources for the policy implementation, there was an agreement between local and international over the fact that the Cambodian government lacked both human and funding resources to implement the policy on higher education. As a result, the policy on higher education is deemed unsuccessful as the government did not have enough funding resources and educated people to implement the policy on higher education. The MoEYS was mainly dependent on technical assistance and funding from donors to implement any project on higher education in Cambodia. Having looked back at the human and funding resources and the lack of strategies, Cambodia depended mainly on technical assistance from international aid donor agencies to implement the policy on higher education. However, the fact that Cambodia relies on technical assistance from development aid agencies to guide the policy implementation is not a unique case. Research on international assistance organizations on the development of education in the developing world reveals that “many developing nations depend mainly on the various external aid agencies for assistance in areas ranging from overall education policy and planning to major reform efforts at various educational levels and in various components of the system” (Spaulding, 1981, p. 207). Technical assistance is not only the case in developing countries, but it is also the case for countries in the former communist bloc. For example, Kazakhstan, which was a former state of Russia, also needs technical assistance from aid agencies in the policy development of higher education (Asanova, 2006). By the same token, countries in Africa also share the need for technical assistance aid agencies to develop and plan their higher education policy (Samoff, 1999).

In a similar sense, an agreement was also reached between the participants over the government’s failure to set up a strategy to measure policy implementation. Therefore, the government never knew if the policy was successfully implemented. Sometimes, there is no clear mechanism for the policy implementation on higher education. As a result, any attempt to implement an intended policy is never materialized or it never achieved the desired outcomes.

In short, the overall implementation of the higher education policy was never measurable as the policy did not follow a well-planned path to implementation.

With regard to the lack of commitment to the policy implementation, both local and international stakeholders seemed to have a lot in common. First, Cambodia had nice-sounding policy on higher education, but there was a lack of commitment to implementing it. The lack of commitment was the result of the rule or law that affected the interests of those in power as some private universities are run by some prominent politicians. Moreover, Cambodia did not only lack commitment to carrying out the policy on higher education, but it also ignored technical advice or recommendations from donor agencies. The common reaction from all the participants suggested that the MoEYS lack commitment to making the policy on higher education a success. This is a clear message for the MoEYS that it must have a willingness to reinforce the law or policy on higher education.

The policy implementation on higher education was also influenced by politics. Although there was some tension over political interference with the policy implantation on higher education, the international stakeholders claimed that politics meddled with the policy implementation, claiming that those politicians that run universities did not want to see the policy implemented as they affected their business. As seen in the discussion, O'Mahony (1999) contends that higher education in Cambodia is politicized. From a political point of view, any law or policy that affects the interests of the government officials are rarely implemented whereas law or policy that does not affect their interests seems to get more attention from the government. Because of political interference, it is common knowledge that the policy implementation on higher education sometimes goes against the policy statements or objectives. Therefore, the effects of politicization of policy and policy implementation are common in Cambodia as it is a culture in which politics seems to dominate in almost every public sector. In essence, the belief that the policy implementation on higher education is influenced by politics could be obvious. The main implication here is that if the government needs to effectively implement the policy on higher education, the government also needs to reinforce the law so that no-one is above the law.

The last factor that hindered the policy implementation on higher education was due to the fact that the policy statements are mainly written by foreign experts. The MoEYS lacked well-qualified and experienced administrative staff to draft the policy statements on higher education. Therefore, when it came to the policy development, donors usually hired foreign experts to draft the policy statements. As a result, when the policy is implemented, it usually does not work as the policy content does not relate to the real issues or priorities of higher education in

Cambodia. The policy is like the wrong prescribed medication which takes effect only for a short period of time. The MoEYS was aware of that, but it had to accept the policy statements introduced by aid donor agencies because their refusal could result in the withdrawal of aid funding. However, the fact that the policy statements in Cambodian higher education were written by foreigners is not a unique case. Literature on policy statements in higher education in developing nations suggests that aid donor agencies tend to influence the recipient countries through a dominant-dependent donor relationship by bringing the wholesale transfer of the system and practice of higher education from the West to the Third World countries which are against the interests of the bureaucratic elites and politicians in the recipient nations (Rodwell, 1988). In other words, aid from donor agencies, such as the World Bank, to a developing nation is usually viewed as a lucrative business by a sub-contractor who hires foreign experts to diagnose the problems of higher education in the recipient country. In most cases, those foreign experts spend a short period of time consulting some relevant local senior officials, reviewing available data, visiting a few selected HEIs and making their impressions. Their reports are usually written in the form of a series of observations followed by a set of recommendations or policy statements which are not always relevant to the economic, political and social context of the recipient country (Samoff, 1999; Tilak, 2002). As the aid agencies usually tend to construe policy dialogue as a persuasion, the aid donor agencies tend to display insufficient regard for the recipients' formulation of priorities, and they also devalue local knowledge (McGinn, 1997) and the recommendations from the foreign experts are often constrained by insufficient empirical support (Dore, 1994). This is the case for Cambodia where international aid development to Cambodian higher education can be traced back in the mid-1990s when aid agencies funded a project to research the issues of higher education in Cambodia. In 1995, the World Bank and AusAID jointly funded a project in Cambodia with the primary aim of addressing the issues of higher education in Cambodia. In 1997, the National Higher Education Task Force (NHETF), which was supposed to implement the project, was established. In the same year, the Action Plan reports were submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval to carry out the Action Plan. Unfortunately, the Action Plan was left unrealized with no sign of receiving the government approval. It was understood that the Action Plan did not receive attention from the Cambodian government because it was designed by foreign experts who arrived in Cambodia, bringing some models based on practices elsewhere to put to test in Cambodia. This implies that though the issues of Cambodian higher education could have been correctly identified by foreign experts, the aid agencies could still transplant its imposed institutional arrangement on Cambodia. Higher education is not like an irrigation system which the irrigation experts know well that a water supply may not require any knowledge of local patterns. This bears a clear message to an aid agency, namely the World Bank that the main contribution of an aid agency should be just advice designed to help Cambodia establish its education policy suitable for the

actual circumstances of the country where the values, conditions and priorities in the Cambodian higher education context need to be taken into consideration. The dialogue from aid agencies in the persuasive form of “Do what we recommend or no loans” has shifted to a new aid paradigm that requires a partnership between aid development agencies and recipient governments (McGrath & King, 2004). The new aid paradigm is also consistent with the concept of institutional arrangement which requires a joint-effort between indigenous people and outsiders by focusing on the stickiness of local knowledge.

As is the case in a number of post-communist countries, higher education in Cambodia is managed and controlled by different ministries. The public HEIs fall in the hands of eleven ministries. Only the private HEIs are under the supervision of the MoEYS. There was a common belief that the scattering of the public HEIs in various ministries makes the higher education system fragmented, and causes inconsistency in the policy implementation as there is no coordinating body between the MoEYS and those running HEIs. Complaints about this fragmented system of higher education were usually heard from the MoEYS, which said that it was hard to manage and supervise the public HEIs. In most cases, HEIs that are not under the MoEYS were inclined to listen to the ministries they belong to rather than complying with the instructions from the MoEYS. The fact that HEIs fall under the managerial arms of different ministries is originally rooted in the former Soviet system model, in which the economic and education systems were not only commanded by the state planning, but education was also designed to be an instrument of the economy (McNeely, 1995). The former Soviet system spread to Cambodia when Cambodia was part of the communist bloc. Although Cambodia has moved from a centrally-planned economy to a market economy, the fragmented system of Cambodian higher education still remains unchanged. This system has been criticized for creating inconsistency in the policy implementation. A public HEI in Cambodia has been viewed as a lucrative business firm since the government allowed public HEIs to charge fees from students. It is believed that the rectors in the public HEIs do not want to be under the control of the MoEYS as they want to be the king in their institutions, meaning that they want to be independent from the MoEYS as it is easier to make financial decisions. Previously, there have been efforts from the World Bank and ADB to create a national university for Cambodia by incorporating all the public HEIs as the university’s faculties. In a similar vein, attempts have been made to place all higher education institutions under the sole management of the MoEYS or a new ministry dealing exclusively with higher education. However, those attempts failed due to intense resistance from the management of the public HEIs that were not under the arm of the MoEYS. It is understood that top management people in the ministries that run public HEIs, such as the ministers and rectors, are the main beneficiaries from the current fragmented system of higher education in Cambodia through corruption. Therefore, the ministries that run HEIs

tend to defend their control over their universities because giving them to the MoEYS is like killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. As profit is viewed as the motive behind the fragmented system of higher education, any attempt to bring about a change aimed at putting all HEIs under the management of the MoEYS will be a hard job. It is well understood that The MoEYS is not happy with the fragmented managerial arrangement currently in place, but it has kept silent in order to survive. Eventually, there is no consistency in the policy implementation on higher education in Cambodia as the HEIs under the roof of the MoEYS adhere to the policy on higher education while others outside the MoEYS seem to ignore it. Due to the lack of both human and funding resources to implement its policy on higher education, the implication here is directed to the government that it should consider putting all HEIs under the managerial jurisdiction of the MoEYS in order to ensure consistency on the policy implementation on higher education. Cambodia should follow Vietnam which also adopted the higher education system from the former Soviet Union more than two decades ago. Vietnam has now put all higher education institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Training, leaving only a few institutions that mainly offer specialist mono-disciplinary courses responsible to other ministries.

The ACC management comes under fire from most of the participants who seemed to have more common views on the ACC than the differences. Most local and all international stakeholders strongly argued that the ACC was not a professional body as the people in the top management were not appointed on the basis of academic qualifications and professional experience. The assessment teams were not well-qualified and experienced enough to perform their quality assessment jobs as most of the ACC staff members were recruited from HEIs, and their qualifications are not well-recognized as they mostly earned their qualifications from local institutions. Although some staff members have high qualifications, they still do not have experience in performing academic program assessment. As a result, the ACC has not made satisfactory progress as what the ACC has done so far is to give provisional accreditation to most HEIs in the Foundation Year only. Despite the ACC plans to carry out the quality assessments in the bachelor programs, the ACC capability has been crippled by the lack of expertise in assessing academic programs. This bears an implication that the aid agencies should aim to provide senior staff in the ACC with training so that they can perform their duties more effectively.

Local and international stakeholders also had different views on the independence of the ACC. However, most local and all international stakeholders thought that the ACC was not an independent body as it operates in the Office of the Council of Ministers which is the most powerful body in the government. Most participants alleged that the ACC management and

operation were influenced by politics. Two reasons were given in their mention of the political influence into the ACC. The first reason was that the top management people in the ACC were appointed on political grounds, and they were allegedly affiliated with the ACC President, who is a highly influential figure in the government. The second reason was that the ACC head office, which is located in the compound of the Council of Ministers, was not considered a neutral place because it is under the direct control of the Council of Ministers. Although there was tension over the ACC management, the ACC was unlikely to be independent as it is headed by the president, who is an influential politician. However, there were a few groups of local participants who supported the notion that the ACC was an independent body as they viewed the ACC office as a neutral place. They argued that as the public HEIs are run and managed by different ministries, the Council of Ministers was seen as the right and neutral location for the ACC. In 2001, the World Bank, as requested by the Cambodian government, came with a soft loan to help Cambodia establish the ACC with the primary purpose of setting up an independent ACC. However, the World Bank pulled out of the ACC with the loan as it perceived that the ACC was not an independent body. The Bank's withdrawal from the ACC might not have been the right decision as the World Bank understood the political culture in Cambodia. The Bank's wish to see the ACC as an independent body was against the interest of the political elites in Cambodia. Dore (1994) stressed that the only solution to the development attempt in the Third World must be consistent with what the politicians want, not what the aid agency imposes on them. A country's education system is designed to reflect the institutional and ideological framework of that country and its political leaders. At this time, it is impossible for a government funded organization to be independent. Had the World Bank stayed, it would have had a chance to negotiate with the government for the level of the ACC independence, and with the World Bank's advice and technical assistance, the ACC would have done much more than just giving provisional accreditation to the Foundation Year programs in most HEIs today. The World Bank should not only function as a source of funding, but also as a development advisory service. Linking the loan as a condition to what the aid agencies want is no longer a good option to a development solution in a recipient country. Rather than leaving the ACC, the World Bank should have used its loan as a bargaining chip to get the ACC on the right track. In return, the Cambodian government could have listened to the World Bank's advice on the effective running of the ACC. To get trust in the ACC independence from the public, the ACC head office should be moved out of the Council of Ministers, and the appointments of top management staff should be reviewed.

The last theme was the internal quality assurance units (IQAU) within HEIs. Cambodia seems to catch up with some countries in the region regarding the internal quality assurance. The IQAU is hailed by all stakeholder groups as a positive sign for the quality improvement of

higher education services within each HEI. However, their views on IQAU situation were not much different from the ACC in terms of the capacity. It would not be possible for HEIs to develop the IQAU due to the lack of people with expertise. The management people in both public and private HEIs are mostly not academics. Rectors in the public HEIs were appointed by the government on the political affiliations rather than academic merits. On the other hand, although rectors in the private HEIs are self-appointed, they usually are rich politicians who do not have academic background either. Some rectors in the private HEIs are also involved in politics as they have a position in the government. The IQAU office in most universities is staffed by teachers who are not experienced enough to design an IQAU mechanism. The MoEYS, which is the initiator of the IQAU, is also incapable of developing an IQA framework. The DoHE lacks qualified people to examine the course programs submitted by all HEIs in Cambodia, and the MoEYS usually gives HEIs a temporary approval to run courses without quality. This raises a question on how the MoEYS will be able to develop an IQA framework. The MoEYS' inability to assess the academic course programs within HEIs has given HEIs an opportunity to run poor quality courses on a free rein.

In short, judging the different views on the IQAU from the participants, it can be concluded that it will be impossible for HEIs in Cambodia to develop an internal quality assurance mechanism for the time being. It will take time and commitment from the MoEYS and HEIs to make the dream of the IQAU become a reality. This has a strong message that aid agencies should focus on the capacity building by training staff in both HEIs and the MoEYS, namely staff in the DoHE which serves as the right hand of the MoEYS. Without technical assistance from aid agencies, the IQAU will become an illusion only.

Summary

The results of this study reveal that stakeholders in Cambodian higher education had different perceptions of the quality in Cambodian higher education. Most local stakeholders appeared to throw their support behind the current situation of Cambodian higher education, saying that the quality of Cambodian higher education appears to be far better than it was twenty years ago. International stakeholders, on the other hand, seemed to be very critical of the quality in Cambodian higher education, claiming that HEIs in Cambodia operated like a business enterprise which focused more on profit rather than showing quality. However, regardless of how higher education in Cambodia was perceived, there was an agreement between local and international stakeholders over the quality characteristics in Cambodian higher education, and that the government strategy to ensure the quality of higher education did not contribute to the quality improvement as the strategy to achieve the quality in higher education was not effective.

Based on the discussion of the quality characteristics in Cambodian higher education and the ineffectiveness of the Cambodian government strategy to ensure the quality of its higher education this study comes to a conclusion that, in a broad view, the quality in Cambodian higher education is of grave concerns. In simple words, it is very poor. The poor quality of Cambodian higher education found in this study is consistent with the dissatisfaction over the quality of higher education expressed by Cambodia's Prime Minister in 2009 as noted in the introduction section, and it coincides with the government's recent concerns over the quality in higher education. In a graduation ceremony, Sok An, Deputy Prime Minister, has urged both public and private universities to improve the quality of higher education in order to respond to the market and development needs of Cambodia (Cambodia-herald, 2012). Therefore, the Cambodian government's 2020 vision in Chapter One to improve Cambodia's economic productivity and to promote national development through the quality improvement of its higher education is unlikely to be achieved if it does not take proper measures to fix its higher education system as Cambodia's economic growth and development depend heavily on its educated population.

However, in a particular sense, the quality of Cambodian higher education appears to be similar to that of many developing nations in the world. To give a fair picture, if one looks at the current situation of higher education in Cambodia from a Western frame of reference, they will absolutely be very critical of the quality in Cambodian higher education. This was the way in which the quality of Cambodian higher education was perceived by international stakeholders. The international quality standards imposed by external stakeholders on the higher education system of Cambodia seemed harsh. The international stakeholders were partly right to take a critical view on Cambodia's higher education in the era of globalization as national education systems are now competing with each other and international standards are clearly becoming more important. The globalising forces have pushed the developing world to take into account the nature of its higher education. As the developing world has begun to integrate into the world community, the globalisation process demands that higher education in developing countries meet the global demands or even conform to the international practice. In simple words, globalisation can be viewed as the global diffusion of Western modernity or westernization (Yang, 2003). This is the reason why the international stakeholders, namely the donors, were very critical of the current situation of Cambodian higher education because they looked at the quality of higher education from a Western frame of reference. The World Bank, which is the biggest loan provider to developing nations in support of higher education reform, usually tends to import the Western style of higher education for reform in the recipient nations. When judging the quality of higher education in Cambodia, they viewed it from a Western perspective. From a Western viewpoint, universities in developed nations seem to meet the

international quality standards, however the quality of Cambodian higher education cannot stand comparison to that of the West. Based on this perspective, the international stakeholders took a negative view on the quality in higher education in Cambodia.

However, if one looks at the current situation of Cambodian higher education from a historical frame of reference, they could be supportive and proud of it. This was exactly the way the quality in Cambodian higher education was viewed by most local stakeholders. Cambodian higher education has just reached the period of massification in just 10 years, and the mass system of higher education has widened access to higher education for high school leavers, rich and poor alike, who want to enrol in higher education courses. Therefore, it was not erroneous for local stakeholders to see the rapid growth of higher education in Cambodia as a great achievement for the Cambodian government. From the perspective of path dependence, the current Cambodian government strategy to ensure the quality of higher education is seen as the right step toward achieving the quality of higher education although it is not effective. The fact that the Cambodian government strategy to ensure the quality in higher education is not effective is a pattern of the strategy in many developing countries in which the conditions needed to assure the quality of higher education do not prevail (Lim, 2001). Although globalisation does have an impact on a state nation like Cambodia, Cambodia needs to rethink the social, cultural and economic roles of its higher education in order to respond to its national context as universities in all societies perform basic functions which result from the particular combination of cultural, ideological, social, economic and educational roles that have been assigned to them (Enders, 2004). In this fashion, the fact that most local stakeholders took a positive view on the quality in Cambodian higher education was not erroneous though it is obviously low.

Under the pressure from the globalising forces and in order to meet the government goal of improving the quality of higher education which the government regards it as the backbone for building the country's human capital for sustainable development and poverty reduction as noted in Chapter One, the Cambodian government needs to strengthen the law enforcement, and it also needs full commitment to improving the quality of higher education as the current higher education which is believed to play a role in creating knowledge for graduates to promote national development is still not yet responsive to the market and national development needs. Therefore, Cambodia needs to review its strategy and the ways how the strategy should be effectively implemented. The Cambodian government must fix the higher education system as Cambodia's economic development depends mainly on quality graduates, or else Cambodia will have difficulties catching up with countries in the regional grouping.

This study, which seeks to understand the perceptions of quality in Cambodian higher education from the stakeholders, contributes in the following ways. First, the findings of this study do not only support previous studies on higher education in Cambodia, but also supplement and enhance those previous studies by overcoming some of their limitations. Second, the results of this study provides an understanding of perceived importance of quality in Cambodian higher education which bears a key implication for policy-makers in HEIs and the MoEYS that they have to address the concerns of all stakeholders regarding the poor aspects of quality in Cambodian higher education in order to meet the stakeholders' expectations. In regards to the government strategy for higher education, this study suggests that future aid agencies need to build a partnership with local Cambodian scholars to jointly research and identify the issues of higher education in Cambodia before attempts to write the policy statements are made. It also sends a clear message to would-be international aid agencies that locally-produced knowledge is not only cheaper than that of foreign experts, but it can also be of much greater relevance given national values, priorities and social and political realities in the recipient nation like Cambodia. Third, the results of this study, which showcases how the quality of higher education in Cambodia is perceived by its stakeholders, provide a framework for understanding quality in higher education in some developing nations that have similar social, economic and political circumstances. Least, but not last, the results of this research provide a useful understanding of higher education in Cambodia and pave the way for potential researchers who are interested in conducting studies on Cambodian higher education in different or similar angles.

The results of this research just provide a useful insight into the ways in which the quality of Cambodian higher education was perceived by stakeholders. The results show that Cambodian higher education is low and not yet mature enough to be known locally and internationally. This study suggests that future research should be carried on strategies to improve the quality of higher education in Cambodia. Although many areas of Cambodian higher education need further attention and improvement, the urgency is the development of institutional quality assurance which is beyond the capacity of most HEIs in Cambodia. Therefore, future research should aim to focus on a strategy that helps develop an institutional quality mechanism for HEIs in Cambodian where resources are very limited.

Appendix 1. Explanatory Statement for Participants

RMIT University

Design and Social Context Portfolio

School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning

Dear

My name is Vann Moniroith. I am undertaking a research project at RMIT University in the School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning. The title of my research is: “Stakeholders’ Perceptions of Quality in Cambodian Higher Education”.

The main objectives of this research are (1) to understand how quality in the Cambodian higher education is perceived by stakeholders, (2) to examine what strategy the Cambodian government has in place to ensure the quality of higher education and (3) to understand how stakeholders view the effectiveness of the government strategy. This project is funded by RMIT University.

In order to achieve the above objectives, I will be interviewing stakeholders in Cambodian higher education in Cambodia. The stakeholders in Cambodian higher education in this study are both local and foreigners. Local stakeholders are considered to be students, lecturers, and university rectors or vice-rectors from both public and private universities, senior staff in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia, senior staff at the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia, employers, and two academic unions. International stakeholders include key donor agencies to Cambodia such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), AusAID, university consultants, and foreign employers in multinational corporations which are operating in Cambodia.

As you are considered one of the above stakeholders, I am inviting you to participate in my research. Your participation will involve answering a series of questions based on your experience and your views regarding the quality of higher education in Cambodia. The interview will take approximately between 30 to 45 minutes. Your participation in this

research is of a voluntary basis, and you may reserve the right to withdraw yourself from this research at any time.

I assure you that no findings which could identify any individual participant will be published. Only the investigator of this project and his supervisors will have access to the data which will be securely stored for five years as prescribed by the RMIT university regulations. The data collected will be analyzed for this project, and the results may appear in academic publications. However, the data collected will be treated in a way that protects the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Should you have any questions regarding this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me through my email: s2011562@student.rimt.edu.au or my supervisor, Associate Prof. Christopher Ziguras at christopher.ziguras@rmit.edu.au

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Vann Moniroith
PhD student
School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning
RMIT University

Appendix 2. Consent Form

RMIT HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Prescribed Consent Form for Persons Participating In Research Projects Involving Interviews,
Questionnaires, Focus Groups or Disclosure of Personal Information

PORTFOLIO OF Social Context and Design

SCHOOL/CENTRE OF Global Studies, Social Science and Planning

Name of participant: _____

Project Title: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Cambodian Higher Education

Name(s) of investigators: Moniroith Vann

Phone: _____

(1)

(2)

Phone: _____

1. I have received a statement explaining the interview/questionnaire involved in this project.
2. I consent to participate in the above project, the particulars of which - including details of the interviews or questionnaires - have been explained to me.
3. I authorize the investigator or his or her assistant to interview me or administer a questionnaire.
4. I give my permission to be audio taped/photographed Yes No (delete if inapplicable)
5. I give my permission for my name or identity to be used Yes No
6. I acknowledge that:
 - a) Having read the Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.
 - b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

- c) The project is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to me. The privacy of the information I provide will be safeguarded. The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law. If I participate in a focus group I understand that whilst all participants will be asked to keep the conversation confidential, the researcher cannot guarantee that other participants will do this.

- d) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to my supervisor and the examination committee. Any information which may be used to identify me will not be used unless I have given my permission (see point 5).

Participant's Consent

Name:

Date:

(Participant)

Appendix 3. Indicative Interview Questions

The following list provides an indication of the type of questions asked, although the wording and order of questions varied according to the circumstances of each interview. Interviews were conducted in Khmer, except for several with international consultants and donor agencies.

1. How do stakeholders in Cambodia perceive the quality in Cambodian higher education?

- a) What do you think about the environment of higher education in Cambodia at the present time?
- b) In your opinion, what do you think of the quality in Cambodian higher education?
- c) Can you give me some reasons how you arrived at this answer?
- d) Can you give some examples of quality in higher education from your experience?
- e) Have you got any suggestions about what an ideal higher education institution would look like?

2. What strategy has the Cambodian government so far developed to ensure the quality of higher education?

- a) Can you tell me how the Cambodian government is trying to achieve the quality of higher education?
- b) What strategy does the Cambodian government have in place to ensure the quality in higher education?

3. What do stakeholders view the effectiveness of the government strategy to ensure the quality of its higher education?

- a) In your opinion, how could the government strategy contribute to the quality of higher education in Cambodia?
- b) In what ways do you think the government strategy higher education affects the quality of higher education in Cambodia?
- c) Do you have any suggestions for the Cambodian government regarding the effectiveness of the government strategy to ensure the quality of higher education?

Appendix 4. List of Participants

	Sector	Stakeholders	Number
Internal	University	Rectors	5
		Teachers	16
		Students	16
		University consultants	4
	Academic unions	Cambodian Higher Education Association (CHEA) Cambodia Independent Teachers Association (CITA)	2 2
External	Government	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS)	1
		Department of Higher Education (DoHE)	2
		Department of Scientific Research (DSR)	1
		Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC)	2
	Donor agencies	World Bank	2
		Asian Development Bank (ADB)	1
		Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)	1
Employers	Employers in governmental agencies	2	
	Employers in the private sector	4	
	Total		61

Appendix 5. Permission Letter from MoEYS



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
Nation Religion King

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS

No : 318 MoEYS/Adm
..... 6

Mr. Vann Moniroith
22 Northgate Drive
Springvale South, Vic 3172
Australia

September 16 , 2008

Dear Mr. Vann Moniroith,


This is the response to your letter, dated 02 September 2008, sent to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to seek its permission to conduct your doctoral research titled "The Analysis of Stakeholders' Perceptions of Quality in Cambodian Higher Education."

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports sees your research topic as of interest and benefit since it regards **quality** at tertiary level as one of its challenges. The Ministry, thus, is pleased to grant permission to you to conduct the above research topic at your appropriate time. The Ministry will encourage related individuals and universities to cooperate with you for your research purpose.

The Ministry looks forward to the fruitful results of your research study.

Sincerely,




Pit Chamnan
Secretary of State
For the Minister

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