DESIGNING A QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR A CAMBODIAN UNIVERSITY

By

Chhang Rath

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Thesis Certification

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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Abstract

Quality assurance has been a legislative requirement in Cambodian universities since 2003, yet it is still a relatively new concept. A formal quality-management framework at a systemic level does not yet exist and little attention has been paid to this in the higher education sector. This has led Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to make ad hoc decisions in dealing with quality issues. Despite some institutions having appointed dedicated quality assurance officers, there is little evidence of a quality management culture in Cambodian universities. For these reasons, the creation of a formal quality management system is imperative in order to ensure that universities conduct their operations effectively and can operate in a global higher education context.

The study has documented and analysed the issues, structures and processes of quality management in higher education in England, Australia and Thailand. This analysis has been applied to the Cambodian context in order to develop a relevant quality management framework for a particular Cambodian university (City University). This framework may also serve as a model for other higher education institutions in Cambodia.

The study included an analysis of the extensive literature related to the quality management systems currently employed in universities in England, Australia and Thailand. Senior managers, academics and staff in three Thai universities and in higher education institutions in Cambodia were surveyed and interviewed. This dual approach allowed the examination of the benefits and disadvantages of applying the features of externally established quality management systems to the Cambodian context.

Higher education institutions, in particular public universities, face many constraints and challenges in Cambodia, including scarcity of resources, poor governance, lack of autonomy, no culture of quality, poor human resource development and the like. These constraints prevent a standard Western-style system from being introduced into Cambodia in the short term. Nonetheless, it is imperative that Higher Education Institutions establish a formal and non-punitive quality management system. Introduction of a quality management system in two phases is recommended.

The first phase of the quality management system consists of simple, basic and general elements of quality with a view to establishing a quality culture in every academic's mindset, and permeating the ideals of a quality management programme throughout the entire

university population. When a culture of quality management is well embedded, the next phase could be implemented. This second phase introduces broader and higher level elements of quality, such as benchmarking, student attributes and a national qualifications' framework, closely linking internal quality management systems and external regulatory requirements to ensure consistency in the quality of graduates across the higher education sector, as well as attaining national, regional and international recognition.

The quality management model proposed will be an important contributor to reshaping and improving quality practices in higher education, as well as informing future key planners and higher education policy makers about quality management in Cambodia.

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Abbreviations

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ACC	Accreditation Committee of Cambodia
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AUN-QA	ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AUSSE	Australian Survey of Student Engagement
AUTC	Australian Universities Teaching Committee
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CHE	Commission on Higher Education
CQAHE	Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
CU	City University (pseudonym for the University studied in Cambodia)
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DEEWR	Department for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQUIS	European Quality Improvement System
EU	European Union
GDS	Graduate Destination Survey
HE	Higher Education
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ILT	Institute for Learning and Teaching
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MUA	Ministry of University Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONESQA	Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment
PAI	Public Administration Institution
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act
PREQ	Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RAE	Research Assessment Exercises
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SNCE	Supreme National Council of Education
SRA	Self-Assessment Report
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
TQM	Total Quality Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Ogranisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
USAID	the United States Agencies for International Development
WB	World Bank

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with the justification for the research, providing an argument for the research being proposed. The research problem is then elaborated, indicating the research gap, followed by the research questions. The significance of the research indicates its contribution to the policies and practices of quality assurance in Cambodian higher education. To assist in shaping the future model of quality management, there is a need for insightful understanding of the Cambodian background and context, and especially the context of the specific City University (CU). There is little theorising about quality in higher education; a pragmatic conceptual framework proposed by Perellon (2007), Premfors (1992) and Scott (2004) is employed. An outline of the whole thesis is presented, and the limitations and ethical issues of the research are identified.

1.2 Justification for the research

Concern about quality is not new in the educational context, even though much of the debate outside the education sector has focused on standards (Green 1994). Quality assurance and quality management have become major issues at both international and national levels for higher education, as there is increasing scrutiny from stakeholders, that is, government, the media, and consumers (Gaither & Maassen 1998). Some developing countries have developed quality assurance systems for reasons of fashion or to fulfil the requirements of international funding agencies and donors. Such systems are also important for economic reasons and as a means of alleviating poverty.

In the Asian context, the 9th ASEAN Summit in 2003 adopted the ASEAN Charter, with a view to promoting economic integration in fields such as products, services, investment and transportation. The 9th ASEAN Summit saw the beginning of the establishment of standards and accreditation and increasing growth in trades, and has recently aspired to establish a ‘single integrated market’ in the region. However, one of the barriers to the process of integration is the economic gap between countries in the region. It is especially true for Cambodia, as its average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is only 22% of the more-developed countries in the region, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam. It has been noted that the process of integration would

encounter a grave issue of dissatisfaction if the economic gap between countries in the region was not also narrowed.

There was an agreement among all leaders of the countries in the region to formulate a policy to ensure that human resource development was the first priority for reducing the economic gap. To narrow the economic gap, the higher education sector can play a significant role in training qualified leaders and highly skilled professionals in numerous areas to lead the development of a nation. Under this policy, the ASEAN University Network – Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) was established, aimed at providing the developing nations in the region with support for establishing the quality assurance system. The establishment of the AUN-QA was initiated by the Board of Trustees, comprising the top management of member universities, and endorsed by the top leaders at national level. This indicates 'the existence of a strong political will behind the scenes' (Umemiya 2008, p.286).

However, quality assurance is a relatively new concept in the Cambodian higher education sector. This concept has come to Cambodia in the wake of an era of globalisation, and of an increasing public scrutiny and accountability by the government, international funding agencies, students and parents on higher education institutions. The World Bank has played a significant role in negotiating with the Cambodian government, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), and higher education institutions in relation to the development of a legal framework for accreditation in higher education. Recently, the World Bank has funded higher education in a bid to improve quality management systems at both institutional and systemic levels. The funding project aims to establish procedures and policies that support the foundation-year program, institutional management, staff development, and the integration of the central quality assurance agency into the regional and international community of practitioners in quality assurance (WB 2010). However, the project will draw good practices and experience from a lesson learnt in the international context, which might not be suitable for the Cambodian context.

Quality assurance is now a legislative requirement in Cambodian universities despite being a relatively new concept. The City University has a dedicated office for quality assurance, and has conducted a number of quality assurance activities. However, a formal quality management framework does not yet exist.

For these reasons I have been motivated to propose a case study on quality management in the higher education sector. The study will identify what might constitute a workable and

productive quality management system for a Cambodian university (the 'what' of the research), and on the strategies that are most likely to assist its effective implementation (the 'how' of the research). The outcomes of the research will first influence how the City University shapes and implements its new Quality Management system; and this will, in turn, provide a model for other higher education institutions in Cambodia; and second, address the gap in the research literature relating to quality management practices and inform the educational policy planners and key decision makers at both ministerial and institutional levels. To achieve these aims I will begin by exploring experiences in quality management systems used in universities in some developed and developing countries, and then examine the stakeholders' perceptions of quality management in higher education in Thailand and Cambodia.

The researcher firmly believes that an internal quality management system is critical to higher education institutions, as it deals with the day-to-day operations of a university in regard to quality improvement. The external quality assurance process in the Cambodian higher education sector focuses at an institutional level, allowing some departments of a university not performing well, to take a 'free-ride'. The internal quality management system plays a vital role in continuous quality improvement.

1.3 Research problem and questions

Although there is considerable literature on quality assurance in higher education around the world, especially in developed countries, there is little or almost no research into quality assurance in higher education in Cambodia. This research will play an important role in filling this gap.

The above research problem was studied through the outcome of an extensive literature review of the practice of quality assurance in the higher education sector in countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Thailand, coupled with the perceptions of key stakeholders in the Cambodian higher education sector, especially managers, academics and staff at a Cambodian university.

The approach of this research was to document and analyse the issues, structures and processes of quality management in higher education outside Cambodia, and to apply this analysis to the Cambodian context with a view to developing a locally relevant, efficient, and effective quality management framework for higher education institutions in Cambodia.

Three main research questions and two sub-questions were posed, which collectively outline the information needed to study and resolve the research problem, and to assist the researcher in determining a suitable quality management framework for the City University.

The main research questions are as follows:

1. What are the features of well-developed quality management systems in the selected countries?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of current quality management arrangements in higher education in UK and Australia? How do they compare with the approach adopted by Cambodia's neighbour – Thailand?
3. What constitutes a locally relevant, efficient and effective approach to quality management for a Cambodian University?

The related sub-questions are:

4. Who should lead the development of this framework and its implementation?
5. How can a quality management framework be implemented effectively in daily practise in the Cambodian setting?

In order to answer the above questions, it is firstly necessary to define the term "quality." The term 'quality framework' refers to an institution's overall approach to quality assurance, which is similar to the phrase 'quality management system' or 'quality system'. A quality system provides the framework for developing quality assurance policy. (Baird 2006). Quality assurance is to do with policies and procedures employed to ensure that the quality of education of institutions is being improved and maintained and that the process of quality management works effectively and efficiently. It involves internal activities of the institution which include staff development, feedback from students, employers, and society, and ensuring that the results of the work performed will satisfy the set performance criteria (Gither 1998).

Based on the above definition of the terms 'quality management' and 'quality assurance', although they are not interchangeable, they are interrelated. The two terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

1.4 Significance of the study

The purpose of this research was to seek an understanding of the perceptions of the study participants in Cambodian and Thai higher education in relation to key features of quality assurance that they thought were suitable and workable for the Cambodian higher education sector. The synthesis of their perceptions with the outcomes of the literature review of quality assurance employed in universities in Australia, England, and Thailand, allowed the researcher to determine what aspects of quality assurance processes were perceived as locally relevant and suitable for the City University.

The findings of this research will provide a valuable contribution to the development, and enhancement of quality assurance in Cambodian higher education through various means. First, it will provide valuable information for the next generation of Cambodian researchers who may be interested in quality assurance issues. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is little or almost no research or study in this area, thus it will help close the research gap of quality related issues. Second, it will inform and provide guidance for decision-makers and policy planners both at university and national levels, especially the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia and other relevant authorities and organisations. Third, it may in turn, be scaled up for other Cambodian higher education institutions if the research outcomes are perceived as relevant to their contexts.

In order to develop a locally relevant and suitable quality management system, an insightful understanding of the Cambodian background and context is important, as quality assurance is necessarily context-dependent. Information about the background and context is helpful in shaping a suitable quality assurance system for use in the future. A number of aspects related to the Cambodian background and context – political and social arrangements, economic status, and the higher education situation – follow.

1.5 Cambodia – Background and Context

1.5.1 Political Arrangement

Internal turmoil and turbulence, which took place during almost three decades in the second half of the twentieth century, have left deep scars of fears and trauma in the hearts and minds of the Cambodian people. Most of the infrastructure, roads, schools and buildings were devastated and millions of lives were lost. Even worse, when the Khmer Rouge regime gained the power to control the country from 1975 to 1979, schools and universities were

closed and neglected, and people who lived in city and town centres were sent to the countryside to work in all types of agriculture. It has been estimated that about two million innocent people were killed and tortured during this period.

The Khmer Rouge regime was toppled by Vietnamese troops, accompanied by Cambodian troops who opposed the Khmer Rouge, in 1979. Despite the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, the country was still ravaged by a two-decade civil war between the Vietnamese-sponsored government (People's Republic of Cambodia) and the Khmer Rouge guerrillas, who resided along the Thai-Cambodian border. For these reasons, it was very difficult for the government to rebuild the nation.

From 1979–1989, Cambodia received generous assistance from Vietnam, the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc countries to re-establish all sectors of the nation. However, 'in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the International Communist ally and pressure imposed by the international community, Vietnam withdrew from Cambodia, leaving the system fragile, but functioning' (Clayton 1999, p. 23).

Shortly after the withdrawal of Vietnam, Cambodia's political system was shifted from a command economy to a free-market economy, and the country began moving from reconstruction to new development. In 1991, the Paris Peace Accord was signed by the factional fighting parties, bringing the beginning of peace in Cambodia and its first universal election.

In 1993, the first national election, sponsored and overseen by the UN, was held. Cambodia's system of government is officially a multiparty liberal democracy under a constitutional monarchy. Under the framework of the constitution, the King serves as the head of state for life. The King reigns, but does not govern, and serves as a symbol of the unity and continuation of the nation. The King appoints the head of the government (Prime Minister) after a vote of confidence by the National Assembly.

According to Ayres' study on the nature of Cambodian political culture in terms of its current structures and its historical development, Cambodia's political culture has been established on a system of patron-client relations. An authoritarian approach to leadership has dominated the system. This legacy has been profoundly embedded in Cambodia's political culture since the Angkor era, and has remained deeply rooted in the system until today (2006).

1.5.2 Current Economic Status

Cambodia is not only shifting from a command economy to free market economy systems, it is also moving from reconstruction to development (Sloper 1999). Cambodia experienced double-digit economic growth, with an annual growth rate of around 10% in 2007, but plummeted to 4.9% in 2009 (WB 2099, 2010). The main sectors contributing to Cambodia's economy are agriculture, garments, tourism and construction (WB 2010). Overall economic growth has been the result of an open trade arrangement, with an increase in exports of 23% per annum since 1998, and by Foreign Direct Investment, which has been around 6% of GDP in recent years (WB 2010).

Cambodia has become increasingly integrated into the world economy after its entry into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1999 and the World Trade Organisation in 2004. The garment industry, the main contributor, was strong in 2008, and the number of garment exports increased by 15.4% in the first half of 2008. However, the garment industry continues to slow down due to a number of factors: economic recession in the US, its biggest export market, the lifting of safeguard measures by the United States in 2009, high inflation in Cambodia and an increase in workers' wages (WB 2010).

Cambodia is classified as a poor country, with an estimated GDP per capita of US$593 pa in 2007 (WB 2009). At present, Cambodia has a population of about 14 million people and about 59% of the population lives on agriculture, the poverty rate is 35% of the whole population, and there is a lack of social security safety nets.

At present, physical infrastructure remains poor, especially roads and railways, causing a barrier to trading opportunities in remote areas of the country. Transport service is still poor. The inflation rate is very high, jumping from 5.2% in 2007 to 22.6% in 2008, due to many external factors such as rising crude oil and food prices, the US economic recession, and weak economic performances of Cambodia' s economy. Another factor is that Cambodia does not produce items such as oil, medical care and household goods and the like nationally, and therefore is highly dependent on imports. The depreciation of the Cambodian Riel against other currencies also contributes to the higher inflation (Seiha & Dalin 2008).

Cambodia is a dollarised economy. Foreign currency continued to dominate the money supply in 2008, accounting for 79.1% of the total money supply and 33.6% of GDP. The Cambodian Riel represented about 19.1% of the total money supply and only 6.6% of GDP.

Tax revenue is collected by the central government. Although the government has demonstrated its intention to levy and collect taxes, the revenue generated from taxes remained relatively weak compared to the level of economic activity (Calavan, Diaz Briquets & O' Brien 2004). For example, in 2005 the government tax revenue accounted for about 10% of GDP, while the government expenditures totalled about 14% of GDP. A large deficit in the government budget is funded by foreign aid and loans, which accounted to about 45% of GDP. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Cambodia's outstanding debts to foreign countries in 2006 totalled US$3.4 billion, which represented 54% of GDP (IMF 2006).

The Cambodian government has demonstrated its strong commitment to resolving the foregoing economic issues through recognition of the importance of education in general, and higher education and research in particular. Higher education is seen as having the potential to contribute to better quality education, health, governance, environmental outcomes, ongoing debate about major social and cultural issues, and economic development (WB 2010).

1.5.3 Current Status of Higher Education

Government Policy

The Royal Government of Cambodia has demonstrated its concerted efforts and political will, as well as its commitment, to the promotion and development of quality in education through the integration of quality assurance in the country's constitution. Article 65 of the Constitution (1993, amended in 1999) specifies that:

> The State shall protect and upgrade citizens' rights to quality education at all levels and shall take necessary steps for quality education to reach all citizens. The State shall respect physical education and sports for the welfare of all Khmer citizens. In addition, the State shall establish a comprehensive and standardized educational system throughout the country that shall guarantee the principles of educational freedom and quality to ensure that all citizens have equal opportunity to earn a living.

In addition to the constitution, the Royal Government of Cambodia set three key policy objectives for higher education in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP):

> (1) Increased access and equity of enrolment opportunity to realise the Royal Government of Cambodia's pro-poor policy;
>
> (2) Quality assurance and improvement at both institutional and system levels; and
>
> (3) Strengthened institutional management and development.

However, the key question is whether educational reforms in Cambodia are consistent with the Constitution and the Education Strategic Plan, as many challenges and constraints need to be addressed.

Privatisation in Higher Education

Soon after the country had changed from a socialist to a democratic system through the UN-sponsored election in 1993, there was a radical change in the country's political and economic situation. Since then, higher education in Cambodia has begun its gradual reforms, and has been marked by privatisation in the sector. The increase in the volume of foreign investment attracted by the economic reforms meant more qualified human resources were needed. Seeing this opportunity, the investors started investing heavily in the education field (ADB 1996). Since that time, the privatisation of higher education has seen a gradual growth in the enrolment of high school students, leading to an expansion of higher education institutions.

The expansion was not meticulously planned; instead it had been pursued on a whim by investors seeking financial benefit (Ayres 2000). Given the opportunity provided by the Cambodian economy, which was still in a transitional stage in introducing a free market economy, and recognising that places at the public universities were so limited that they could not serve the high school graduates, investors funded the establishment of universities to enrol the high school graduates. According to statistics compiled by the Department of Higher Education, the total number of student enrolments in higher education has increased more than two-fold within the four years to 2008, rising from 57,828 in 2004 to 135,671 in 2008 (MoEYS 2008). At the same time, scholarship and fee-paying programs were offered in parallel by public higher education institutions. About 83% of total student enrolment is through private and fee-paying programs (Sloper 2004; WB 2010).

Private investments in Cambodian higher education were booming in the years 2002 and 2003, during which sixteen higher education institutions were established (Chet 2006). A variety of programs ranging from undergraduate to doctoral levels had been offered within less than 10 years. Some private universities occupied only one building. The rapid and uncontrolled expansion of private higher education institutions has presented both threats and opportunities for the country. The major threat to the country is that when the universities set quality against financial gain, they are more likely to leave quality vulnerable. However, they help provide students with opportunities to access higher education. And donor agencies are concerned that unplanned changes within the system are producing more graduates than the labour market can absorb and that graduates are mismatched to the labour market's needs (Ford 2006).

Ford points out that Cambodian higher education has recently been described by educational experts as 'vibrant and lively', 'a cause for concern', 'plagued with difficulties', and a 'ferment of reform' (2006, p.10).

Private universities are generally enjoying 'lively' growth, diversification and branching out across the country. Now there are 111 campuses permitted to operate with loose licensing and gate-keeping functions, and inadequate policies for student admission. As a result, schools and institutions offering an 'associate degree' (two year programs) admit students who have not passed Grade 12 at high school, and then they can transfer to study in a Bachelor's Degree program. It can be seen that the uncontrolled demands for admissions, institutional overload in relation to qualified and experienced teachers, and limited resources, can lead to a debasement of standards and quality (Ford 2006; WB 2010).

Another cause for concern is that graduate unemployment is very high. It is hard to indicate the exact numbers, as there is no an official tracking system for student employment. However, it is roughly estimated at present that one year after they finished their studies, the unemployment of graduates from public universities stands at about 30% of total graduates, and 90% from private universities (Ford 2006).

Constraints on Public Higher Education

Public universities are generally 'plagued with difficulties', meaning that 'the institutions are centrally controlled by the government with limited resources, political interference, and bureaucracy in terms of teacher recruitment, leader appointment, and program approval' (Ford 2006, p.10). Some public universities are granted quasi-autonomous status, and labelled a public administrative institution (PAI). However, PAI universities are expected to comply with regulatory requirements for transparency in governance and financial management, as well as accountability to the stakeholders and public, leading some universities to resist any change in their status (Ford 2006).

According to the Royal Decree on the Legal Status of a Public Administration Institution, its governing board consists of five core members, which include: a representative of the parent Ministry – the Ministry of Economy and Finance – the Office of Council of Ministers, the rector, and university staff (administrative and academic). Besides these five core members, other stakeholders are eligible for representation on the governing board. Although public institutions have gradually assumed a higher degree of operational autonomy (largely on the back of institution-based donor support), there is no current legal or regulatory framework to support this increased autonomy; therefore, some institutions are reluctant to change their status. Moreover, the core five members have dominated the process of decision-making, and other stakeholders' voices are less likely to be heard on the governing board. In practice, the governance system of PAI HEIs remains weak and the process of management remains the same as the old model (Mak 2008).

At present, the 29 public higher education institutions have conducted their operations under central supervision, and are subject to financial allocations by many parent ministries and institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (eight institutions), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (three), Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (one), Ministry of Health (one), Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (seven), Ministry of Religious Affairs (two), Ministry of National Defense (three), Ministry of Ministry of the

Interior (one), Ministry of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (one), the Office of the Council of Ministers and the National Bank of Cambodia (one each). Therefore, it is notoriously difficult to gain access to information in relation to the institutions' annual expenditure by the government.

It is estimated that per-student expenditure by the Government is around R40,000 (or US$100) per annum. Fees for private students are variable, normally ranging between US$150 and US$450 per student per annum. The fees policy is not rigorously regulated, with levels largely determined by what the market can bear. For both public and private institutions, financial planning, management and reporting systems are very limited. Public institutions are frequently not informed about their annual allocations and have little delegated authority for spending. For both public and private institutions, although there is currently a requirement to establish annual development and financing plans, there is no clear accountability for the spending of public or private funding (SEAMEO 2003).

Scholarship students are admitted to enter public higher education institutions through a selection process administered by the MoEYS, based on the results of high school exams, and with a priority admission policy favouring female and rural students. The number of students is also determined by the MoEYS according to the students' preferences and grades in their high school exams. Despite the fact that public higher education institutions are allowed to recruit fee-paying students on their own, they are obligated to abide by admission criteria set by the MoEYS.

For public university and college lecturers' tenure, a tenure track position is based on length of service, and becoming a civil servant is automatic. However, merit-based performance in teaching, research and contributing to the well-being of the community is not seen, as there is no systematic and formal process for ranking and promoting university lecturers, leading to confusion in regard to rankings and promotion. Some lecturers proclaim themselves as senior lecturers or professors after teaching for four or five years.

There is no regulatory requirement for management and leadership skills in the promotion of university and college leaders, and their nominations and appointments are often politically motivated. There is no specific term for rectors or other types of leadership, so they can hold their position until they retire, leading to the implementation of a top-down approach, and a lack of accountability to teachers and staff.

A new body that has emerged as a result of the unplanned 'ferment of reform' is the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), which is chaired by the Council of Ministers. With assistance from foreign experts and funding from the World Bank, the ACC has made some positive steps, and stirred up 'ferment of reform' across the higher education sector. Minimum standards for a foundation (first) year, with a view to a broadening liberal education, have been created and implemented. However, evaluation research on the foundation year has not been conducted, leading to a lack of information in relation to its effectiveness. A credit-transfer scheme has been created, and minimum standards for all higher education institutions are in the process of getting feedback and comments from senior managers of the universities, and approval from the Board of the ACC (Ford 2006).

Recently, another institution has been established: the Supreme National Council of Education (SNCE), which is directly under the Office of the Prime Minister, and performs the following tasks:

- Propose long-term educational policies and strategies in response to social and economic development needs of the government;
- Evaluate work in the area of education, technical and professional training according to the policy of the government;
- Mobilize a range of resources for the purposes of education (RGC 2008).

This Council is the peak institution of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC). This is an indication of the increasing requirements of accountability imposed by the government.

Despite the creation of the ACC and the SNCE and the establishment of quality assurance units within universities and colleges, the Prime Minister of Cambodia has recently urged the MoEYS to enhance the quality of higher education as most of the students who graduated with a Bachelor's and Master's degree do not seem to have received legitimate qualifications. In the closing ceremony of the annual convention on education he said: 'it is now very easy to get a Master and PhD's degree in Cambodia, so the MoEYS, and the ACC have to enhance the quality of education, and must formulate a policy for plagiarism.' He added that some PhD students graduated by hiring someone to write a thesis or dissertation, and some PhD students had never attended any class, or studied anywhere, but when he was invited to preside over a graduation ceremony, he saw these students being awarded a PhD degree. He also agreed with the fact that some graduates were really qualified. He agreed that quality is

affected by quantity; however, we must enhance the quality of education in order to ensure that our human resources are qualified. Ironically, no country can produce as many students with PhD or Master's degrees as Cambodia (News Digest 2009).

Another cause for concern is the dramatic growth in higher education enrolments, now at 92,340 undergraduate students (Bachelor's degree level). According to the Department of Higher Education, there is estimated to be over 46,000 first year students in 2010-11. This rapid growth will overload higher education institutions even more, so the key question is whether there will be enough qualified and experienced academics to provide a quality education to all those who are willing to pay for the opportunity of higher education, and whether the government has the capacity to finance HEIs to supplement fees.

1.5.4 Context of the City University (CU)

The university was reopened in 1980 after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, focusing on training teachers for secondary education schools throughout the country. The following year saw the opening of the Institute of Foreign Languages, initially training students to become Vietnamese and Russian teachers.

Over the past decade, the University has been challenged to survive in a national economic climate that views higher education as a private good rather than a public good (Brook & Ly 2009). The University has continued to grow, and now includes the Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Institute of Foreign Languages. To keep up with growing needs of society, the university has expanded its programs up to a Master's degree level since 2001.

After the establishment of the ACC, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport recommended that both public and private universities and colleges establish internal quality assurance units. The University has an office dedicated to quality assurance. Although the Quality Assurance Unit has conducted a number of quality assurance activities such as program, institutional evaluations, self-assessment, and tracer studies on student employability, a formal quality management framework does not yet exist. This has led to a lack of staff involvement and participation. Likewise, the majority of universities do not have quality management frameworks in place even though they claim to have committed to quality assurance. Data is non-existent as are information systems needed for decision making and planning, leading to ad hoc, rather than evidence-based, decisions.

The University's mission includes the three core responsibilities of a university – teaching, research and community service – plus cultural preservation. The University has just developed its strategic plan, for the first time ever, for the five years 2008-13, comprising five goals: (1) To achieve national and regional standards of excellence; (2) For each department to develop its own respective Master's program; (3) For all departments to develop their research activities; (4) To provide information communication technology so that stakeholders have access to the internet and the external exchange of information; and (5) For all departments to establish their own quality assessment mechanism. The University is seeking approval of the strategic plan from the MoEYS, so that the University is able to obtain funding to support the strategic plan. This has demonstrated that the University is preparing to initiate its reform agenda.

According to the strategic plan, especially goal (1) and some aspects of the other goals, the University is ambitious, developing a sound and attractive plan with relative ease, but needing to acknowledge that the implementation of the plan may be another issue and problematic. As it stands, the University and the MoEYS are not able to supply sufficient resources to support the plan. The key question is whether the University has enough competent leaders with the political will to lead teachers and staff to achieve this plan and ensure that the leaders have sufficient ability and resources to involve all educational stakeholders in participating in the implementation of the plan. Some aspects of the goals are beyond the capacity of the University, as some decisions have to be made at the ministerial or national level. Many researchers suggested quality assurance in universities in developing countries should not be too much ambitious; some countries have introduced it, as it is fashionable, or there are some pressures from international or local donors or funding agencies (Lim 2001).

Human Resources

Like other public higher education institutions, the University's faculty members were lost and killed under the Khmer Rouge. Since then the University has begun its operations under the management of a handful of teachers, who were trained and mentored by international experts, especially experts from Vietnam. These faculty have passed their knowledge, institutional culture, management style, academic structures, and the like, to new generations of faculty members (Brook & Ly 2009).

At present, the University has 433 academic and support staff, and of the 433 faculty members, 15 academic staff (3.5%), hold a PhD degree, 132 (30.5%) hold a Master's degree, and 214 (49.4%) hold a Bachelor's degree, and the remaining 72 (16.6%) hold a high school certificate or diploma, and represent administrative and maintenance staff. Most of the faculty members graduated from Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, other Eastern-bloc nations and local universities. A small number of the faculty graduated from different countries such as the United States, Australia, Japan, and Asian countries, but the university cannot retain them because of low salaries. According to the statistics of staff qualifications, many would argue that the University is not comparable to the Minimum Standards set by the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA).

The 433 faculty members are government civil servants, and employed on a full-time basis. The university has no autonomy to recruit its own staff, and it is not able to apply any sanctions on those who perform poorly or lack commitment. Essentially, there is nothing to differentiate between those who are strongly committed to, and actively involved in, the development of the University, and those who are not, leading to low morale and motivation amongst staff.

The faculty receive their salary from the government, which is very low compared to the rate of inflation in the country. Some of the faculty can also generate other income from teaching fee-paying student classes at the University, because the University is permitted to offer fee-paying programs in parallel with scholarship programs. Some of the faculty may be employed to teach at other institutions on a part-time basis, or work for private companies and NGOs. In accord with the MoEYS policy, those faculty who teach in higher education institutions are required to teach 12 hours a week; however, it is difficult to differentiate between employment on a full-time and part-time basis, as part-time teaching staff are allowed to teach more than 12 hours a week. Therefore, it is hard for the University to retain experienced and qualified teaching staff, especially those who graduated from overseas, as they tend to be offered a higher rate of pay than that is available from the University.

Research and Teaching

Despite teaching, research, and community service being the core 'businesses' of the University, the research and community service activities are less likely to be undertaken for a numbers of reasons. First, teachers are poorly paid, so many teachers 'moonlight', or teach more hours, either within the institution, or outside the institution, leading to a lack of time to

do research. The University and the MoEYS have no package of research funding. Second, research skills and the experience of the faculty members are limited, as there is a lack of training and research support, and time to develop their ability in research. Third, if any faculty member wants to conduct research, they have to bid for research grants from external funding agencies or donors, which is highly scrutinised and involves a bureaucratic process, causing a lack of motivation and enthusiasm. Fourth, many universities and colleges around the world provide their staff with internet access, while the University seems to exist in the nineteenth century, as it is not able to provide internet access to its own academics and staff. Last but not least, there is inadequate office space for teachers, so they only come to the University when teaching. These reasons have resulted in a significant lack of research by the faculty.

Notwithstanding these barriers, some faculties have expressed enthusiasm for undertaking research according to the study by Brook and Ly.

> As one said "I'm proud of doing what others find hard to do – teaching with little income and doing unfunded research with students in rural areas." Others wanted to achieve specific research-related goals at CU, such as "to develop more research as a part of the program and build faculty capacity". Another staff member said, "I want to build a research group at the university and try to get research grants. I seek advisors and support… I want to develop a lab course". Last, a director of a graduate program said, "I would like to build a research culture in my program". (2009, P: 7)

1.6 Conceptual Framework

The notion of quality assurance was well embedded in the business and industry context, and was then transferred to the higher education sector where it was developed and adapted (Deming 1986). Total Quality Management (TQM) has been used in both USA and international colleges and universities (Grant, Mergen & Widrck 2004). A theoretical framework could have come from business organisational studies; however, many argue that it was inappropriate for the higher education setting (Blackmore 2004; Harvey & Newton 2007).

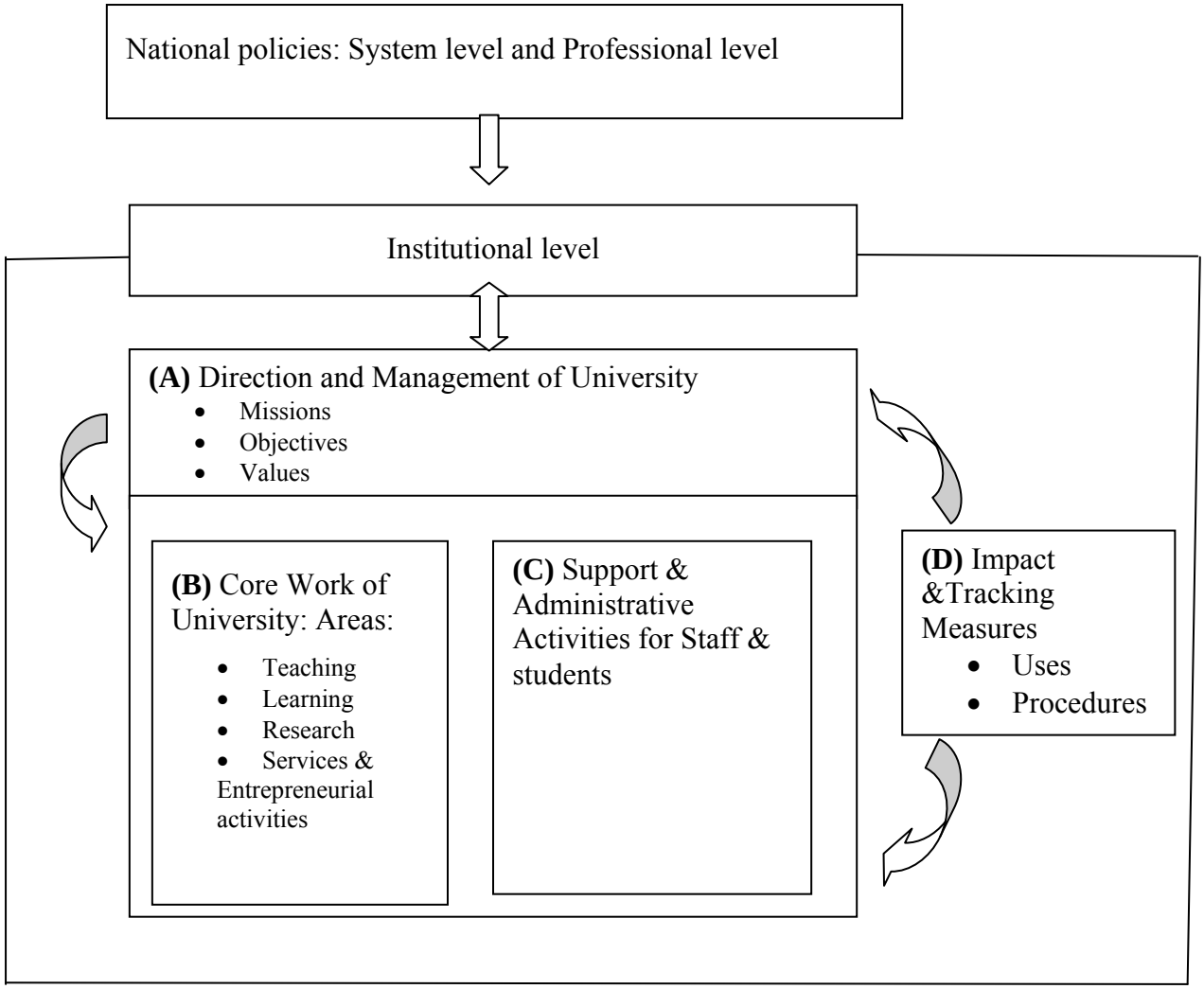
The purpose of higher education is complex because there are multiple stakeholders such as governments, employers, professional bodies and associations and so on involved in discussions about quality assurance issues, and they tend to impose different views on the quality of higher education. A business organisation has an unambiguous purpose, which is to

make a profit. To achieve this purpose, a managerial approach to quality management is appropriate for the business setting. The increase in the use of a managerial approach to quality assurance in the academic context has attracted much criticism, because it weakens the well-established collegial tradition in higher education institutions.

There is a paucity of literature theorising about quality in higher education (Harvey & Newton 2007, p. 232). The conceptual framework for quality assurance in higher education is rather pragmatic and is mainly driven by new public management policy that higher education needs to be held accountable to the public. Although not a universal approach, methods such as self-evaluation, performance indicators, peer review, and self-assessment reports (SRA) have been used as a means for checking and assuring quality in higher education (Harvey & Newton 2007).

To provide a general guideline for this study, a conceptual framework for quality management in higher education is adopted by adapting three conceptual models proposed by Scott (2004), Perellon (2007) and Premfors (1992) (see Diagram 1).

Diagram 1. Quality Assurance in Higher Education



Adapted from Scott (2004); Perellon (2007) & Premfors (1992)

Diagram 1 indicates that there are activities and roles associated with overall direction setting, resourcing, governance and communication (A); with the university's core activities of teaching and learning, research, community engagement and entrepreneurial activities (B); and with the provision of associated support, infrastructure and administrative activities for students and staff (C) (Scott 2004).

However, successful universities not only track how well the various activities shown in Diagram 1 are working by seeking user feedback, they also ascertain whether these activities have a positive impact on students (D) using benchmarked trends in demand, retention, and graduation rates, assessment performance, graduate employability, salaries, and employer satisfaction with their graduates. For instance, with respect to teaching and learning they not only utilise satisfaction surveys in areas (A) and (B) but also look at impact indicators (D). The tracing data collected about the quality of operations (A), (B) and (C) and the university's impact (D) can be both qualitative and quantitative and can be used to both prove and improve the quality of what a university does (Scott 2004).

The Scott model is introduced to address quality-related issues at the institutional level. As mentioned earlier, there are many stakeholders in the quality assurance arena. Some are at the system level, some are at the professional level and some are at the institutional level. They do not always agree with each other because they might be interested in different dimensions of quality. Institutions shape their own practices in relation to the system and the professional level to some extent, but not completely. For example, institutions need to use the data available at the national level, as they are audited, but they can use their own data as well because they have their own views, especially about formative assessment.

The aim of this study is also to explore other aspects of quality assurance in an attempt to make a comparative study between the Australian, UK and Thai systems of quality assurance. Thus, an exploration of Perellon and Premfors's conceptual models is undertaken, expanding the Scott model.

Perellon (2007) categorises quality assurance as a policy embedded in the broader field of higher education. In comparative studies, policy analysis can be regarded as a 'field of study concerned with variations in the products of governmental activity over time and across different jurisdictions' (Hofferbert & Cinganelli 1996, cited in Perellon 2007, p. 156). According to Heidenheimer et al. (1990), comparative public policy is 'the study of how, why and to what effect different governments pursue a particular course of action or inaction'

(cited in Perellon 2007, p. 156). Premfors notes that issues of the six fundamental choices (size, structure, location, admission, governance and curricula) need to be addressed by all policies in higher education based on five basic values: excellence, equality, autonomy, accountability, and efficiency (1992).

Perellon (2007) further argues that responses to the six fundamental choices in policy analysis in higher education are not always based on the five basic values, as they are always space- and time-dependent. Comparative studies allow us to see how the issues of the six fundamental policy choices are addressed and how they vary from one context to another concerning each dimension of the policy (the beliefs or ideational dimension and the instrument or the material dimension) (Perellon 2007). He argues that to identify quality issues in relation to the fundamental policy choices in higher education, the following questions need to be addressed.

Objectives: What should be the aims and objectives of a quality assurance policy?

It is hard to identify objectives of policy regarding quality assurance in higher education because there are many stakeholders involved in it and they may have different objectives in relation to quality arrangements. However, the objectives can be classified into two different types – summative or formative (Perellon 2007).

Summative objectives are generally employed in higher education in an attempt to link the outcomes of the quality assessment to financial incentives. In this respect, universities and other higher education institutions are funded based on their quality performance. Formative objectives put an emphasis on the importance of the learning activities, regardless of what kind of procedures higher education providers use. They aim to locate strong and weak areas of a program or an institution with a view to taking actions for improvement of the weak areas. It is argued that these should not be in line with funding allocations to institutions (Perellon 2007).

Summative objectives are mostly employed at a national level. Usually there is a link between the results of quality assessments and political ramifications, for example, funding allocations, additional grants, and so on (Perellon 2007). Formative objectives are mainly employed at an institutional level in attempting to investigate areas of weakness and strengths for continuous improvement of quality. The results of the assessments do not link with funding allocation (Perellon 2007).

Control: Who should control the process of quality assurance?

There is an increasing debate over who should take responsibility for the implementation of the policy on quality assurance in higher education and how this responsibility is balanced between the many constituents.

There is a tension between government and higher education institutions in relation to who should take the responsibility for the development of a quality assurance policy and its implementation. Theoretically, either the government or higher education institutions can take responsibility for it. In practice, there has been a sharing of responsibility between governments and higher education institutions over the procedures (Perellon 2007). Perellon (2007) suggests that it is appropriate to examine the relationship between the two bodies employing a mixed political and institutional control of the policy. Autonomy from political control is important, as it will be addressed effectively through decisions being made independently of political control (Perellon 2007).

Areas: What are the domains covered by the quality assurance procedures?

In general, there are three areas addressed by quality assurance procedures. These are research activities, study programs, and general institutional management. Traditionally, research activities and study programs are the core business of universities and colleges, while the general institutional management consists of other activities, including financial management, institutional governance, staff retentions and the like (Perellon 2007).

Procedures: How are the quality assurance procedures set up?

Regarding procedures, there are three pairs of opposing standpoints that need to be addressed: outcome-orientated vs. process-orientated procedures; internal vs. external procedures; and qualitative vs. quantitative methods (Perellon 2007).

The first opposing pair of quality assurance procedures considers the issue of quality in different ways. Outcome-orientated procedures focus on the 'product' of higher education institutions such as numbers of graduates and publications, and the outcomes are measured against set criteria and standards. Process-orientated procedures focus on the general process of how programs are delivered and how research is conducted Perellon 2007).

The second pair is that of internal vs. external procedures, which focus on the different stages of the procedures and on the agents involved in these stages. The internal procedures rest on self-assessment reports and they generally comply with the guidelines set by the external bodies, while the external ones rest on the involvement of peer reviewers who give comments and recommendations on what areas needed improving (Perellon 2007).

The third pair is that of qualitative and quantitative procedures. A quantitative approach refers to the use of key performance indicators and benchmarking, which provide objective and measurable data that serve the interests of a political agenda. This approach can be problematic, as performance indicators provide us with implicit information, and it is sometimes difficult to make valid comparisons with qualitative data (Perellon 2007).

Uses: How is the information collected used?

The information collected from various stakeholders plays a significant role in reflecting the previous objectives and the control of the system because the information is made available not only to the institutions, but also to the public at large. For example, the Quality Assurance Agency in England publishes the information about institutional audits on the Agency's website and can be used to rank institutions or program provisions. League tables and the ranking of universities have been introduced in many countries and are published in books, newspapers and magazines so that parents and students can choose which universities they wish to attend. Higher education institutions also use ranking tables for marketing purposes (Perellon 2007).

1.7 Limitations of the study

There were complexities in gaining access to a sample which was representative of the whole population of the Cambodian higher education sector, and the time for conducting data collection was limited. The data for this research was collected from a small sample population of three institutions, including the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia, and one Cambodian university. Thus, the findings of this study might not be able to be generalised beyond the study sample.

There were some problems encountered in gaining reliable information, although a purposive sample was employed for selecting the participants because some participants did not fully understand the concept of quality. In addition, a case study approach may be criticised for lacking knowledge of generalisability, as it focuses on a particular instance or situation. The results of this study must be treated with prudence and might not be generalised as representative of the population of higher education across the country.

The methodological limitations of the research instruments and sampling method of data collection are discussed in details in Chapter 4.

1.8 Ethical considerations

Although there are no explicit policies for ethical research in Cambodia, this study was conducted in public institutions, and as some senior managers, academics and staff were involved in this study, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, voluntariness, and sensitivity were highly maintained. Pseudonyms were used for participants and the one Cambodian university were used. The university involved was labelled the City University (CU) in lieu of using the real name of the university because quality was, and is, a sensitive issue in Cambodia.

Confidentiality of the information was strictly enforced in each university, and managers considered it as imperative, as they were wary of sharing information, especially with those who came from outside the institution. So, ethical issues were treated with great caution. Further details of ethical issues of this research were identified and are discussed in Chapter 4.

1.9 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters: Chapter 1 presents the aims, scope and research gap of the study. To achieve the aims of the study, the research questions are designed to explore the key features of quality assurance in higher education in Australia, UK and Thailand. To limit the scope of the study, a pragmatic conceptual framework is also highlighted.

Chapter 2 encompasses, explores and analyses the general concepts of quality assurance as derived from an extensive literature review. Chapter 3 analyses the quality assurance arrangements and practices in the UK, Australia and Thailand. It comprises four sections. Section one investigates the key features of quality assurance in higher education in the UK and what advantages and disadvantages it faces in its daily practices. Section two explores the key features of quality assurance in Australian higher education and its strengths and weaknesses. Section three examines the key characteristics of quality assurance in Thai higher education. Section four is the synthesis of the results of a comparative study of the three systems with a view to determining what constitutes a locally relevant and suitable approach to a quality management system for a Cambodian university.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the research methodology and processes used in this study. The chapter provides the research paradigms, and methods of data collection. To collect the quantitative data, a questionnaire was designed to survey the participants. To collect qualitative data, a set of interview questions were designed to gather the participants' views

and experience in quality issues. It indicates how both the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed, and also highlights the limitations of the study and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents data descriptions and analyses of the survey and interview outcomes. The quantitative data was analysed by using SPSS software with a five-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). The qualitative data was categorised into themes for analysis.

Chapter 6 provides a conclusion based on the synthesis of the literature and the data from the survey questionnaire and interviews. Some recommendations are then proposed.

Chapter 2. Approaches to Quality Assurance

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises an exploration of the approach to quality through an overview of the history of quality assurance: examining the evolution of quality assurance and why we bother with it; identifying what purposes quality assurance serves; determining how quality assurance drives innovation; discussing an instrumental approach to quality assurance; and, considering who should lead the development and its implementation.

2.2 Quality assurance: Historical overviews

United States' companies influenced the development of models of quality assurance in Europe and their practice (e.g. TQM). After World War II, Total Quality Management was promoted in America and found little response. However, there was a strong response from the Japanese (Deming 1986). TQM was thus implemented in Japan first, then in the West, and then moved to the higher education sector for more thought, articulation, and research.

Total quality management (TQM) tries to assure quality by involving everyone in the organisation in its pursuit. In the industry setting Total Quality means that the processes by which the product is produced becomes the assurance of a quality product (Stubbs 1994). Advertisements for Japanese cars illustrate aspects of the organising principles of the factory and its quality assurance processes rather than control (Deming 1986).

In 1979, the British Standards Institute established its first standard for quality assurance, labelled as the BS 5750 (British Standard for Quality Assurance). It is concerned with the related and proper quality management systems, instead of the product itself and its post-production inspection. Likewise, quality in higher education focuses on how a university manages itself to offer quality teaching instead of the assessment of the standard accomplished by the learner. Thus quality is broader than standards, and academic standards do not have the same meaning as teaching quality (Blackmore 2004; Stubbs 1994).

The concept of quality assurance was employed in industry and business in the West, where the aim was to maximise profit and increase sales with low costs in a competitive world. At the same time, quality was not considered in the higher education domain. Higher education institutions enjoyed their own professional freedom, and academic autonomy with little need to be accountable for their actions, and they were established for the elite (Lim 2001).

However, things started to change in western countries in the mid-1980s, where the quality assurance of its processes and products became a significant aspect for higher education institutions (Lim 2001; Van Vught & Westerheijden 1994). In regard to the historical context a distinction is made between the intrinsic and the extrinsic values of higher education (Van Vught & Westerheijden 1994). The distinction between the models of quality assessment can also be made; one that is controlled by an external authority is called the French model; the other that is a self-regulating body is called the English model. Both of the models did not exist in the actual history of European higher education. An ongoing hot debate about the quality issue still exists in the higher education context (Van Vught & Westerheijden 1994).

The French model may be considered to be the model of quality assessment in terms of accountability; the power to decide what should be taught and who could be allowed to teach at the university was in the hands of an external authority. The English model is considered quality assessment by means of peer review. Both the element of providing accountability (the French model) and the element of peer review (the English model) are very important dimensions of current quality management systems in higher education (Van Vught & Westerheijden 1994).

So far, the two elements have played a crucial role in higher education. With respect to the history of quality, higher education has always had both intrinsic and extrinsic qualities. The intrinsic qualities try to find ways that respond to the quest of learners for knowledge. The extrinsic qualities are associated with the services higher education institutions provide to society (Van Vught & Westerheijden 1994). The combination of both quality systems, intrinsic and extrinsic, has assisted higher education institutions in maintaining their position in history and society.

In the early 1980s, debate about quality and standards was mainly internal to higher education. Since the mid-1980s higher education in the UK has moved rapidly away from self-regulation toward a more mixed and externally imposed system by external bodies (Patrick & Stanley 1998; Van Vught & Westerheijden 1994). In 1984, quality was declared to be a key objective for higher education in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, government policy was adopted in which quality played a very crucial role. In Denmark, Finland, Spain and many other countries the first steps were taken to design a quality assessment system (Van Vught & Westerheijden 1994).

2.3 Why bother with Quality Assurance in Higher Education?

There are several contributors to an increasing concern about quality in higher education. These include various stakeholders, including governments, which in most countries are the key players; citizens, who pay taxes to the government; employers, who employ graduates; students and their parents, who pay up-front fees; teachers, professors and managers in universities, who have to play multiple roles in assuring continuous improvement, accountability and compliance (Frazer 1994).

The increasing concerns about quality assurance are founded in the following. First, student enrolments have increased rapidly. In response to this increase, there has been the need for an expansion of public funding, which has led to the requirement for accountability of the public expenditure, and there is the public requirement for better public services. Second, there is increasing competition among higher education institutions for resources and students. Third, there is the tension between efficiency and quality. Higher education institutions have to manage their resources efficiently in order to achieve these stated aims and objectives. Fourth, the development of new technologies that enables higher education institutions to create distance education (e-learning). This has posed a critical question about how the quality of these modes of delivery can be assured. Finally, globalisation phenomena gave rise to an increase in cross-border education, and student mobility. In response to such critical issues, there is a need for the establishment of an international or regional quality assurance network in order to recognise the levels of education of each other. For example, ASEAN University Network (AUN), the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA), and the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) were established (El-Khawas 2006; Harvey 2002; Lim 2001; Stella 2007).

Similarly, Van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) have drawn attention to various factors that have led to a constant increase of attention with respect to quality in higher education in Europe. First, the rapid growth of the student-body, along with increase in the number of fields of study, departments, and even whole new institutions, have posed questions about the amount of public expenditure for higher education. Second, the reduction of public expenditure, budget-cuts, and retrenchment operations have automatically led to questions about the quality of processes and products in higher education. A third factor is associated with the transition process of technology-based economies, in which many countries initiate policies to guide students to fields that are regarded to be vital for further economic development.

Issues of concern about quality also exist in the Asia and Pacific region; however, the form of concern might be somewhat different from the Europe experience. First, there is a growing concern about the per capita reduction of public expenditure in higher education in many countries, thus universities and colleges need to focus on efficiency in the use of resources and effectiveness in teaching and learning (Harman 1996; Lim 2001).

Second, rapid growth in student populations and the diversity of higher education has given rise to concerns about quality. The connection between growth in student enrolments, economic issues, new accountability pressures, and value for money in the higher education sector requires that universities and other higher education institutions explain to the public what they are doing and how well they are doing it (Harman 1996; Lim 2001).

Third, rapid growth in the international mobility of students and the increasing internationalisation of the labour market has posed another concern. For example, countries like Australia, New Zealand and Japan, which are involved in exporting education, the need for maintaining and enhancing quality in higher education is required to attract large-scale numbers of fee-paying students (Harman 1996; Lim 2001).

Fourth, there is a rapid expansion of private higher education institutions. In some countries, private institutions deliver high quality. However, in other countries, when there is tension between quality and profit, there is a tendency to leave quality vulnerable. Finally, as far as developing countries are concerned, some countries are currently interested in quality assurance stemming from policies imposed by international agencies such as the World Bank, and UNDP, in other words, coming from donation-driven policies (Harman 1996; Lim 2001).

Many studies on the rate of investment in education provide similar findings. In the event that the quality of education is poor, the rate of investment in education and the impact of economic growth will be lower (Lim 2001). A study also suggested that the private rate of return and a social rate of return to quality, are significantly greater than that for quantity (Behrman & Birdsall 1985). Another study which surveyed students' educational achievements from fifteen developed and five developing countries, also supports these findings (WB 1980).

Lim (2001) observes that by the 1990s some developing countries had introduced quality assurance systems in an attempt to improve the quality of their higher education sector. Others might have introduced it since it was fashionable to duplicate the model established by

governments in developed countries, which have already adapted quality assurance procedures for higher education from those used in business and industry.

Lim further argues that whatever the purpose, the main question is to ask whether the quality assurance systems that have been used in higher education in developed countries are relevant for higher education in developing countries. Although quality assurance processes have improved the quality of higher education in developed countries, it is a legitimate question to ask whether those processes are effective when applied in developing countries.

2.4 Concepts or theories of quality

Quality assurance and accreditation systems in higher education vary from country to country. Some quality assurance systems are based on fitness-for-purpose, meaning that universities must be responsive to the needs of customers, and they are evaluated against their mission and objectives, whereas some employ a standards-based approach to quality assurance, in which universities are assessed on a set of criteria as required by external bodies or professional bodies.

To fully understand the concept of quality, I explore some concepts of quality evident in quality management in business, corporation, and industry context. These are:

Conformance to specifications (or standards): When services or goods meet set specifications or threshold standards, a service or good is regarded as of acceptable quality (Crosby 1984). This notion of quality derives from quality control in the manufacturing industry. In this approach, the quality of goods or services is measured as to whether it meets the standards set, being rejected if it does not conform (Green 1994; Harvey 2002).

Fitness for use: Services or goods are regarded as of acceptable quality when they satisfy the expectations of the customers (Guaspari 1985, cited in Bogue 1998).

Continuous improvement: An institution or organisation is able to maintain continuous improvement. That institution or organisation is of acceptable quality (Deming 1986, cited in Bogue 1998).

Consideration of multi-aspects: An organisation or institution needs to consider not only fitness for use or conformance to specifications but also reliability, durability, aesthetics, and the like. It must embrace various aspects: goals, the process employed for achieving those goals, and how the goals are achieved (Garvin 1988, cited in Bogue 1998).

With respect to the production of goods such as cars (e.g. Rolls Royce and relatively modern Toyota), or furniture, the definition of quality is straightforward, and there is no confusion in its meaning. However, there is no a clear-cut meaning of quality in higher education as there are multiple stakeholders involved in the discussion of quality in higher education, including students, parents, governments, employers, academic staff, administrators, staff and others. For instance, European higher education institutions were reluctant to define quality in higher education since they saw quality as context dependent, which changes from time to time (Brown 2004; Harvey 2005; Lim 2001; Lomas 2002; Newton 2000; Sanyal & Martin 2007; Stubbs 1994).

Despite different arguments about the concept of quality, it is possible to categorise a wide range of concepts of quality in higher education, including quality as exception, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money, satisfaction of the client, and quality as a threshold standard.

Quality as exceptional 'excellence': Green calls this concept the traditional concept of quality. When people talk about promoting quality, they frequently mean promoting excellence. However, quality is not the same as being excellent. Every university or college, of course, tries its best to deliver its programs with quality, not to aim for excellence as do Cambridge, Oxford, or Harvard because it needs to focus on mass education and not only the elite education. A university with a mission to develop its country might choose differently, to be a university like Berkeley (Green 1994).

This definition, promoting excellence, applies more to higher education delivered by elite institutions that Lomas calls the Russell Group of UK universities (the Russel Group is an association of 20 major research-intensive universities in the United Kingdom formed in 1994 at a meeting held in the Hotel Russell, London). He argues that institutions that have focused on the mass system of higher education are perceived as somehow of lower quality, where 'more means worse', and these universities see quality as 'fitness for purpose' (Lomas 2002). Nevertheless, Green argues that the 'excellence' approach to quality is resource consuming, and it is not of much value when the quality of the whole institution is assessed. If the quality of universities is measured against the same standards used to assess the quality of Cambridge, or Oxford universities, many institutions would be perceived as being of low quality (Green 1994).

Quality as fitness for purpose: This approach requires the institution to focus on what is needed to achieve the stated purpose or mission of the institution. There must be a match between stated goals and their achievement. An institution that can achieve its set goals and missions is regarded as a quality organisation (Green 1994; Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield 2007).

Some governments and most higher education institutions are in favour of the fitness for purpose approach; for example, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) audits the quality of an institution based on the purpose or mission of that institution. An institution is perceived as successful when its purpose or mission is set on the basis of the context and time because quality is context dependent, evolving over time (Lim 2001; Green 1994). The QAA subject review approach, and the ISO 9000 series quality assurance procedures are based on the concept of fitness for purpose (Lomas 2002).

According to a survey of senior managers (pro-vice-chancellors, vice principals, deans and academic registrars) in a wide range of universities in the UK, fitness for purpose was the approach to quality that got the most support, closely followed by transformation. Exceptional performance (excellence) and value for money got far lower support and the latter was the least popular approach (Lomas 2002).

However, the key question is how do we know our product or service fits the purpose? Who is to define the purpose? – Educators, students, employers, governments, or the public? It is a waste of time trying to specify the purpose of higher education. So the purpose is in the eyes of the beholder (the role of interpretation is the user (Harvey & Newton 2007). They stress that 'fitness for purpose is intrinsically linked as a definition of quality with the accountability approach to quality assurance' (Harvey & Newton 2007, p. 235).

Similarly, Green argues that it is difficult to define the purpose of higher education because there are different stakeholders involved in discussions in relation to quality issues in higher education (1994). 'Who should define the purposes of higher education? Should it be the government, the students, the employers of students, the managers of institutions or the academic professionals?' (Green p. 12).

Quality as value for money: This concept has its focus on efficiency in the use of public resources, and accountability to political authorities. Outputs are measured against inputs. This concept is popular, and is often supported by governments because it is responsive to accountability. In higher education, efficiency in the use of resources needs to be considered

in order to meet objectives and purposes set by an institution (Lomas 2002). However, a value for money approach is more likely to undermine professional autonomy and academic freedom because, in order to achieve value for money, there will be intrusion from government via funding agencies and quality assurance agencies (McNay 1995). Higher education institutions will shift from a collegial tradition to a managerial enterprise. The traditional concept of collegiality and self-regulation is more likely to be diminished (Lomas 2002).

Satisfaction of the client: the concept of the student as a consumer in higher education is on the rise, meaning that an institution is perceived as being of acceptable quality when it meets the expectations of the consumer. Deming (1982) argues 'the difficulty in defining quality is to translate future needs of the user into measurable characteristics, so that a product can be designed to give satisfaction at a price that the user will pay' (Cited in Green 1994, p. 26). It is hard however to specify who is the customer in higher education, as there are many types of customers in higher education, including students, governments, employers, and the like (Green 1994).

It is easy to identify the needs of students in universities and colleges such as library facilities, study materials, student housing, and other physical facilities. It is hard however to identify the quality of education service, because it is intangible. The quality of products of the manufacturing industry, for example cars, is physically tangible. Thus there is a need to ask a question whether students know exactly what they need (Green 1994). 'They may be able to identify their short-term needs, but do they have enough knowledge and experience to know what they need in the long term? Are they in a position to judge whether their needs are being met?' (Green 1994, p. 27).

Quality as value added: this concept refers to the value added to students during their study and training. It is the method of formulating learning outcomes and realising the outcomes in the graduates. The basic quality question is what has he/she learnt? This concept is relevant to current trends of higher education moving from elite education toward mass education, where the process of value adding is itself emphasised rather than the measurement of value adding from an already high level (Bogue 1998).

Within this approach, an institution needs to respond to the critical question, relating to what difference it makes in enhancing student skills, knowledge, attitudes, or other attributes while they are studying or training (Bogue 1998). Student knowledge, skill, and attitude are

accumulated over time through lifelong learning process (Harvey 2002). Value added is a difference in a student's attainment between the commencement of studies to when they have graduated. Measuring the value added abilities of a student requires an institution to conduct pre-assessments of the students when they begin a program and post-assessment of the students when they have finished their education (Bennett 2001).

Despite the fact that value added is broadly accepted as a sound approach to quality in higher education, it has been less likely to be used as a measure for assessing a university's quality and performance, for several reasons: first, value has many dimensions so institutions need to develop many different measures; second, institutions are intended to create the same kinds of value added for all students, but institutions are contextually different; third, institutions have different missions; fourth, it might take institutions many years to identify the outcomes, so it is recommended that an institution should assess facets of value added with alumni rather than with graduating students. A value added approach is more likely to be complex and costly (Bennet 2001). Similarly, Harvey and Green (1993) argued that quality should be investigated in terms of a wide array of aspects contributing to a concept of value added (Harvey & Green 1993).

Quality as a standard: In this respect, quality is seen as meeting threshold requirements. Specific standards and norms are defined; a threshold is established that the university should cross in order to certify that it meets the quality standard. This concept of quality often forms the basis for accreditation decisions. This approach to quality is fashionable in the public services, namely the Patients' Charter in relation to health services (Green 1994). McDonald's fast-food restaurants have a set of principles that are applied to a wide range of production activities and service provision (Lomas 2002). The problem is that it is not clear what basic quality is. The fulfilment of the standards does not motivate innovations. It implies that once the standards have been established, there is no need for the quality to be reconsidered. However, services and products, in fact, will need to be modified to satisfy the pace of technological change in society. The use of the term 'standard' is easily measurable and quantifiable, but this does not work well in higher education. Similarly, academic standards are no longer equated with teaching quality (Stubbs 1994).

To demonstrate the complicated concept of quality in higher education, consider Frazer's example:

> A number of departments in different universities produce graduates in the same subject at the same level, and the standard of achievement of the graduates from each department is the same, but there are different criteria for quality. The perception of the public would probably say that they have different quality. Department A attracts students on entry with the highest-grade students, while Department B admits lower grade students. The view of the public is that A is of higher quality than B. But because the achievements of the graduates are the same, it could be argued that B is of higher quality since the 'value added' to its students is much greater. Department C has better qualified staff and better physical facilities than Department D. The public view is that C is of higher quality than D. But C is more costly and, because the achievements of the graduates are the same, D is more efficient. Department E sets up goals of high standards whereas Department F is more modest in its statement of what it intends. The public opinion is that E is of higher quality than F, whereas F is more effective than E. (Frazer 1994, p. 110)

Quality is defined differently depending on the stakeholders, meaning that any definition of quality must take into account the views of various stakeholders. For example, government might look first at the pass/fail percentage, the dropout rate and the enrolment time. Quality in the government's eyes might be described as 'as many students as possible finishing the programme within the scheduled time with an international degree at reduced costs' (Vroeijenstijn 1995, p. 60). Employers may view quality as the skills and attributes obtained during the studies. Students may consider quality as the concept that helps develop their individual knowledge and position in society. Academics may define quality as knowledge transfer, good academic learning and a good learning environment (Vroeijenstijn 1995).

Similarly, different groups or stakeholders in higher education have different perspectives on quality. For instance, students and lecturers might focus on the process of education, whereas employers might emphasise the outputs of higher education. So, the approach to quality is not a unified perception and it is recognised that one institution might excel in one area, but might not excel in another (Green 1994).

Green's recommendation with respect to the notion of quality in higher education is quoted below:

> This points to the need for the development of a framework that will clearly show the relationship between the criteria used and the various quality assurance and quality

> assessment techniques recently available, whether within or outside higher education. This should provide a stronger, more reliable, more credible basis for quality assessment than that which currently exists. (Green 1994, p. 28)

However, whatever approach is employed for measuring quality in higher education, there will be questions such as what do we measure? – 'Excellence for what?' 'What is the value in "value for money?''etc. (Maassen & Van Vught 1996, p. 188).

Of the abovementioned approaches, fitness for purpose, excellence and standards, have been the most powerful as they have been used around the world in the establishment of a quality assurance framework in higher education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent 2008).

2.5 Quality assurance and accreditation

Quality assurance is to do with policies and procedures employed to ensure that the quality of education provided by institutions is being improved and enhanced, and that the process of quality management works effectively and efficiently. It involves internal activities of the institution that include staff development, feedback from students, employers, and society (Gaither 1998; Hanlon 2007). In business or industry, quality assurance is part of one's managerial duties while in higher education institutions it is the duty of professional academics and staff that requires professional commitment and willingness rather than authoritative controls. In order to improve and enhance internal quality assurance continuously, an institution requires an external point of reference (benchmarking), both national and international (Gaither 1998).

Accreditation refers to certification or recognition that is given to an institution for meeting minimum standards set by an external accreditation agency or professional body. Standards vary according to institutional mission and goals, for example, as in Australia. In some countries, such as Nigeria and China, institutions are required to meet a set of criteria set by an external body. Quality assurance is concerned about quality improvement and enhancement; accreditation is mainly concerned about efficiency goals and the process of quality assurance (Gaither 1998; Hanlon 2007).

A key tendency in quality management is toward quality enhancement, and improvement, not just meeting standards and measurements set by an external body (Gaither 1998).

2.6 Purposes of quality assurance and its innovation

Quality assurance provides the stakeholders with 'value for money'; that is, accountability through evidence of results (Sanyal & Martin 2007). Quality assurance will provide a framework for us to see more clearly the relationship between academic programs, and between the academic and administrative units of the university, and to establish effective and creditable solutions to problems. It will also give a clear focus, direction and process. It will improve the effectiveness of the traditional management system. Moreover, quality assurance checks not only accountability, but also can be employed to promote compliance with regulation requirements or to govern an uncontrolled growing private sector (Harvey & Newton 2007).

An external quality body should be used to assess the management system. This will add to the efficiency of the function. In the event that the results of the assessment or review are available to the public, the institutions that have low performance can be shamed into taking action for improving their performances. If performances are related to funding, then quicker action for improvement will be taken (Blackmore 2004; Lim 2001).

There is a clear indication in developed countries that quality assurance has played an important part in changing the tradition of academics because they are now conscious of the need to improve the quality of their work, and higher education institutions have developed quality performance indicators, procedures and policies in line with external quality requirements. It has also improved the quality of higher education (Lim 2001).

In contrast, there is still a lot of debate in the literature about quality, leading to the question of whether a quality audit can actually bring about continuous improvement. According to Beeler (2003), audits cannot themselves drive continuous improvement. Nevertheless, Peters (2003) argues that dynamic, and proactive quality management processes can actually bring about improvement, but static quality auditing can only comply with a threshold standard. Similarly, the impact of quality assessment and audit differs between institutions, and these differences can be associated with the methods used and with the institutional and national contexts for their use (Brenna & Shah 2000).

The evidence is less visible in developing countries since quality assurance has recently been introduced in some because it was the fashionable thing to do; in other words, without considering different conditions within different contexts (Lim 2001).

Furthermore, the establishment of quality assurance in some developing countries derives from pressure, or donation-driven policies of national or international funding agencies, in particular, in countries that receive financial aid from international funding agencies. For example, the World Bank was the main driver to initiate the creation of a legal framework for higher education and accreditation in Cambodia.

Summing up, quality in higher education is significant since higher education institutions must take accountability for society, for employers, for students, and for each other. The accountability is not only financial. Universities exist to generate new knowledge, to disseminate knowledge and to preserve and transmit a cultural heritage (Green 1994). On the other hand, Neal (1998), Vice President for Adult and Professional Studies at Ottawa University, Ottawa, argues: 'Recent experience shows that the most successful quality assurance programmes are imitated, maintained, and enhanced through the professional commitment of the faculty, not through quality assurance system, administrative controls, or legislation' (p. 87).

2.7 Instrumental Approach to Quality Assurance

Varied approaches to quality assurance have been used depending on the context. The fitness for purpose approach checks whether the institution or program achieves the stated mission (fitness for purpose), and identifies whether the purpose is appropriate (fitness of purpose) (Sanyal & Martin 2007). Higher education institutions are judged against their purposes, and they are not judged against the same set of standards. This approach is considered more suitable for quality innovation, for example in Norway, the United States, and other countries. However, some argue that higher education institutions must meet a set of minimum standards for inputs, processes, and outcomes, which is called the standard-based approach to quality. This approach checks overall patterns rather than specific aspects of the institution (Sanyal & Martin 2007).

The instrumental approach to quality assurance must start by formulating the purpose of the university and making sure that it is compatible with the goals of the country. When the 'fitness of purpose' has already been set up, the quality management system will be evaluated to see whether it can accomplish this purpose, which is called 'fitness for purpose' (Green 1994; Lim 2001; Sanyal & Martin 2007).

Lim suggests (2001) that in order to establish a quality management system, the first step is to set up the university's mission or purpose. The second step is to identify the functions

through which the mission of the university are to be achieved. The third step is to establish objectives for each function and set quantitative and key performance indicators. The fourth step is to set up quality management plans, including the management processes that are used to ensure that these objectives are accomplished. The fifth step is to create a quality audit system to assess the performance of the university in order to identify areas where improvements are needed.

A mission statement has to contain specific goals that are consistent with those of the government. It should reflect something distinctive and not just comprise a bland statement that fails to identify the institution's priorities. The main priority of universities should be to serve the needs of the regions of their location (Barnett 1995; Lim 2001).

Generally, the aim of quality assurance in universities in developed countries is to assure and enhance the quality of the university functions - teaching, research, and community services - in order to satisfy their missions. Key performance indicators need to be established to measure whether the objectives are achieved (Lim 2001).

However, objectives, strategies, and key performance indicators need to be adapted to suit the contexts in developing countries (Lim 2001; Sanyal & Martin 2007). For teaching, some universities in developed countries use strategies for recognising and rewarding good teaching by asking staff to attend formal training in teaching and preparing teaching portfolios. These strategies are new for some universities in developed countries and premature for most universities in developing countries (Lim 2001). The use of performance indicators, including a specific percentage increase in the number of staff promoted on the basis of good teaching should be not encouraged. For research, key performance indicators to measure research productivity should not be complicated, for example, different weights for different types of publications and different quality of publications. For direct community services, the role of supervising the internships of students should be regarded as direct community service (Lim 2001).

The successful implementation of university management plans for teaching, research and community services relies on active support from administrative services in developed countries (Deming 1982; Lim 2001; Perry 1994). Universities in developing countries must first pay more attention to this issue because most of their administrative staff do not understand clearly the management plans, and are not competent to be involved in this respect. Second, to implement these plans there must be a strong commitment and action

from leaders and managers to continuously improve quality, and their willingness to promote quality determinedly. As well, there is a need to engage faculty members in this activity from the very beginning so that they are familiar with the system. Without their participation, the whole process will falter, no matter how hard the leaders and managers try to implement them (Lim 2001).

A quality management framework should adhere to five components: first, there should be clarity of aims; second, there should be a policy for delivery of a course; third, there should be a policy for professional development for staff; fourth, there should be evaluation from student and employers' viewpoints. Finally, there should be an action in response to these views (Lim 2001, Stubbs 1994). This is consistent with Scott's conceptual framework.

However, anecdotal information about quality arrangements does not provide any help in developing a locally relevant and effective approach to quality management in Cambodia. For this reason, a comparative study of good practices and the pitfalls of experience in quality assurance arrangements will be thoroughly reviewed in the context of universities in countries such as the England, Australia and Thailand.

Chapter 3. Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the UK, Australia and Thailand

Despite many reports that appear to address the topic of quality management processes as employed in universities and colleges in both developed and developing countries, there is a limited volume of literature about quality assurance in Cambodia, and little or no research into quality management for universities and colleges in Cambodia. In order to answer the research questions posed in this study, it is necessary to review the literature on quality assurance and quality management systems that has been implemented in universities and colleges in other countries, and regions such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Thailand.

The literature review of quality management is divided into five sections. Section 3.1 provides an overview of the literature concerning the quality assurance system that has been employed in the UK. Section 3.2 provides a literature review of quality assurance that has been implemented in the Australian higher education sector. Section 3.3 explores quality assurance practices in higher education in Thailand. The final section conducts a comparative study of quality management between these countries. The researcher includes the Thai quality assurance system in this study, as both Thailand and Cambodia are located in a similar geographical, cultural and social context, and the Thai system has gone through this development recently.

Each quality assurance system is reviewed against the fundamental policy choices outlined by Perellon (2007), namely: objectives, control, areas, procedures and uses by answering the following questions (see page 20 for a more detailed account):

Objectives: What should be the aims and objectives of quality assurance policy?

Control: Who should control the process of quality assurance?

Areas: What are the domains covered by the quality assurance procedures?

Procedures: How are the quality assurance procedures set up?

Uses: How is the information collected used?

Approaches: Approaches may comprise fitness for purpose, standards, continuous improvement, quality processes or quality outcomes. Levels refer to the system, institutional or professional (Perellon 2007).

Values: Values of quality can be defined as excellence, equality, autonomy, accountability, and efficiency (Premfors 1992). Brennan and Shah (2000) classify quality into four main types of quality values supporting distinct approaches to quality assurance. These are summarised in the Table 3.1, as follows.

Table 3.1 Values of quality

Type 1 'Academic'	Subject focus – knowledge and curriculum Professional authority Quality values vary across institution
Type 2 'Managerial'	Institutional focus – policies and procedures Managerial authority Quality values invariant across institution
Type 3 'Pedagogic'	People focus – skills and competencies Staff developers/educationalist influence Quality values invariant across institution
Type 4 'Employment focus'	Output focus – graduate standards/learning outcomes Employment/professional authority Quality values both variant and invariant across institution

Source: Brenna and Shah (2000)

The various policy choices are dealt with under system, professional and institutional levels of control.

3.1 Quality Assurance in Higher Education: the United Kingdom

3.1.1 Argument of the section

Overall the higher education system in the UK has shifted from a self-regulating, to a mix of self-regulation and external control. The government increased its regulation through establishing accountability and funding mechanisms largely to ensure universities are accountable for their use of public resources.

There is still an ongoing debate concerning the purposes, coverage, form and ownership of quality assurance. Some stakeholders argue that higher education institutions should be

independent from external control. Others argue that higher education institutions should be closely controlled by external agencies because they are funded by the government and they should reengineer their quality management systems to align with that of external agencies.

The government's policies are to enhance social and economic development of the country. The government believes that universities are the key players in improving the economic performance of the country. To put this into effect, higher education providers need to align themselves with business and industry through professional bodies and associations. These bodies and associations are involved in giving advice on curriculum and/or program development, ensuring relevancy to, and coherence with, the needs of the job market.

As mentioned earlier, there are multiple stakeholders involved in discussions about who should take responsibility for quality assurance issues in higher education in the UK. The debate regarding these issues still remains unresolved, but for the sake of simplification, the power of control is categorised into three levels: system; professional; and institutional. Each level of control will be explored in detail as set out below.

3.1.2 System level

Higher education institutions in the UK have enjoyed academic freedom and professional autonomy, in other words, self-regulation has been a feature of the higher education sector. However, higher education systems in the UK have shifted rapidly from a self-governing towards a more mixed system with the introduction of greater external controls from mid 1980 and in 1991 compulsory quality assurance was introduced in England (Brown 2004; Lim 2001; Harvey 200; Peter 2006). Activities of the HEQC were treated as self-regulation, but those of the QAA should be considered external regulation (Peter 2006). "The UK has one of the longest track records in explicit and externally-influenced quality assurance." (West 2008, p.7).

The process of external quality assurance in the UK consists of multiple layers, including subject-based teaching quality assessment, institutional audit, research assessment exercise, professional, statutory or regulatory bodies, external examiners and government. This has led to criticisms that there is a lack of trust in, and an increasing burden of paperwork for, higher education institutions (Geall, Harvey & Moon 1997; Harvey 2005; Harvey & Williams 2010). The government's focus is on accountability to, and compliance with, the threshold standards set by the central quality assurance agencies, rather than on learning and value-

adding of the students as well as continuous improvement (Geall, Harvey & Moon 1997; Harvey 2005).

Table 3.2 Summary of external audit and review, teaching and research, 1986 - 2008.

Time period	Method of quality audit/review	Major coordinating bodies
1986, 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008	Research Assessment Exercise	Higher Education Funding councils
1991-1997	Academic Quality Audit	UK Academic Audit Unit Higher Education Quality Council
1998-2002	Continuation audit	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
1993-1995	Teaching quality assessment and subject review	UK higher education funding councils
1995-2001	Universal subject review	Higher Education Funding Council for England (until 1997) Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (1998-2001)
2002-2008	Institutional Audit (revised method from 2006)	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

(Bellingham 2008)

At the outset it should be emphasised that the arrangements for assessing the quality of research is quite separate from the arrangements for assessing the quality of education. The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was established as early as 1986, and has been used to gauge the quality of research activity in each institution for the purpose of allocating research funding. It has now been replaced by the Research Excellence Framework, which, in addition to making use of the well established performance indicators for research, will include the assessment of impact. Having said this, the focus of this section is on the quality of education.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was established in 1997, comprising representation from the top leaders of UK universities and colleges. Since its inception, the QAA has worked with the university sector to develop a set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. This was designed to provide reference points and guidance for formulating policies for maintaining academic standards and quality within higher education

institutions. The Academic Infrastructure was a set of nationally agreed reference points which gave all institutions a shared starting point for establishing, describing and assuring the quality and standards of their courses or programs (QAA 2010).

The Academic Infrastructure encompasses four inter-related components. The first component was the Code of Practice concerned with the management of quality and standards, comprising 10 areas. The second component was the framework for higher education qualifications indicating requirements for degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic awards granted by a higher education provider. Due in part to historic differences, and the different education systems two separate frameworks were established – one for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and one for Scotland. The third component was the subject benchmark statements which set out expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe and define what was expected of a graduate in terms of abilities and skills gained from a subject. The fourth component was the program specifications describing the expected learning outcomes and how these outcomes could be achieved and demonstrated (QAA 2008).

The purpose of the establishment of the Academic Infrastructure was to ensure comparability and consistency between a student's ability and skills obtained from a course at the same level across the higher education sector. In addition, the government was attempting to provide objectivity in the expected outcomes and achievements to higher education providers (QAA 2010).

In response to the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure, many universities have been compelled to reengineer their quality assurance processes, and establish educational development units to align with a nationally agreed framework. Taking these into account there was an increasing interest by the government in seeking to strive for a continuous improvement of quality education (Harvey & Newton 2007; Harvey & Williams 2010).

A criticism of the subject benchmark statements is that they have been used as a 'tick the box' exercise in regulatory compliance rather than as a developmental system. Also, the use of the subject benchmark statements was difficult for an institution in developing multi or interdisciplinary programs since it was hard to know which part of the statements should be drawn upon in quality assuring programs. Institutions had to refer to many different subject benchmark statements, especially in joint or combined degree programs (Bellingham 2008; Harvey & Williams 2010; Jackson 2002; QAA 2010).

It was reported that it was difficult for an institution to develop a program which needed to cover both a subject benchmark statement and the requirement of a professional body, or external quality assurance agency. Serious doubts have been posed about the extent to which the external examiners are able to judge some multi-disciplinary programs appropriately because they might not have an insight into the program of study as a whole (Harvey & Williams 2010; QAA 2010).

Although many institutions found program specifications useful in developing a new program and within quality assurance processes and procedures, difficulties emerged when a higher education provider designed its program in collaboration with other providers because they tended to be in a disagreement with one another in relation to the use of a different approach to the production of program specifications (QAA 2010).

Similarly, the Code of Practice indicated an array of requirements, leading to an increase in accountability rather than quality improvement (Hodson & Thomas 2003). There was some overlap and duplication between sections of the Code of Practice and with legislation and other processes such as those of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (QAA 2010).

Most institutions found it difficult to integrate the qualifications frameworks into their internal quality management frameworks and standards in such a way as to respond to the needs of employers and work-based learning, due in part to a lack of clarity and involvement of academic community and students in terms of the development of the Academic Infrastructure (QAA 2010).

In response to the above difficulties the approach adopted by the QAA was to shift from a **'fitness for purpose'** quality approach to a **'standards-based'** approach, the standards set by each institution being judged by whether they were appropriate for the awards being granted, or relevant to national subject benchmarks, the National Qualifications Framework, and Institutional Program Specifications (Brown 2004).

Apart from the above change the new quality framework was not much different from the previous one; however, there was some modification of the subject-level assessment, which is now called 'disciplinary audit trails' (Brown 2004, p. 134). Subject specialists would not be involved in the process of audit; the audit teams made overall judgements based on an audit of a sample array of discipline areas or themes in relation to quality and standards. The audit teams would look at the effectiveness of an institution's quality structures and mechanisms, and ways that the quality of programs was reviewed and recommendations implemented. The

teams would also assess the accuracy and reliability of information about quality and standards published by the institution. Based on the collected information, the teams would make key judgements on the level of confidence in the institution's quality management of its programs, and the level of reliance on information about the quality of its programs published by the institution (Brown 2004).

Despite there being no requirements for comprehensiveness of scrutiny at subject level or graded judgement on subject level provision within the new quality arrangements, there was a much stronger requirement for information in relation to quality and standards than the previous arrangements, as it required institutions to provide information beyond evidence necessarily needed to inform students and the public (Brown 2004).

A number of aspects were reviewed for institutional audits, namely the institutional context; institutional systems and arrangements for quality assurance; the institutional design, approval, and review of programs of study; teaching and learning, and the student experience; student assessment and the classification of awards; student feedback and quality enhancement; faculty appointment, development, promotion, and award; promotional materials for academic programs; validation and franchising; and other forms of collaborative program provision (Brown 2004; Gosling 2001; Gosling & D'Andrea 2001; QAA 2009). Study programs were required to provide a statement of the expected learning outcomes for the students adhering to a national qualifications framework and the Academic Infrastructure to standardise qualifications and degree awards across the higher education sector (Brown 2004; Gosling & D'Andrea 2001).

The audit process was conducted by examining materials such as a description of quality assurance arrangements at all levels of the institution, a critical self-study report, and other selected materials (Brown 2004). In the first instance, self-study reports were used to make the judgement as to the level of confidence in an institution's quality arrangements and academic standards. The institutions were expected to present not only their strengths, but also their areas of weaknesses and appropriate actions taken to improve them (QAA 2009).

These quality assurance arrangements have been subjected to ongoing criticism, mainly focusing on the tension between 'accountability' and 'quality improvement'. Some argued that external evaluations did not provide an opportunity for constructive dialogue between academics and professionals, and external quality agencies in such a way as to focus on continuous improvement. They deprived educational experts and academics of a sense of

ownership of the quality agenda at a grassroots level, and responsibility from universities and colleges due to a lack of trust and confidence from the government (Harvey & Williams 2010; Hodson & Thomas 2003). The external examiners generally were able to get superficial information about self-evaluations because they just came to check the reports, found some concerns raised by institutions and then validated the reports whether they were reliable or not. The outcomes of the validation seemed to have little or almost no impact on quality improvement of learning and teaching (Harvey 2005).

In general, improvement of the students' learning and experience was a task of internal review and a monitoring process, which was based on student feedback, internal improvement audits, 'periodic reviews' of programs, and self-reflection of academic and support staff on their everyday practice. These activities had more significant impact on the continuous improvement of the institution and student experience of learning rather than periodic assessment and audits by external agencies (Harvey 2005).

However, the key question is whether a single agency is able to ensure both accountability and quality enhancement at the same time, as both accountability and improvement need to have a balance of power and trust between various stakeholders. There must be open communication and discussion among stakeholders to settle various purposes and interests. Serious distrust among various stakeholders and imbalances of power might lead to failure of the system (Brown 2004; Harvey 2005).

Mindful of the distinction between accountability and continuous quality improvement of the government established the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILT), which is now known as the Higher Education Academy. This Academy's role is to raise the status of teaching and promote 'teaching excellence', and to manage the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (Gosling 2001; Greenbank 2006; Warren & Plumb 1999).

The Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) has been allocated to provide recognition, and reward to individuals who achieve a high score in their teaching, and to provide an opportunity for them to share the good practice with other staff. The FDTL consists of three levels: the individual, the subject, and the institutional (Gosling 2001). At the individual level, a National Teaching Fellowship Scheme is introduced to reward individuals who have had excellent performance in their teaching and learning support.

The 2003 White Paper on The Future of Higher Education created an agency, which is now called the higher education academy, to support learning and teaching in higher education.

This agency was a merger of three existing bodies, including the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT), The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN), and the Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA). The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) has been established across higher education in the UK under the auspices of the ILT. Its aim is to specifically focus on the subjects that are considered distinctive. At the institutional level, higher education institutions have been required to establish a Learning and Teaching Strategy, and have been funded to conduct the activities to achieve the objectives of the strategy (Gosling 2001; Harvey 2005).

3.1.3 Professional level

The role of professional bodies in quality assurance in higher education is threefold: to provide advice, guidance and/or accreditation of programs and the curriculum; to ensure students have relevant practical experience; and to accredit CPE programs. In the UK, for example, the professional body normally requires the novice or prospective practitioner to demonstrate an understanding of a knowledge base of his/her field through written examinations, and followed by a requirement for practical experience. Although most professions put more emphasis on the knowledge base, full accreditation generally requires a period of practice in addition (Lester 2000).

According to an historical perspective, there were three main concepts of 'profession':

> A learned and moral one based on a broad classical education (the pattern for ancient professions such as medicine, law, the priesthood and university teaching), a practical one based on apprenticeship and typified by the mediaeval craft guilds, and the predominant knowledge-based technical or administrative profession of the industrial era (Lesser, p. 408).

Nowadays it is the technical-rational or competence-based model which has become the key approach to most professions (Lester 2000). Moreover, the government established the competency-based system of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) with a view to preparing students for employment with knowledge and skills, which contributed to improving economic performance. To achieve this aim, closer links between higher education providers and industries were introduced in order that the academics and the practitioners could exchange their new knowledge and skills to keep each other informed in response to the endlessly changing needs of today's society (Watkins 1999a).

To meet these changing demands, trends of education and training of professionals have changed considerably over time. These changes are illustrated in the Table below:

Table 3.3 Changing education and training of professionals

From		**To**
Internal accreditation from the professional body	→	Closer links with HE and employers; accreditation of HE courses
Technical, knowledge-based syllabus	→	Syllabus changed to meet new demands for transferable/generic skills
Exclusivity of entrance system favouring university graduates, and education based on course and exams	→	Providing a ladder of opportunity and accreditation favouring prior learning to open up the profession

Source: Watkins 1999a, p.45

In the UK, various professional bodies or associations have different influences on the academic community (Watkins 1999b). For example, pharmacy is monitored by only one professional and registration body (The Pharmaceutical Society), which has a low level of control of the academic community, while Nursing is monitored by many professional bodies with greater control. The UK Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting is responsible for the registration as a nurse. The National Board is responsible for an examination of degree programs, and awards qualifications to a registered general nurse. The relevant tertiary institution monitors academic standards (Churchman & Woodhouse 1999).

There are three accreditation bodies for business programs operating in the UK, including the Association of MBAs, EQUIS, and AACSB. Some business schools receive accreditation from the Association of MBAs. This association accredits MBA programs. Some schools seek additional accreditation from EQUIS and AACSB (Watson 2006).

However, no professional body is responsible for teacher education; the teacher education programs are monitored by the bodies which include the Department of Education and

Science, Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (Churchman & Woodhouse 1999).

In addition, professional bodies employ different approaches to examining syllabus content. Some professional bodies give a model syllabus to higher education institutions. Other bodies do not have a specific syllabus but specify the type of content and requirements. Some bodies are involved in curriculum development or program reviews (Churchman & Woodhouse 1999; Enser 2002). Some strictly maintain control over the examinations procedures themselves; for example, accountancy examinations are designed and marked by the accountancy professional bodies. Others give authority to higher education providers to control their professional qualifications. For instance, the Law Society gives this responsibility to higher education providers. The Law Society is responsible for validation, accreditation and quality control (Watkins 1999a).

Each professional body uses a different approach to examinations, dependent upon the students' academic preparation. For example, a candidate for accounting qualifications who enters with a degree in Art might have to take three sets of examinations since he/she did not previously study accounting or business. However, those with an accounting degree might have to take only one set of examinations. If an institution wishes to maximise the proportion of exemptions, the institution can negotiate with a professional or regulatory body (Mathews 2004). It becomes apparent that the accreditation system in accounting in the UK is less intrusive than that in Australia (Mathews 2004). The requirement for the library and information profession is that practitioners possess a variety of skills and perspectives and engage in lifelong learning in order to refresh their knowledge and skills regularly (Enser 2002).

Occasionally professional associations are directly engaged in the quality audit process. For example, the audit of library and information science education are conducted under a joint accreditation between the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the professional and regulatory body (Enser 2002).

To sum up, one can argue that professional bodies lay greater stress on summative objectives with the focus on the quality of educational outcomes rather than the quality of educational processes (formative objectives), although some professional bodies were involved in curriculum development and instructional designs as well as syllabus content. Their involvement included various purposes relating to quality assurance arrangements, such as

the pursuit of standards, consistency and compliance. The government's interest in professional associations is to encourage higher education providers to set up closer links with industries and businesses so that the institutions could prepare their graduates for the job market that would, in turn, contribute to the improvement of economic performance of the country.

3.1.4 Institutional level

The internal approach to quality assurance in universities in the United Kingdom is based on a wide range of information collected from the following: surveys of student views; internal peer reviews of teaching; internal audits of quality procedures; external reviews of teaching and research; professional body scrutiny of programmes; surveys of recent graduates; and employer views of graduates. Every internal audit of an academic institution is expected to focus on three dimensions: the student experience; the quality assurance systems; and the mechanism for quality enhancement (Brown 2004; Geall, Harvey & Moon 1997).

The student experience survey cycle consists of six main stages, including student-determined questions, student satisfaction questionnaire, analysis, production of a report, consultation, and feedback to students. Giving feedback on actions to students is critical because they need to know that the action is taken and the data was collected for a purpose. However, the processes of giving feedback to students are not easy since the institution might find it difficult to contact students. In doing so, for example, the University of Central England in Birmingham provides reports to students through a number of sources such as the Students' Union, libraries and resource centres, student representatives on Senate, faculty boards and course boards, the University and Students' Union newsletters, or newspapers (Geall, Harvey & Moon 1997).

The UK higher education institutions regard students as their customers so student views are important contributions to continuous quality improvement. If quality assurance is to be employed to enhance students' experience in higher education, universities need to be responsive to key stakeholders, such as students and staff. The institution needs to translate their feedback into action rather than just fact-finding, or accountability to the government (Geall, Harvey & Moon 1997).

In general, higher education institutions concentrate on the satisfaction of the client; therefore, various tools for gathering student feedback have been introduced, together with performance indicators, league tables and benchmarking to ascertain whether the needs of

customers were being met (Lomas 2007). Higher education institutions focus on the quality of educational processes rather than content. They have put a concerted effort into collecting statistical data to justify that students were receiving good quality of education, leading to too much emphasis on paperwork and managing quality processes rather than quality improvement. To show high satisfaction levels, universities inevitably manipulate the data in order to attract students (Lomas 2007).

In many countries, including Australia, UK, and the United States, standards for staff tenure and promotion are explicitly or implicitly based on Boyer's framework focusing on four forms of scholarships: namely the scholarship of discovery (research); the scholarship of integration, including the writing of textbooks; the scholarship of service, including the application of practical knowledge which contributes to the benefits of society and the community at large; and the scholarship of teaching. It is argued that improving the quality of learning and teaching emerges from activities associated with all four forms of scholarship (Healey 2000). According to Boyer, the nature of good teaching needs to be well understood, more open to scrutiny, and better communicated (Boyer 1990). In response to this, teachers need to know how to assume a scholarly approach to teaching and how to gather and demonstrate precise information about their effectiveness as lecturers, including reflection, inquiry, evaluating, documenting and communicating associated with didactic activities (Healey 2000).

There has been a long history in the UK higher education sector of the observation of teaching, as it was connected with management processes to determine promotion and performance-related pay. Observation of teaching has been embedded in the Quality Assurance Agency's Subject Review procedures (QAA 2004).

According to the University of Oxford, selection of new staff is effected through direct evidence of teaching skills by requiring some form of presentation at interview. All new staff are required to undergo a five-year period of probation. During the probationary period the new member of staff has a departmental mentor. The mentor will give advice on matters in relation to teaching and research. Performance is reviewed after two years and for a second time after four years during the probationary period. The reviews include specific checks on teaching competence, drawing evidence from the direct observation of teaching and from student feedback. An appraisal scheme for permanent staff was also introduced and is conducted only once every five years. The scheme provides the mechanism for individuals to

explore the scope for better infrastructural support and to raise general concerns about staff workload (QAA 2004).

Once a member of staff's appointment has been confirmed, the responsibility for further professional development lies with the individual member of staff and his or her faculty/department. The University offers a wide range of programs for staff, ranging from seminars, colloquia and conferences, to courses for heads of departments and first-line managers. It also involved in research and development projects to support staff in terms of administrative skills. All members of staff are required to participate in staff development training activities to improve and enhance their teaching (QAA 2004).

Although research plays a dominant role in recognition and promotion in higher education in the UK, teaching still remains important for promotion. Some argue that heavy pressures on research might have a negative impact on the quality of teaching because there might be a lack of balance between teaching and research. Therefore, the government has shifted its attention to provide a large amount of funding to only a small number of leading research universities so as to they can compete internationally. Other universities should focus more on knowledge transfer, and small-scale research concerning teaching and learning (Greenbank 2006).

The assessment for teaching and learning is based on four classes of criteria: excellence in delivery, scholarship in teaching and learning, communication with students and staff, and student support. Applicants are required to submit a full portfolio of evidence along with recommendations from the Head of Department and/or Dean. The composition of the assessment panels includes the Vice-Chancellor or Principal of the institution, as well as other senior members of staff. Sometimes there is also an involvement from student associations and alumni (Brown 2004).

Even though there are some criticisms that higher education institutions in the UK are more regulated by the government, leading to an erosion of institutional autonomy compared to universities and colleges in the US, universities in the UK have autonomy and authority to recruit their own teaching and support staff, and provide their staff with the opportunity for personal and professional development, whereas universities in Cambodia, in particular, public universities have no autonomy or ability to recruit their academic staff and seriously face a scarcity of resources.

However, the key question is how universities with limited resources are able to give feedback from surveys to their students. Giving feedback on actions to students would be even more difficult for universities in developing countries; it is especially true for Cambodia due to the fact that universities lack a means of communication such as information technology, and financial constraints. Moreover, universities are reluctant to be open to students about sensitive issues, and they consider it as confidential information for use within their own universities.

Whereas, Universities in the UK conduct both formative and summative evaluations. For formative evaluation, student feedback on departmental and faculty teaching is gathered though teaching-evaluation questionnaires. Students can choose between an 'open' or 'confidential' mode, depending on whether they wish to remain anonymous. Questionnaires are available in hard copy or electronically (QAA 2004).

In addition to the teaching evaluation form, students are invited to complete a self-assessment form. Students are allowed to participate in discussions of general issues and the results of the questionnaires and discussions are recorded and notified to senior and junior academic staff. The responsibility for monitoring undergraduate student satisfaction during a student's period of study depends on the departments. In addition to the formative evaluation, in the final year of their studies, students have the opportunity to complete the Student Course Experience Questionnaire (QAA 2004).

Based on the above discussions, it is clear that quality in UK universities is measured using a mixture of methods. The quality of higher education institutions is measured against a number of predetermined criteria and standards set by the central government agency, and the data are available at the national level. However, higher education providers are self-regulated with respect to using the data, conditioned by their own views, especially about formative assessment.

The results of quality assessment provides prospective students with vital information for making decisions about selecting which university they will attend, and they also provide universities with a useful source of information for identifying their areas of strengths and weaknesses (QAA 2009).

Universities use these results for marketing their courses or programs where they have achieved success. The results can be found on a website (Unistats), which is published by the

Higher Education Academy (HEA), which is newly established. Most successful universities use these results for commercialisation of their programs (Brown 2004).

3.1.5 Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

Many studies of quality assessment in UK higher education show that quality audit has an enormous impact on a higher education institution, as it has helped to lift up an institution's profile of quality assurance, to disseminate good practices, and to provide quality-related information to audiences wider than higher education institutions. It has encouraged institutions to produce documentation, reports and quality arrangements for a follow-up after one year (Brown 2004).

Institutions have paid greater attention to professional development for their academic staff, and other teaching and learning support. They have put into place internal quality assessment systems for scrutinising teaching and learning performance in response to the needs of students (Brown 2004).

The scholarship of teaching and learning has been promoted by many universities, and more funding has been allocated more specifically to learning and teaching than ever before (Gosling 2001; Greenbank 2006).

Quality-related information has been made available to all educational stakeholders, allowing students to make an informed judgement on which universities they should choose to enrol. In addition, this information is useful for employers in terms of graduate employment (Brown 2004).

Some higher education providers performed poorly in the quality assessments, as they were unfamiliar with the process and many of them were small institutions. Nevertheless, their performances have been on the rise over time 'as they have learnt to play the game' (Brown 2004, p. 97).

Similarly, the study by Hoecht on academics' perception of the impact of quality assurance in UK higher education indicates that:

> most of the interviewees felt that quality assurance had brought some benefits to students and accepted the need for some degree of formalization and standardization that they saw as an inevitable consequence of quality assurance
> (Hoecht 2006, p. 555).

Weaknesses

Despite many advantages, there are endless debates over quality audit; on the one hand, it is viewed that external assessment is a threat to the autonomy and academic freedom of higher education institutions; one the other hand, it is viewed as a marketing opportunity for higher education institutions. It is, of course, a marketing opportunity for those who succeed, while those who fail face numerous problems such as pressure on management and academic staff, and a bad image in society at large (Hodson & Thomas 2003).

Criticisms emerge from academics and staff that the assessment process is bureaucratic because it is time and effort consuming to prepare many documents to satisfy the assessment process. In addition, it costs more money for paperwork preparation than the money received from the funding councils, as institutions have to expend a lot of resources on quality activity, but they in return receive little money from the government (Brown 2004; Warren & Plumb 1999).

The study by Hoecht (2006) on academics' perception of the impact of quality assurance in UK higher education shows that the quality operation at universities is perceived as very bureaucratic, has high opportunity costs, and addresses quality issues superficially. Academics perceived it as an intrusion into their professional autonomy. They sometimes exaggerated information in order to get high scores in the audit and perceived it as 'playing a game' or 'intellectual sport' rather than something that would force them to betray themselves and sell out their personality' (Hoecht 2006, p. 556).

There is an increasing burden on institutions both in terms of paperwork and financial costs. The cost of the whole exercise to the quality assurance system, both to the Funding Councils and to the universities, exceeds the funds affected by the outcome. It was estimated that an average combined audit and assessment each year for each university cost about £150,000, compared with an average annual teaching block grant of £16 million. The costs for the sector were estimated to be at least £30 million per annum (Alderman 2005; Blackmore 2004; Brown 2004).

Similarly, Harvey and Newton question:

> Why should institutions take the not-inconsiderable step of adopting a research-based approach to improvement? At the moment they are investing considerable resources to comply with external requirements but with minimal and poorly targeted or documented pay-offs. Indeed, the UK Cabinet Office's Better Regulation Task Force,

> in its report …. indicated that "PA Consulting put the annual cost of what it referred to as 'accountability burden' on HEIs at £250 m". (Harvey & Newton 2007, p. 241)

One can argue that intrusion from external quality assessment agencies by central government leads to undermining the traditional peer-review-based quality assurance system, as there is a gradual increase in the market-oriented culture of higher education.

The government's preference for economic relevance contrasts with old universities' perspectives focusing on the quality of 'internal dialogue' between teacher and student, and between student and student. Assessors used their own criteria, which required 'relevance' as the main criteria for judgement, together with depth of knowledge, breadth of subject coverage, learner autonomy, learner progression and curriculum cohesion (de Vries 1996, cited in Brown 2004).

According to Trow, this concept reflects that government has lost trust in the academic community and in the ability of an institution to thoroughly evaluate its own activities and enhance them. Quality assurance agencies of central government try to put a concerted effort and energy into compelling universities to compile bureaucratic reports, while universities are able to adapt themselves to a complex and challenging environment that external evaluation of 'outputs' can only capture superficially (Trow 1994, cited in Brown 2004). Staff view the quality system as more 'accountability-led' than 'improvement-led', as many argue that improvement comes from a changed culture and local ownership, which compliance processes do not encourage (Harvey & Newton 2007).

The Vice-Chancellor of Oxford Brooks University argued that the introduction of a grading system under which only a small proportion of programs were found 'Excellent' would ruin Britain's capacity to lure international students. Many argued that assessment suffered from two major conflicting perspectives: the first one is a contradiction between its diverse purposes in terms of accountability (to the funding councils and other external stakeholders) and improvement (a conflict which contributed to the 'ownership' issue); and the second contradiction is within the accountability purpose, between a fitness-for-purpose and a standards-based approach (Brown 2004).

There have been concerns about the degree of consistency between judgements of different academic programs, and about institutional bias that old universities outscored the new universities and new universities outscored colleges, making it difficult for new universities and colleges to compete for research funding (Brown 2004).

An early report from the HEFCE (1992-95), indicated a quality ranking of 'excellent' correlated with three other characteristics: high quality research (as measured by the RAE), the size of provision and institutional prosperity (as measured by total income per student). A department rated highly for research was more likely to have a good chance of receiving an excellent grade for its teaching. Also, there was a tendency for excellence to correlate with size, as based on the 2000-2 assessment, one could see that very small departments (less than 50 students) appeared to be weakest (Brown 2004).

Excellent quality was correlated with institutional prosperity. According to the first two assessment rounds, of 45% of the assessments, 20% of institutions with the richest resource capacities tended to attain a grading of Excellent. Only 2% of assessments in the 20% of institutions with lowest resource levels received a grading of Excellent (Brown 2004; Harvey 2005).

HEQC, HEFCE and QAA all made concerted efforts in this area; however, so far this effort has provided relatively few outcomes, and there are strong criticisms that external quality assurance has created stronger centralisation of power within higher education institutions. Many argue, 'there is less consensus on whether it is a good thing, as the quality agency itself is not entirely consistent' (Brown 2004, p. 100).

It is hard to identify strengths and weaknesses of the process of quality assurance in Cambodia, as there is no research or review on quality assurance systems. However, one can argue that after the evaluation of the Foundation Program of all higher education providers, HEIs have become familiar with the process of quality assessment, and they have learnt at least some of the processes of quality assurance.

An involvement in external quality assurance agencies by the central government was seen as an intrusion into the academic freedom and professional autonomy of institutions in England, leading they believed to the undermining of the traditional peer-review and internal dialogue between teacher and student and between student and student. On the contrary, most HEIs in Cambodia would view quality assessment from external quality assurance agencies as supportive because most of them are newly established, small and unfamiliar with the process of quality assurance so they need guidance from the central quality assurance agencies.

3.1.6 Tabular summary of the UK section

Based on the above discussions about quality assurance arrangements in the UK (mainly English) higher education sector, a summary appears in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4 Summary of key elements of quality assurance in the UK.

System, institutional, and professional level. (Perellon 2007; Premfors 1992)

Approaches	**Levels**	**Values**
• Standards; • Quality outcomes • Continuous improvement	**System level** **Objectives**: Summative **Areas**: • Quality management system and mechanisms for achieving quality, • Research, Subjects or disciplines; **Procedures**: • Outcome-oriented, • Quantitative and Qualitative, • Internal and external; **Uses**: • Ranking; • League tables; • Funding allocation; • Information for students and public; • Pass or fail	• Accountability; • Efficiency (value for money); and • Compliance;
• Standards-based	**Professional level** **Objectives**: Summative **Areas**: Subjects or courses **Procedures**: Outcome-oriented **Uses**: Accreditation	• Consistency; • Compliance; • Improved economic performance; • Responsiveness;
• Continuous improvement; • Fitness for purpose;	**Institutional level** **Objectives**: Formative **Areas**: • Teaching & learning, • Research; • Quality management system; **Procedures**: • Process-oriented; • Quantitative vs. qualitative; Performance indicators; **Uses**: • Quality improvement; • Information for students & employers; • Benchmarking;	• Autonomy; • Accountability;

3.2 Quality Assurance in Australian Higher Education

3.2.1 Introduction

The objective of this section is to explore quality assurance arrangements in Australian higher education. As in Section 3.1, the review is based on the conceptual framework presented in Diagram 1 (Chapter 1).

As with the section on quality assurance in higher education in the UK, past and present quality aspects and practices in higher education in Australia are investigated because in order to shape a model of the future arrangement, there is a need to fully understand the past and present experience. Past experience and practices in quality assurance in Australia may be useful for developing a suitable quality management system for a Cambodian university.

In this respect, under each dimension of the fundamental policy choices, there are a number of aspects of quality assurance arrangements used in higher education in Australia. There are many actors involved in quality assurance such as governments, funding agencies, and the Australian Universities Quality Assurance Agency (AUQA). Recently, a new body of national accreditation has been proposed: the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

Instruments and concepts used to measure the quality performance of higher education institutions, or to guide them in developing new programs and curricula, are the Australian Qualifications Framework, graduate attributes, quality tracking system, performance indicators, and benchmarking.

Tools used for promoting the quality of research and teaching are research funding, promotion systems, a support system for teaching and learning, and a teaching and learning performance fund.

3.2.2 Argument of this section

Like the UK, Australian higher education used to enjoy a greater degree of self-regulation, allowing institutions to manage their programs in a collegial manner. For example, until recently universities did not have to abide by the national qualifications framework because they were self-accrediting. However now universities, while they are still self-accrediting, must abide by the National Qualifications Framework and fit in with other national Protocols.

In recent years, there has been a shift from a whole-institution approach to quality assurance to a standard-based approach and subject or discipline-level assessment. This has led to

tensions between the values of collegialism or self-government, and managerialism and external regulation. Some people argue that higher education providers should be allowed to run their programs in a way that is free from political control or external interference. The argument is that quality does not come from the power of coercion and imposition from the outside, as it is derived from commitment and involvement from the grassroots levels of staff as well as from the interface between individual teachers and students. But some believe that universities and colleges should be closely monitored and scrutinised by the central government agency, as governments are the key players in ensuring that higher education providers deliver their study programs and courses with acceptable and credible quality. In return, there should be a link between the results of quality assessment and funding allocations.

The latter argument is consistent with the Cambodian higher education context, as the higher education system is centrally controlled by the government and most providers tend to leave quality vulnerable when tensions between quality and profits emerge. Without close scrutiny and supervision from the government, many institutions would neglect quality. Therefore, the government's intervention in quality matters is important in Cambodia. In theory 'one could argue a situation where either the political authorities or the higher education institutions are solely responsible for the development and implementation of the policy' (Perellon 2007, p. 163).

Tensions over the ownership of quality assurance in higher education still remains in Australia, similar to other countries across the world, as there are many actors involved in quality assurance in higher education; to name a few - government, professional bodies and associations, academics and HE institutions. They tend to view quality differently, but they perform overlapping and duplicate tasks as to quality assurance in order to achieve different purposes and objectives. This control may be classified into three levels – system professional and institutional.

3.2.3 System level

Currently, there are four agencies involved in quality assurance in Australian higher education, including the Commonwealth Government, State and Territory Governments, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), and a newly proposed National Accreditation Body called Tertiary Education Quality and Standard Agency (TESQA) (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales 2008).

The State and Territory governments have many responsibilities in relation to quality assurance in higher education. In order to ensure a standardised quality across Australia, the State and Territory Governments developed the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes in March 2000. The Protocols were developed to serve many purposes, among them the recognition of new universities and the accreditation of courses or programs offered by both Australian and overseas higher education institutions (DETYA 2000).

In the Australian higher education sector, there are two different regulatory bodies. The Department for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (MIISR) takes charge of research, while the Department for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) takes charge of teaching and learning.

The establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) was aimed at ensuring trustworthiness from the international academic community and accountability of the higher education system (Bradley et al. 2008). AUQA is currently responsible for conducting quality audits of self-accrediting universities and State and Territory Government higher education accreditation authorities on a five year cycle; providing public reports on outcomes of these audits; commenting on the criteria for the recognition of new universities, the accreditation of non-university higher education awards, and reporting on the relative standards and international standing of the Australian higher education system and its quality assurance processes (AUQA 2007; Woodhouse 2004). AUQA also ensures that other agencies engaged in the quality assessment of non-accrediting universities are employing the Protocols in a proper manner (McInnis 2005). AUQA has also recently begun the process of auditing non-self-accrediting institutions.

AUQA is not involved in accrediting or reviewing subjects or programs within higher education institutions (AUQA 2007; Woodhouse 2004). Academic audits of self-accrediting higher education institutions are based on a whole institution approach. The results of the academic audits are heavily reliant on a report of a self-assessment conducted by an institution and a site visit by an external quality assurance agency. An institution is required to submit its performance portfolio reflecting the institution's own self-assessment (AUQA 2007; Woodhouse 2004).

AUQA evaluates the extent to which the institution is achieving its mission and objectives (fitness for purpose) by examining the key areas of teaching and learning; research and management; and an institution's overseas activities. AUQA has used the Approach-

Deployments-Results-Improvements (ADRI) approach as its quality audit framework (AUQA 2007; Woodhouse 2004). In the first cycle, three areas – teaching, research and community service – were reviewed. In the second cycle, AUQA focused on specific areas such as teaching quality or research as determined through negotiation with each university (Tennant 1996).

With reference to the assessment of quality of teaching and learning, institutions are assessed on the following aspects: overall planning and management; curriculum design; delivery and assessment; evaluation, monitoring and review; learning outcomes; use of effective innovation methods; student support services; staff recruitment, promotion and development; and postgraduate supervision (Lim 2001, p. 74).

For the assessment of research, universities are judged on their research management process, research outcomes, and improvement in research output. It is worth mentioning here that AUQA generally follows well established research performance indicators that are used in the allocation of block research grants to universities (indicators such as research income, publications and research student completions). A separate process is currently being established to bring together these measures under a new framework – the Excellence in Research Australia scheme. For the community service aspect, universities are judged on the basis of the effectiveness of management processes and outcomes (Lim 2001).

This quality assurance process has forced higher education institutions to integrate the above quality aspects in their quality management systems, and collect information in relation to the internal and external evaluations of these aspects. Based on this information, the institutions can make an informed judgement about improved quality performance (Lim 2001).

While the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) was established to promote consistency of standards, efficiency and effectiveness of the accreditation procedures; ironically there have been criticisms of a lack of the efficiency, consistency, and effectiveness of AUQA's procedures (Bradley et al. 2008). 'The current AUQA process is not sufficiently rigorous and AUQA has no power to act if it finds that a university does not meet the criteria' (Bradley et al. 2008, p. 121).

A newly proposed national accreditation body called TESQA will be responsible for accrediting and re-accrediting all higher education providers; conducting quality audits of academic standards and processes for setting, monitoring and maintaining them; and registering and auditing providers for the purposes of the Education Services for Overseas

Students (ESOS) Act 2000 (Bradley et al. 2008). With the arrival of the new national accreditation body, there will be a shift from a whole-institution approach to quality assurance to a standard-based and subject-level assessment to ensure that Australia remains at the top among OECD countries on the subject of quality education (Bradley et al. 2008).

The governments have used many quality instruments to ensure consistency of standards, efficiency and effectiveness of quality assurance, in higher education institutions across the nation. These include the Australian Qualifications Framework, graduate attributes, quality tracking system, performance indicators and benchmarking.

The Australian Qualifications Framework

The Australian Qualifications Framework was established in 1995, with a view to developing a set of uniform qualifications recognised across the whole higher education sector in the country, and maintaining international competitiveness, as Australian universities partly depend on their ability to attract international fee-paying students. The framework is used as a guideline for formulating policy for curriculum development and gives other quality bodies reference points for the accreditation of programs or courses and for assessing the performance of universities (Anderson, Johnson & Milligan 2000; McInnis 2005).

One can argue that the Qualifications Framework can provide transparency and consistency of qualifications by higher education providers and institutions across the country. However, McInnis (2005) argues that it is relatively weak because 'it serves the purpose of informing students as to what different qualifications mean relative to others and provide something of a gatekeeper role for institutions introducing new courses' (p.10). The diversification of providers and flexible modes of course delivery is still an ongoing debate, as recently there has been increasing discussion within higher education world-wide, and particularly in Australia, of the need for diversity within the higher education system. The Federal government was intended to promote the value of diversity, flexibility in the attempt to establish some world class universities (Guthrie, Johnston & King 2004; Lim 2001).

The Australian Qualifications Framework only outlines 'characteristics of learning outcomes at each of the qualifications levels, but not a minimum level for each qualification' (DEST 2002a, p. 20). This has led to criticism about the lack of a minimum level or standard across institutions or between different courses within institutions (DEST 2002a).

Similarly, the need for consistency across educational sectors and the clarity of expected learning outcomes is important as discrepancies in some qualifications in relation to the

duration and level of study are identified. Thus reviewing the structure of the AQF should occur sooner rather than later (Bradley et al. 2008).

Graduate attributes

Graduate attributes are sets of generic abilities that all graduates should have upon completion of their study programs, regardless of what degree they have been granted. In Australia, the concept of 'student attributes' is complex because 'the development of them has shadowed the development and adoption of the key competencies within the vocational education sector' (DEST 2002c, p. 12). Generally, a graduate from higher education should possess a combined knowledge of generic (oral and written communication, leadership, self-organisation, analytical skills, critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving skills and so on), general knowledge (an understanding of the social, economic and cultural context) and specialised or professional skills (including disciplinary knowledge) because he or she needs to be able to work in a complex and challenging society (DEST 2002c; Tennant 1996). Academic staff are expected to integrate 'graduate attributes' in their course syllabi, teaching and learning activities. The attributes may be varied from one university to another across Australia.

The Australian Council for Educational Research was engaged to establish a test tool and to produce a report on generic skills in higher education (Anderson, Johnson & Milligan 2000). The Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA) was designed to test cognitive skills of graduates in four aspects, including critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal understandings and written communication (Coates 2005; DEST 2002a). However, the key question is the extent to which the generic skills can be measured because they are 'diffuse, localised, uncertain, transient or slowly evolving nature' (Coates 2005, p. 31). As yet there are no system wide measures of graduate attributes but many universities are developing measures to suit their mission and goals.

Quality tracking system

The Australian quality assurance approach places emphasis on not only processes, and inputs, but also on outcomes. In the area of teaching and learning there are some well established sources of data such as the Graduate Skills Assessment, and student surveys – the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ), the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), and the current Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) (Bradley et al. 2008).

The GDS is designed to find out the employment success of students after graduation. Students are asked to fill in this survey within four months of completing their courses. The aim of the survey is to provide the public with comparative information, and higher education institutions with benchmarking data that helps them measure the success of their students in the job market. This survey is conducted by the Graduate Careers Council of Australia (DETYA 2000).

Apart from the GDS, some institutions use other surveys such as employer and graduate surveys. In addition, most institutions are encouraged to compare their own quality performances, nationally and internationally (Lim 2001). The government believes that these exercises have assisted the university sector in responding more effectively to the development of the country's economy and labour market as well as of the society and culture (DEST 2002a). However, it is difficult to determine whether programs match with the labour market because student employability is also influenced by a number of non-academic aspects, including institutional image, social networks and the economic situation (Coates 2005).

The Course Experience Questionnaire is designed to gather valuable information in relation to students' perceptions of their experience during the course. The CEQ covers teaching, goals and standards, workload, assessment, generic skills, student support, learning resources, learning community, graduate qualities, intellectual motivation and overall satisfaction (DETYA 2000). The CEQ is designed to generate 'deep learning' (Coates 2005).

However, Anderson, Johnson and Milligan (2000) argue that the CEQ is limited as:

> its focus is the course, not the subject; it deals in overall impression, not particulars; and it provides a delayed rather than a current perspective on the student's experience of teaching and learning (p. 23).

Coates (2005) argues that 'A major limitation of the CEQ in generating data for the purposes of determining the quality of university education is its exclusive focus on teaching' (p. 29). This contradicts contemporary constructivist theories of learning which emphasise that 'learning rather than teaching is what really matters in education' (Coates 2005, p. 29). This means that a measure that focuses on teaching alone is not enough (Coates 2005).

Another limitation of the CEQ is that it focuses on what teachers do in formal teaching. It fails to focus on the important information about beyond-class experiences that students do outside formal instructional contexts. Information in relation to how students spend their time

besides studying in class is becoming increasingly significant, as out-of-class experiences add value to formal in-class learning experience (Coates 2005).

The Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire is aimed at examining research students' satisfaction with supervision, skill development, intellectual climate, infrastructure, thesis examination and goals. The PREQ was developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (DETYA 2000).

The Bradley Review suggested that the Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) should be used to measure student experience, as it provides the institutions with better information about the broader student experience. This survey was piloted in 2007 and it is now available on the Going to Uni website (Bradley et al. 2008).

There is still an ongoing debate about the validity and reliability of the student surveys, as most academics argue that they are most helpful if they are used for formative purposes because they can provide lecturers with informative input for improvement over time. However, there is still scepticism about the summative approach in an attempt to compare the outcomes, as the judgements about quality may not be universal (Baldwin 1997; Johnson 2000). Similarly, student evaluations should be employed for diagnostic and formative purposes instead of being used for summative purposes (Marsh, cited in Johnson 2000). Bedggood and Pollard (1999) also point out the disadvantage of the use of a summative approach to student opinion surveys.

Despite considerable warnings in respect of a summative approach to student evaluation of teaching, student evaluation of teaching is the most common mechanism used to measure the quality of teaching in the Australian higher education system (Anderson 2006). The student evaluation is a convenient tool for staff performance appraisal with a view to making decisions on promotion and tenure (Bedggood & Pollard 1999). Student evaluation of teaching is likely to be even more critical in the future (Anderson 2006).
According to the survey by Anderson (2006), almost all academics support student evaluation of teaching, as they believed that it provided students with an opportunity to voice their opinions and responsiveness to their needs. However, some academics argued, 'the process is susceptible to manipulation by either students or staff' (p. 165). Others argued that 'the process of placing the student in the role of evaluator had the potential to encourage soft marking' (p. 166).

Performance indicators

Performance indicators have become a significant tool for measuring and assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the higher education system in many countries. The idea is mainly influenced by external agencies, especially by governments (Gaither, Nedwek & Neal 1994).

The Commonwealth Government in Australia introduced performance indicators as a tool to assess and measure performance of the higher education system in the late 1980s, with a view to allocating resources to higher education institutions. Performance indicators became a critical tool in the late 1990s when the government announced its research grants to higher education institutions for research activities, called the Research Quantum (Taylor 2001). As mentioned earlier, for many years there has existed national data on publications, research income, doctoral completions, and other outcomes such as patents.

Performance indicators used by Australian higher education institutions have typically focused on students, staff, finance, research and student outcomes. However from 2012 a new performance fund is being introduced. This replaces the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, which focused on excellence in teaching and learning. The new performance fund requires universities to meet a range of requirements that include:

- Participation rates of low socio-economic status, indigenous, regional and remote students;
- Completion rates for the institutions as a whole and for low socio-economic status, indigenous and regional and remote students;
- Progression rates for the institution and for low socio-economic status, indigenous and regional and remote students;
- Overall level of satisfaction on the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ);
- Level of satisfaction on the CEQ good teaching scale;
- Engagement score on the Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) scale of staff student interactions;
- Engagement score on the AUSSE scale of enriching education experiences;
- Improvement in the student-to-staff ratio for the institution; and
- Direct measures of learning outcomes to be developed (Bradley et al. 2008, p. 160)

However, the use of performance indicators has received a lot of criticism. It has been argued that performance indicators might not encourage diversity among institutions (Davis 1996,

cited in DEST 2002b). It has also been argued that institutions are different in terms of size, student population, resources, and context. In this respect, quantifiable performance indicators do not serve diverse purposes (Naidoo 2000, cited in DEST 2002b). In response to the required performance indicators, individuals or institutions might neglect activities that are not assessed by performance indicators (Robert 1990).

Taylor's study on the effectiveness of the application of research performance indicators in Australian universities shows that:

> When matched up with financial resources, performance indicators are an effective tool for raising the academics' pressure to increase the quantity of outputs measured by the indicators … The final outputs measured by the indicators – quantity of publications and external grant applications – had also increased. However, this study shows that although the application of research performance indicators has an impact on the research activities of academics, the consequences are not always positive (2001, p. 49).

The Department of Education, Science and Training is in agreement with the limitations of the performance indicators, and suggests that the performance data needs to be handled with care, otherwise it might lead to misleading interpretation of the data (DEST 2002b). Moreover, a lot of higher education institutions have expressed their concerns in relation to the use of performance indicators that it might lead to creating league tables or ranking tools for resource allocation to universities (DEST 2002c).

Benchmarking

Benchmarking was introduced in the Australian higher education sector in the late 1990s, but it was not widely used across the sector (Garlick & Pryor 2004). Two projects have had a significant impact on the Australian higher education sector; one was established by McKinnon, Walker and Davis in 2000 - Benchmarking: A Manual for Australian Universities and another was published by Garlick and Pryor in 2004 (Stella & Woodhouse 2007). The follow-up study by Garlick and Pryor (2004) on the effectiveness of the McKinnon, Walker and Davis benchmarks indicated that although it had some positive effects on universities in terms of management and preparation for assessment, there were some criticisms that it was not seen positively as a tool that provided universities with a continuous improvement plan. It was viewed that the benchmark was a 'one size fits all' approach, leading to a serious

impediment to diversity either between universities or within the one university, and that it provided superficial information, which was not beneficial to the institutions.

Based on these criticisms, AUQA advised universities to devise a systematic process for assessing their objectives in terms of relevance, desirability, feasibility, distinctiveness, and measurability. In order to evaluate its policies, procedures, and practices, and to examine whether its objectives are achieved or not, a university must have in place suitable quantitative and qualitative tools to measure them (Stella & Woodhouse 2007).

Besides the McKinnon et al. benchmarks, Australian universities have adopted a range of benchmarks, to name a few: Australian Business Excellence Framework and the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, the Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT), and so on. Through audit reports, Stella and Woodhouse (2007) observed that they do not seem to have an explicit answer to the question 'why benchmark?' (p. 20). The underlying assumption was that they seemed to put more emphasis on earning fame, prestige and bidding for resources than learning and improving from benchmarking processes (Stella & Woodhouse 2007)

Stella and Woodhouse argue (2007) argue that many universities have not fully integrated benchmark initiatives into their overall quality assurance framework, and the way in which universities adapt the benchmarking strategies to the institutional context and use them, still needs attention. However, after AUQA audits, it can be seen that attention to benchmarks, and external comparisons is being increased.

A newly proposed national accreditation body (TEQSA)

The Bradley review noted that 'the issue of a standards-based approach will continue to be a significant policy issue in the Australian higher education sector' (Bradley et al. 2008, p. 132). AUQA argues that there is a need for the establishment of a more systematic standards infrastructure and subject benchmark statements like the UK system (Bradley et al. 2008). The current system of quality assurance is criticised for being 'complex, and fragmented, and inefficient' (Bradley et al. 2008, p. 115). The system focuses too much on inputs and processes rather than on outcomes and standards.

In response to criticism, in 2007 the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) commissioned a study on the feasibility of the establishment of a new national higher education accreditation body, and new criteria for accrediting higher education institutions focusing heavily on outcomes and standards with a view to promoting

greater national consistency in recognition and accreditation as well as to maintaining quality education in an internationally competitive environment (Bradley et al. 2008).

After consultations with the state and territory higher education providers and other stakeholders, MCEETYA not only made recommendations, but also proposed 4 possible models for improving national consistency as well as creating a national accreditation body. This body will be involved in:

- Stronger cross-jurisdictional coordination (Models 1 and 2);
- The establishment of a national higher education accreditation body with limited responsibility for courses offered in more than one jurisdiction or offshore (Model 3); and
- The establishment of a national higher education accreditation body that would fully assume the roles and functions currently performed by the states and territories under the National Protocols (Model 4). The body would have decision-making powers in relation to:

  - Accrediting courses offered by institutions that do not have the authority to accredit their own courses;

  - Approval of self-accrediting higher education institutions;

  - The establishment of new universities;

  - Conducting quality audit (i.e. subsuming AUQA); and

  - Registering and auditing providers in relation to protection of overseas students (Bradley et al. 2008, p. 118).

In order to provide stronger assurance of learning outcomes in the future, two possibly workable approaches are proposed:

- Develop indicators and instruments to assess and compare learning outcomes directly; or
- Develop formal statements of academic standards by discipline for use in course design and approval processes as well as assessment and moderation processes across all institutions (Bradley et al. 2008, p. 134).

Discipline-level standards would be in line with the Australian Qualifications Framework and expected statements of learning outcomes would be explicit aligned with standards of professional bodies (Bradley et al. 2008).

Both institutions and peak bodies expressed their support for the establishment of the proposed approaches. Nevertheless, there are concerns about whether the first approach can measure the value added by institutions to student learning, or measure student performance at the end of course only. Concerns about the establishment of the second approach may require a lot of time and resources (Bradley et al. 2008).

Conversely, a strong disagreement with the establishment of a national accreditation body by state and territory quality assurance agencies emerges, as there is a concern that the creation of centralised systems will lead to a lack of relevance to local context and issues, as well as to increasing regulations and imposition (Bradley et al. 2008).

Compared with AUQA, TEQSA will have more power as it has jurisdiction to impose sanctions on higher education providers that cannot achieve the agreed set of performance measures. The establishment of TEQSA is intended to eradicate 'some of the regulatory complexity and red tape that currently exists' (Commonwealth of Australia 2009, p. 32). The key question is how TEQSA will be able to minimise the complex regulations and red tape processes, as it will play multiple roles as an accrediting and registering body.

Although the government is interested in accountability and in summative judgement of what universities are doing, they are also interested in providing support for learning and teaching in Australia with the establishment of the Australian Leaning and Teaching Council, with a view to promoting quality and excellence in teaching and learning in higher education institutions. This indicates that 'the government seems to shift its focus from control and surveillance to the development of negotiated mechanisms for enhancement' (Pawley & Mertova 2010, p. 179).

The Council administers a number of Granting Schemes, including a Grants Scheme, Teaching Awards, Fellowships and Discipline-Based Activities. A Grants Scheme is established to deal with benchmarking, assessment, standards and related aspects of good practice in learning and teaching, to support innovation in learning and teaching, and to support academic leadership in higher education. Discipline-Based Activities provide for discipline-specific development, dissemination and application of good practice (including workshops, conferences and seminars). The Fellowship Scheme deals with an international exchange and partnerships program (Bradley et al. 2008).

3.2.4 Professional level

Professions Australia (PA) is a national organisation and the peak body of professional associations in Australia. Currently, there are twenty-one member associations. Professions Australia is the name of the Australian Council of Professions Ltd. The main objective of Professions Australia is to enhance and promote professionalism for the public good and national interests (Clark 2004).

Professional programs of Australian universities are legislatively required to be reviewed by professional associations or bodies in the field such as accountancy, engineering, architecture, dentistry, business and pharmacy. The purpose of professional bodies is to help higher education institutions to maintain the relevance and coherence of their programs, as it is perceived that relationships between higher education institutions and industries are not as close as that between professional bodies and industries. Generally, professional bodies play a significant role in curriculum development in higher education institutions, accreditation of professional programs professional standards, promoting careers in the professions, teaching and training and research (Professional Australia 2008). They check entry level to programs, practical experience, contents of subjects, and mode of study (Churchman & Woodhouse 1999). They also aim at ensuring that graduates are eligible for their membership so that the institutions can operate as professionals in a particular field of study (Harding & Simpson 2006).

In Australia, the relationships between the higher education sector and the professional bodies are very complicated and the requirements of accreditation differ from one professional discipline to another. Accreditation and regulation of programs are influenced by industry requirements, student needs, government policy, and the environment and international tendencies of development. Professional bodies are strongly involved in course design, course approvals, reviews, teaching and assessment of a university (Churchman & Woodhouse 1999).

For example there are two professional bodies involved in accrediting accounting programs: CPA Australia (CPAA) (CPA stands for Certified Public Accountants), and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia (ICAA). They are involved in assessing the suitability of the initial academic preparation for entry into the accounting profession. They also assess the outcomes of the institutions based on the objectives of the institutions and their strategies for

achieving the stated objectives, but there is no uniformity in the requirement for accreditation (Mathews 2004).

Moreover, in order to maintain an international credibility, Australian business schools have increasingly sought international accreditation. Some business schools or programs have been accredited by the Association of MBAs (UK), EQUIS (EFMD) or AACSB International (US-based) (Harding & Simpson 2006).

Professional bodies' objectives are similar to that of government, as they are interested in summative judgement and in the quality of courses and standards to ensure that higher education providers deliver courses in response to the market, social and economic needs. They also influence the government in terms of decisions on funding allocations to higher education institutions, and inform industry policies in terms of the suitability of student employment in the job market through a closer link between higher education providers with businesses and industries. By doing so, universities are compelled to hold themselves accountable to the public for their efficiency in the use of public resources.

However, criticisms over professional bodies have arisen. Clark (2004) argues that they over-emphasise economic outcomes which do not allow for a broader debate on benefits that individual professions contribute to social and environmental outcomes. They tend to focus heavily on relevancy and coherence of courses and programs rather than on ethical and moral behaviours and other values contributing to general knowledge and generic skills. Moreover, they also heavily stress efficiency and accountability. For these reasons, concerns about diminishing academic freedom, professional autonomy and innovation have arisen.

3.2.5 Institutional level

Of course, universities need to use data available at the national level. However, they use their own data as well because they have their own views especially about formative assessments. Besides using the quality-tracking system required by external quality assurance agencies, Australian higher education institutions have conducted other surveys to identify areas that need to be improved. For example, the Australian Technology Network Universities have employed tracking mechanisms for teaching and learning, including a Course Performance Survey, a Student Feedback Survey, a Subject Feedback Survey, a Feedback on Teaching, a Student Satisfaction Survey, a Research Student Satisfaction Survey and a Graduate Capabilities Survey. Monash University uses surveys such as Support Service

Survey for staff; Customer Satisfaction Survey and Learning and Growth Survey (Pawley & Mertova 2010).

Both internal (critical self-review) and external procedures are used to review the academic quality of higher education institutions. Universities established under the legislation of the state and territory or Commonwealth governments are entitled to accredit their own courses and to take responsibility for the quality and standards of their provisions. Despite variations of internal quality assurance processes between universities and higher education providers in the Australian higher education sector, the major processes for internal quality assurance can be outlined:

> Approval processes for new courses and units of study; regular review of courses and units; internal review of departments, faculties and research centres; student evaluations of teaching; use of external examiners for higher degree research theses; surveys of graduates to assess satisfaction with courses; soundings of employers on the suitability of graduates for the workforce; and benchmarking of these areas against performance in other similar universities (Bradley et al. 2008, p. 130)

The requirements for an institution to design courses with unequivocal statements of expected learning outcomes are needed as explicit processes for measuring student learning outcomes, and are the most critical elements to maintain academic standards of the institution. Despite that, the level of student achievement is difficult to assess, as Australian universities' grading systems are internally determined for undergraduate and postgraduate coursework, except for honours and research degrees as they are assessed by external examiners (Bradley et al. 2008).

As part of the audit approach to quality, universities in Australia have established performance appraisal schemes, which require academic staff to prepare annual performance appraisal goals which are then discussed and signed off by the head of school or some other responsible person. The performance appraisal requires academics to establish goals for their research, conference papers, publications, teaching and supervision in the forthcoming year. However, much research showed that Australian academics expressed their concerns about the introduction of staff appraisal as a threat to their collegial traditions and professional autonomy (Moses 1988, cited in Anderson 2006). Similarly, Anderson's study (Anderson 2006) found that most academics view performance appraisal as an imposition from above, impeding their sense of professionalism, and creating greater stress on them.

Most universities in Australia use promotion criteria based on performance in teaching, research, university and community service and leadership. However, the emphasis on each core responsibility varies from one institution to another. For instance, the University of Queensland has adopted promotion criteria which weighs 30% for teaching, 30% for research, 20% for community service, and 20% for other categories, whereas Charles Sturt University has employed different criteria for promotion to lecturer, and professor. For promotion to lecturer, 40% is given to teaching; 30% is given to research/scholarship/professional consultancy, 10% is for community service and 20% for other categories. For promotion to associate professor teaching is weighed 20%; research/scholarship is weighed 40%, while community service is weighed 30%. Similarly, the University of Adelaide uses four criteria for promotion to all levels – teaching; scholarship/research/creative pursuits/contract research; leadership in and service to the university; and professional activity. Teaching and research are more heavily weighed than other categories (DEST 2002c).

Staff promotion has been based on the systematic demonstration of performance, along with empirical information in relation to teaching and research through a staff appraisal system (Baldwin 1997). Similarly, 'teaching incentives and promotional staff opportunities in universities for good academic instruction are often placed second to publication outputs, and receiving of external grants' (Gatfield, Barker & Graham 1999, p. 249). Likewise, research outputs play a critical role in promotion and appointment of teaching staff, and universities and departments obtain their status and reputation from research achievement (Harman 1998; Taylor, Gough, Bundrock & Winter 1998). The status of teaching is claimed as not as important as research (Taylor et al. 1998).

Notwithstanding that each university has a comprehensive staff appraisal or performance management system, termination processes, and provisions of grounds for unsatisfactory performance or misconduct are complicated and long, leading to rare cases of dismissal, discouraging managers from implementing the process. There are numerous recommendations from universities that there is a need for streamlined termination processes, but which are fair and just to all staff members and leaders (DEST 2002b). However, the key question is 'how can universities improve their performance-based management and reward higher achievers? Is there anything the Commonwealth can do to facilitate this?' (DEST 2002b, p. 45)

3.2.6 Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

There are a number of advantages stemming from quality assurance activities in Australian HE. First, higher education institutions in Australia have started to realise their importance, and started to establish their own standards to improve the quality of their courses. The quality culture has been embedded in the higher education sector (Lim 2001).

Second, teaching, despite claims to the contrary, has been granted equal status as research for tenure and promotion. Before the introduction of quality audit, teaching was not perceived as important as research for professorship promotion. In the policy, teaching is given equal weight to research; however, in practice it might not be seen to be the case. Teaching has been enhanced through the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development, and the results of the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) (Lim 2001).

Third, the whole-institution assessment of quality engages all parts of the institution in a process of self-assessment activities; so all people within the institution are involved in this process, leading to a wider spread of effects within the university system (Lim 2001).

Fourth, funding allocations to universities based on good performance in quality, as additional funding to the total of operating funding, creates less conflict in the higher education sector than in the UK system, where research performances are much more emphasised, leading to the creation of 'win and lose' situations (Lim 2001).

The current quality system respects the autonomy of institutions; it does not cost much more than the cost of internal assessment and administration. There is no serious intrusion by government or outside agencies into teaching and learning activities (Anderson, Johnson & Milligan 2000).

Weaknesses

There is a range of potential problems with current quality assurance arrangements.

First a common criticism is that:

> the holistic approach adopted does not have the richness of detail of a disciplinary approach. Its concern is only with the performances of an entire university and does not allow non-performing departments to be shamed or punished financially and allows a free-ride (Lim 2001, p. 84).

The current Australian approach to auditing institutional quality assurance puts heavy emphasis on processes, inputs and reports, but not enough focus on outcomes (DEST 2002c).

Second, the focus on student performance affects students who are from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, as these students might find it hard to be accepted by rich and well-established institutions. This could be overcome by measuring 'value added' rather than absolute performance.

Third, the concern with system level quality assurance is that it leads to standardisation (rather than 'standards'). This works against the need to have diverse provisions in higher education to meet the diverse needs of both the students and employers.

Fourth, the adoption of performance indicators in research and teaching may lead to the formation of league tables, as evidenced by global measures of the performance of universities such as the Times Higher Education Supplement university rankings. In particular differences in reputation and image have a negative impact on the smaller, less established and low resource institutions (Lim 2001).

Finally the use of quality measures and performance indicators more generally is met with distrust and scepticism by the academic community (Taylor et al. 1998). Baldwin (1997) also argues by posing a question: 'How do you in the central administration know what is going on out there in the faculties?' (p. 292). He also lists many disadvantages, as perceived by many staff:

- Excessive bureaucratic demands, resulting in overwhelming volumes of paperwork and increased time spent in meetings;
- A perceived loss of autonomy for academic staff;
- The alienation of some staff from university management and a climate of cynicism about 'going through the motions' (1997, p. 297).

Higher Education providers in Cambodia are likely to experience similar strengths and weaknesses as their Australian counterparts because the quality performance of institutions is based on the assessment of the whole institution and focuses only on procedures, policies and accountability rather than on the quality of the interface between teachers and students, as well as student and student. The introduction of quality assessment will help Cambodian HEIs create their own quality management culture, as a top-down approach to decision-making is deeply embedded in the Cambodian context.

3.2.7 Summary

It is difficult to identify explicit objectives of quality assurance in Australia, as there are many actors involved in discussions about quality assurance issues in the higher education sector. If we have a close look at the system level, the political authorities put emphasis on a summative-oriented approach rather than a formative-oriented approach to quality assurance, although a whole-institution approach to academic audits has been employed. In addition, there is a tendency for a shift from a whole-institution approach to a standards-based approach and a discipline-level approach to quality assessments within the new National Accreditation Framework. This is due to many complaints that the current system is ineffective and insufficient and AUQA has no power to impose any sanction on a university that does not meet the criteria.

The government's objective is to standardise qualifications of graduates across the whole system of higher education in Australia, to maintain its positions within the best quality education among the OECD countries. For this reason, managerial and governmental performance indicators are employed to measure the quality of universities and colleges. Universities are managed in a less collegial and a more corporate manner.

The government links its funding of higher education institutions with the requirement for each institution to submit to a quality audit. The government believes that higher education institutions play a significant role in improving the performance of social and economic development. Thus universities are expected to respond to economic and social needs.

The relationships between higher education institutions and professional bodies or associations are complicated because each professional body has a different requirement for accreditation. The objective of the professional body is to enhance and promote professionalism for the benefits of the public and national community, and to assist higher education institutions in maintaining relevancy and coherence of their programs or courses. Professional bodies are involved in curriculum development, professional standards, promoting careers in the professions, teaching and training and research, and ensuring that the student's capacity is suitable for entry level to the programs. There have been a lot of concerns about a more narrow focus on economic needs rather than the development of ethical and social environment.

At the institutional level, although universities are self-accrediting institutions and have the power to accredit and approve their own courses, they try to fit in with a broad range of

external reference points and benchmarking stipulated in the National Protocol, such as the National Qualifications Framework. In response to the government policy on economic and social development, the institutions need to redirect their training programs which equip students with the knowledge and skills to be responsive to the needs of industry and the employment market. This requires institutions to use managerial and governmental indicators to measure their quality education. Moreover, universities no longer have a monopoly on quality assurance agendas. Collegiality is more likely to diminish, and institutional managerialism is more likely to increase.

In response to the perceived disadvantages of the current approach, a new national accreditation body named TEQSA is being established which has a focus on a standards-based approach to quality assurance. The new approach will include not only institutional audits but also subject or discipline-level assessments. TEQSA will bring in the Australian Qualifications Framework, AUQA and the National Protocols. The three components will come under the TEQSA.

AUQA has focused on an process-oriented, rather than an outcome-oriented, procedure of quality assurance. Both higher education institutions and the central government agency responsible for quality assurance use both qualitative and quantitative procedures to measure the quality of the universities, as textual materials, analysis of statistical data, performance indicators, surveys of students, graduates, employers, and peak bodies are predominantly used. The process of academic audits is based on a critical self-review conducted by each respective institution with a validation of the results of the self-assessment in the form of peer review by panels of experts. As well, reports are sent to institutions in the form of recommendations and affirmations, identifying areas requiring action, moving toward being accredited or not accredited, and sanctions for those not receiving quality flags. There is a strong impact of the rankings in the public perception and especially in the recruitment of Australian and overseas students. A summary is presented in the table below.

Table 3.5 Summary of key elements of quality assurance in Australia

System, institutional, and professional level (Perellon 2007; Premfors 1992)

Approaches	Levels	Values
Cycle 1: A whole-institution approach, Objective-dependent (fitness for purpose), **Cycle 2:** moving to a standard-based approach	**System level** **Objectives**: Summative **Areas**: • Teaching, learning, research, community service; • Quality management system and academic risk; • Moving to discipline-level assessment **Procedures**: • Process-oriented rather than Outcomes-oriented; • Qualitative vs. quantitative procedures; **Uses**: • Reports to institutions, minister, public; • Ranking and funding allocation;	Accountability, efficiency, consistency, and response to the economic and social needs.
A standard-based approach	**Professional level** **Objectives**: Summative **Areas**: courses **Procedures**: Outcomes-oriented **Uses**: • Inform government & industry policy; • Decisions on funding	Relevance & consistency;
• Self-accrediting; • Fitness for purpose; • Managerial & governmental indicators.	**Institutional level** **Objectives**: Summative & formative **Areas**: • Courses and units; • Teaching & research; • Use of external examiners for higher degree research theses; • Surveys on graduate satisfaction with courses; • Benchmarking against performance in other similar universities. **Procedures:** • Process-oriented, moving toward outcome-oriented; • Qualitative vs. quantitative procedures. **Uses**: Commercialise courses and programs; attract funding from the government.	Autonomy, economic goals, efficiency, accountability to multi stakeholders, especially government.

3.3 Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Thailand

3.3.1 Introduction

This section is intended to examine a quality management system that has been employed in universities and other institutions in higher education in Thailand. In order to insightfully understand the system, many quality dimensions of quality assurance will be reviewed based on the conceptual framework which is presented and discussed in Chapter 1.

As English-written documents relating to quality assurance in Thai higher education were limited, some primary data from interviews with 12 senior managers at three Thai universities were used to supplement the literature review. Of the three universities, two universities are located in Bangkok and one is located in a province. The aim of the interviews was to ascertain the practical experience of senior managers and academics in relation to the development and implementation of quality management systems in their universities.

3.3.2 Argument of this section

Similar to Cambodia, most higher education institutions are still under the civil service system. The higher education system is highly regulated by the central government. Through this regulation, two external agencies are involved in quality issues in higher education institutions, one of which plays a coordinating role in developing internal quality management arrangements, the other being responsible for auditing and accrediting higher education institutions. Higher education institutions have to align their quality management systems with quality standards set by the government and approved by the parliament.

All Thai universities are legislatively accountable to the government in terms of efficiency in the use of public money and compliance with the nationally agreed standards. In response to this requirement, universities need to employ a managerial approach to quality assurance rather than a collegial tradition.

Quality is still a relatively new concept in the Thai academic culture, and quality assurance is driven by the demands of the global market, so higher education institutions typically seek foreign inputs when they want to introduce a new system or guideline. ‘The introduction of audit cultures into Thai academic institutions represents a major global intervention into established educational practice and can cause resistance’ (Chalapati 2007, p. 67).

A number of challenges lie ahead of the higher education sector in Thailand. First, there is an imbalance between the rapid expansion of higher education institutions to accommodate the

growth in student numbers, and public funding allocated to the institutions, which has remained the same or been reduced. The need for effectiveness and efficiency in the use of public resources is essential. In doing so both internal quality management systems and external quality assessment become key instruments for maintaining and measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the university (Bovornsiri 2006).

Second, higher education institutions face the unresolved tension between global knowledge-based economies and local relevance. In response to an increase in demand for meeting the globally market-driven and knowledge-based economies, most institutions are trying to develop links with their counterpart universities abroad, leading to many criticisms of the lack of local relevance (Bovornsiri 2006). By the same token, it is commonplace to import foreign concepts and methods, and to seek new ideas, inputs and consultancies from foreign experts when a university wants to establish a new guideline or new strategy. This has led to criticisms of failure to serve the needs of local communities (Sinlarat 2004).

Third, although national competitiveness among higher education institutions has significantly increased upon the introduction of rankings based on the results of institutional and program assessment, this has led to an increase in competition among academic staff and has eroded a sense of community and collegiality. However, the level of global competitiveness of Thai higher education institutions remains weak (Sinlarat 2004).

Like other countries in the world, there are many stakeholders involved in discussions about quality issues in higher education in Thailand. However, the government is a dominant player in determining the landscape of quality assurance, and tightly controls higher education.

3.3.3 System level

In the past, Thai higher education institutions had never established quality assurance systems. Society perceived the quality of each higher education institution through the image and reputation of that institution. In 1996, the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA), which is now called the Commission on Higher Education (CHE), announced its quality assurance policy that all universities or higher education institutions must improve and enhance their quality of teaching and learning, leading to the establishment of the Higher Education Act in 1999. The Act gave new connotation to terms such as Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and External Quality Assurance (EQA) (Kanjanpanyakom 2004).

In response to the Act, Thai higher education institutions were required to establish their own internal quality management systems, and quality assurance offices in order to facilitate and

ensure that their provision of education met the required standards, and guidelines set by MUA (CHE 2006).

Like other countries in Asia such as China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Korea and Taiwan, quality assurance in higher education in Thailand has been tightly scrutinised by central government bodies (Harman 1996). Notably, the peak body of the current executive board of the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) is chaired by the Prime Minister (ONESQA 2006).

In 2000, the ONESQA was established by Royal Decree (Suttiprasit 2002). It is responsible for development of criteria, and methods for external quality assessment, and assesses quality performance of all educational institutions from schools to universities (ONESQA 2006).

The central government agencies tightly control the curriculum and standards in universities. Although each university has authority to develop and design its own curriculum, and study programs, the university must receive approval from the Ministry of University Affairs, and submission of the program to the Civil Service Commission is required to obtain scholarship for the students (Harman 1996).

Another practical example is that the CHE is responsible for:

> Broad policies relating to higher education, university regulations, setting curriculum standards, overseeing university personnel and administration, for approving accreditation and curriculum development, and for acting as a link between universities and government. (Wiratchai 1992, cited in Harman 1996, p. 27)

The current government policy is aimed at enhancing quality in higher education by providing some higher education institutions with autonomy in terms of their administrative, managerial and financial arrangements. However, the need for accountability, efficiency (value for money), consistency and compliance to standards is still required (ONESQA 2006).

To ensure consistency in the quality of graduating students, the government has moved to establish a National Qualifications Framework and a set of generic Graduate Student Attributes.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is in the process of being developed with a view to supporting the National Education Act 1999, and to providing a common understanding of the expected learning outcomes of the graduates to the community,

education institutions, and stakeholders across the Thai higher education sector. Each graduate is expected to possess at least five domains of learning outcomes, which include: ethical and moral development, knowledge, cognitive skills, inter-personal and responsibility skills, analytical and communication skills (Sujatanond 2008).

At the initial stage in 2008, CHE piloted the National Qualifications Framework for eight disciplines, including Science, Logistics, Biotechnology, Tourism and Hotel Management, Computer Science, Nursing, Education, and Agro-Industry. In the meantime, the CHE also conducted a training program for NQF trainers so that they can provide training to higher education institutions across the country about how to use the framework (Sujatanond 2008). At the next stage, the Commission was planning to develop the NQF for fifteen disciplines by 2009 (Sujatanond 2008). However, a clear guideline relating to how to balance professional subjects and liberal education is not explicitly outlined. As well, it is not quite clear about how to measure whether graduates acquire these skills by the time of their graduation.

Budget allocation to universities is on the basis of the bargaining ability of an individual institution. Public universities use two separate accounts – one is public funding from the government and another is their own income generation split between faculties. The public funding is spent in accord with policy or regulation of the government, while the spending of income generated from other sources is not regulated by the government so universities can manage it in a flexible manner according to their own needs (Weesakul, Charsombut & Rachapaetayakom 2004). It is, therefore, difficult for administrators to assess the financial status of the university or monitor its financial flow (Schiller & Liefner 2007).

The 2006 financial reform saw three major changes in the university funding system. The first was a demand-based funding system, which was determined by the number of students and their tuition fees. Second, additional funding was allocated to higher education institutions on the basis of specific national or provincial policies. Third, a performance-based funding method was introduced (Schiller & Liefner 2007).

With respect to areas of assessment, higher education institutions are accredited at both institutional and program level. The process of institutional assessments tends to be complicated, as the need for use of different criteria may be required for different groups of the institutions, despite the fact that eight aspects of the core business of higher education institutions are reviewed, such as graduate quality, teaching and learning, academic support,

research and innovation, academic services, preservation of arts and culture, management and administration, and internal quality assurance systems (Bovornsiri 2006).

The weighting of each aspect of the eight core businesses depends upon the particular type of institution and its grouping in terms of the balance of research, teaching, service, and art and culture. Group 1 is weighed at 30% or more for teaching and research. Group 2 is weighed at 30% or more for teaching and services. Group 3 is weighed at over 30% for teaching, and at 20% or more for art and culture. Group 4 is weighed at 40% or more for teaching, and less than 30% for research, services, art and culture (AUN-QA 2006).

ONESQA focuses on an outcome-oriented procedure rather than an educational process. The results of the quality assessment are based on a standards-based approach with quantitative performance indicators. The standards are set by the government and approved by the parliament. The results of the quality assessment are rated on the basis of a five-point Likert scale, where 5 is 'excellent, four is 'good', three is 'fair', two is 'needs improvement', and one is 'badly needs improvement'. ONESQA claims that the purpose of the quality assessment is to focus on areas of strengths and weaknesses rather than to focus on the score per se providing institutions with feedback on their quality and standards, so that they know where to improve (ONESQA 2006).

The process of the assessment is based on both internal and external procedures. An institution is required to conduct a self-assessment of the institution and its programs, and then submit the self-assessment report to ONESQA for validation. A team comprised of academics and a small proportion of non-academics undertake a site visit to the institution to review the self-assessment report (ONESQA 2006).

Accreditation is categorised into three groups: full accreditation, conditional accreditation and no accreditation. Receiving conditional or no accreditation means the institution must develop a plan for improvement within a timeframe agreed between the auditors and institutions. According to the Higher Education Act, accreditation is compulsory, together with a budget allocation, institutional reputation, public acceptance, and institutional development plan for improvement, etc (CHE 2006).

After the 2008 quality assessment round, the government announced its policy regarding performance-based funding distributed to universities and other higher education institutions, by linking funding with the results of the quality assessments. If any institution fails to pass the ONESQA assessment, it will not be entitled to receive full subsidies from the

government. However, the full performance-based funding method is not yet in force (The Nation 2009). The results of the quality assessment are reported to the Minister and the public through the media. There are political consequences for higher education institutions in the form of funding and recognition.

There are tensions between higher education institutions in Thailand and the quality assurance agency in relation to the results of the 2006-2008 assessments. Many old and well-established higher education institutions argued that the results would undermine their reputation. They did not trust ONESQA's criteria of assessment, recommending their amendment. Many leaders of the leading universities called for more explanation about the criteria by which universities were assessed, and questioned the reliability and credibility of the assessment criteria (Bunnag 2009a)

The Rector of King Mongkut's University of Technology at Thonburi argued that the results of assessment by the ONESQA did not reflect accurate outcomes performed by the university (Bunnag 2009c). He added: 'it was widely recognised that older universities like Chulalongkorn and Mahidol had been placed in the top 500 rankings of The Times Higher Education QS World University Rankings' (Bunnag 2009c, p. 1).

There is a concern that the results would have a negative impact on the reputation of universities and their funding allocations from the government because the new policy for funding allocations would be partly based on the findings of the assessment of ONESQA (Bunnag 2009c). Likewise, the Mahidol University rector argued that many aspects of the assessment were not appropriate, adding that the findings had triggered misunderstandings and he would not accept it if they were employed as criteria for funding allocations (Bunnag 2009c).

Many senior managers of universities, especially of leading universities, have not had trust in ONESQA's criteria for assessment since its inception in 2000. They believed that ONESQA must change its assessment criteria, especially those for research assessment, as they do not cover a wide enough variety of fields (Saengpassa & Aramnet 2009).

Dr. Somwang, ONESQA director, believed that well established, leading universities have paid little attention to ONESQA's assessment results, and he also warned that the government would allocate operating grants to universities based on ONESQA's assessment results. In response to the criticism, he said his organisation planned to amend its criteria for assessment, and he argued that universities needed to pay attention to improving their quality

arrangement rather than criticising ONESQA's criteria (Saengpassa & Aramnet 2009). He argued that there were a number of factors behind leading new institutions performing better than the older ones. The first factor is that perhaps these new institutions have employed many young, energetic, and enthusiastic academics. The second factor is that they have had an explicit direction in how to produce graduates, creative research programs and plans to expand their curriculum or new campuses. These factors could cause these institutions to receive higher rankings (Bunnag 2009a)

3.3.4 Professional level

Close links between professional bodies and higher education institutions do not exist yet for some universities. The establishment and process for the link are still pending. A President interviewed in one participating university states that, 'right now we don't have professional bodies to assess professional subjects, but we are planning to assess our computer program'.

New competitors from international universities have emerged within the Thai market; for example, Webster University and Schiller-Stamford International College. These competitors have forced some business schools to become members of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) or the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD). These schools are required to prepare a self-evaluation report for international accreditation (Islam & Liangrokapart 2006).

Most business schools employ part-time faculty both from academia and business to teach their programs. Business students may benefit from the professionalism and expertise of external practitioners who share their real-life experiences because they want to link their programs or courses to the job market. Business schools have to rely heavily on the availability and reputation of the external teachers. Some schools also establish the linkage between their programs or courses and the market through internship programs, international exchange programs and involvement of external practitioners in the curriculum development. This allows the schools to customise their curricula to satisfy students in different market settings (Islam & Liangrokapart 2006).

Based on the above discussions, one can argue that there is some movement from government monitoring to professional monitoring of quality assurance in the Thai higher education. The market plays an increasing role in quality assurance in higher education in Thailand because most higher education institutions want to expand their education market to attract students from other countries in the region (Islam & Liangrokapart 2006).

Thailand has plans to introduce a trial of the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award Framework in the Thai higher education sector, as the government aims to promote its higher education sector internationally in order to attract more students from the region. The Higher Education Commission will invite well-established and leading universities to be involved in the trials. Professor Luis Calingo, a member of the Board of Examiners for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, contended that the Malcolm Baldrige Framework was an internationally recognised standard for the business sector, and has been employed by a number of leading universities in the US (Phetdee 2009).

However, a number of senior managers of the universities expressed their concerns in relation to the introduction of the Malcolm Baldrige Framework into the Thai higher education sector. A vice president of Khon Kaen university in charge of Planning argued: 'The international assessment system would not leave any queries' (Phetdee 2009). Similarly, a vice president of Mahidol University contended she would examine the framework in detail before putting it into use because she was concerned that her university might have troubles adjusting itself and also suggested that Higher Education Commission organise a forum to discuss the framework with university leaders before its introduction (Phetdee 2009).

3.3.5 Institutional level

Higher education in Thailand has gone through some difficulties in adopting a quality assurance system, and an ongoing debate around the purpose of quality assessment still prevails. Although higher education institutions have autonomy to establish their quality assurance framework, there is a requirement for consistency between the internal quality management systems and the National Education Standards, guidelines and procedures set by the central government agencies (Dr. Yuthya).

Quality assurance in higher education institutions is tightly controlled and monitored by the government and its control extends to internal institutional arrangements. The establishment of internal quality arrangements is strongly required and tightly coordinated by the CHE in order to ensure that the institutions are ready for external evaluation (Suttiprasit 2002). Universities need to comply with nine aspects of quality determined by the CHE such as philosophies, commitment, and objectives, teaching and learning, student development activities, research, academic services, preservation of art and culture, administration and management, and finance and budgeting (Bovornsiri 2006; Wattanatorn 2004).

As a Dean in a university put it:

> at the national level, they have two or three bodies and set up standards that we have to be consistent with. In any case, all organisations will cover management, academic, research, services, and cultural preservation (Dr. Yuthya).

Similarly, a President in another university says, 'all Rajabhat institutes use the same standards, indicators and manuals' (Dr. Paula). A Vice President in a different university also maintains, 'we integrate the key performance indicators of the Ministry of Education and the external agency (ONESQA)' (Dr. Amy).

Despite strong government regulation, the need for consistency of internal quality arrangements among the institutions is not required. The institutions have autonomy to adapt the framework to suit their own context and name it as they wish. For example, Chulalongkorn University names its internal quality assurance as (CU-QA84), Thammasat University (TU4Es) and Sri Nakharinwirot University (SUPREME 2000). In addition, some Thai higher education institutions have adopted, and adapted international quality management systems, especially International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (Suttiprasit 2002). Irrespective of whether or not the institutions adopt the CHE's guidelines or adapt the international quality standards, the institutions must be assessed by the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment on a five-year cycle basis (ONESQA 2006; Suttiprasit 2002).

There is still an ongoing debate about how quality is determined, and there is no clear-cut approach to measuring quality. For this reason, one can argue that Thai universities have not had a unified purpose for quality evaluations. This is consistent with Sinlarat's argument, that 'the real purpose of evaluation still needs to be defined' (2004, p. 213).

The main focus of internal assessment of most Thai higher education institutions is on a formative-oriented approach. A self-assessment is the key approach to internal quality management. However, the tools for self-assessments need to be consistent with managerial and governmental indicators.

Although many universities claim that they apply the PDCA quality cycle, and multi-level committees of quality assurance are established, they focus on their input and the process of quality management rather than outputs and outcomes, because relatively new experience in internal quality audit process, and self-assessment makes it very difficult for them to implement it effectively, and to encourage staff to be involved (Kanjanpanyakom 2004;

Suttiprasit 2002). The President in one university put it: 'if you can manage the inputs and process properly, you can produce good outputs and outcomes' (Dr. Pechthoeurn).

An internal process of quality assessment in the universities interviewed is implemented by requiring respective faculty to conduct and submit a self-assessment report to the central Quality Assurance Unit of the university, followed by a visit of an assessment team to validate the report. The self-assessment reports are based on quantitative performance indicators developed by the central quality assurance agencies. The results of the assessment are given to both the faculties for improvement and the governing board of the university for informed decisions.

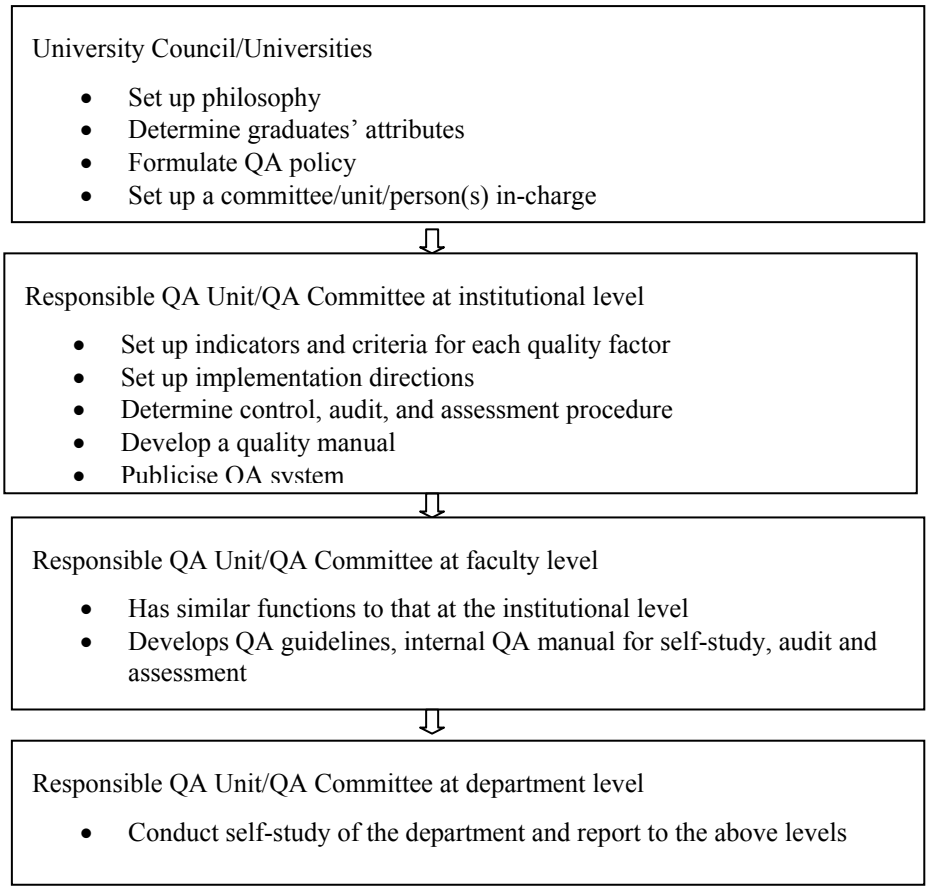
Based on the above discussions, one can argue that procedures for internal quality assessment employed by many universities do not close the quality loop because they focus mainly on educational process rather than educational outcomes.

It is hard for higher education providers to implement the quality assurance standards set by the government for a number of reasons. The concept of quality assurance is still new for most academic staff, so resistance to cooperation occurs. The culture of quality assurance has not been embedded at the institutional level. A Dean in one university noted:

> The institution faces difficulty in implementing the quality assurance standards developed by the central government agencies, as most of the faculty members do not understand and refuse to cooperate…all staff members disagree because they did not know the concept of quality before. Everybody is worried when they are assessed how they work (Mr. Martinara).

As mentioned earlier, a relatively new experience in internal quality audit process, or self-assessment, makes it very difficult for the institutions to implement it effectively, and to encourage staff to be involved, so multi-level committees of quality assurance in universities were established, as illustrated in the table below (Kanjanpanyakom 2004).

Table 3.6 System and mechanism of internal quality assurance in Thailand.



Source: CHE 2006, p. 8

With respect to student attributes, although Thai universities offer degree programs, they have never established what types of graduates they would produce (Sinlarat 2004). Sinlarat argues that:

> The whole system of higher education is characterised by consumerism. Teaching essentially still stresses making students fully receptive to foreign knowledge. The teaching-learning process is still conceived of as the spoon-feeding of children. The administration of universities continues to have characteristics of the civil service (Sinlarat 2004, p. 215).

Teaching and learning are perceived as putting too much emphasis on rote learning, lacking practical knowledge. The concept of student-centred learning is not strongly emphasised (Bovornsiri 2006). This may lead to difficulties in equipping students with generic skills suggested by the National Qualifications Framework, and a lack of innovation (Sinlarat 2004).

There was high variability in academic standards across the university sector and quality assurance was still ineffective if benchmarked against foreign universities. In response to this criticism, Thai higher education institutions have to align themselves with the international network and international universities to exchange knowledge and experience through seminars, conferences and workshops.

For research, teachers do not have time to conduct any research, which is one of the core businesses in a university. They need to do extra work in addition to their designated workload to top up their salaries through additional work off campus or through the teaching of extra classes, especially academics and staff in many public universities (Weesakul et al 2004).

Many faculty members are not involved in doing research for a number of reasons. First, research agencies funded only research expenditure; however, they did not fund research infrastructure, such as equipment. Public funding does not cover research expenditure (Schiller & Liefner 2007). Thailand's expenditure for research and development is still limited if compared with similar wealthy neighbouring countries like Malaysia, which spent about 0.5% of its GDP for research and development, while Thailand spent about 0.26% of its GDP in 2002 (Schiller & Liefner 2007).

Second, research does not count for tenure and promotion and is not an employment requirement, as the majority of the faculty members in public universities are civil servants. For these reasons, only 20% of the academic members in Thai higher education institutions conduct research (Weesakul et al. 2004). However, some active and competent researchers are able to bid for research grants from funding agencies to supplement their salaries, so this is a kind of incentive that encourages faculty members to be involved in research (Schiller & Liefner 2007).

With respect to quality research, Dr. Khorn maintains that quality research refers to the relevance of the research to the needs of society. He argues: 'we research to find new knowledge and the new knowledge must be applicable … and can be translated into practice that benefits society' (Dr. Khorn). By the same token, Dr. Paula points out that:

> Our philosophy is different from other universities like Mahidol, or Chulalongkorn; our philosophy as stipulated in the Act is that our university is committed to local development so your research has to meet the needs of the locals. The research must have an impact on the quality of life of the locals so we don't mind whether

> professors from Harvard university do not quote or cite our research as long as they are good for the locals.

Regarding community service – obviously, partnerships between the industry sector and Thai faculty members have typically taken the form of only informal consultancies. The main purpose of the faculty members is to generate extra income to top up their low salaries from the public universities (Schiller & Liefner 2007). Incomes generated from consultancy services do not go to the university, as the consultancy process has gone through an agreement between an individual consultant and the private sector (Kirtikara 2002; Weesakul et al 2004)

Teaching records are more important than that of research and community service for tenure and promotion (Schiller & Liefner 2007). Initially, student evaluations of academic staff were introduced in the higher education sector; however, they have not been included in staff promotion, so the process of promotion was done according to civil service policies (Sinlarat 2004).

Universities tend to have different policies for promotion. Two universities in the city exercise the policies for staff promotion on the basis of research publications and good teaching rather than years of teaching. As Dr. Yuthya puts it:

> Teachers are promoted based on journals and publications, which are examined by different levels of people. People who just start teaching at this university are given a position as a lecturer and need to have certain teaching quality, and some publications to show. If you have PhD and you come to teach here for two years, with good teaching and some publications, you will be considered an assistant professor.

However, another university located in a province does not have a concrete policy for staff promotion. The university tends to promote teachers who are involved in administrative work, and those who are not engaged in administrative activities are less likely to be promoted. The President admits that:

> It is not good in terms of incentives, leading to a lack of motivation of teaching staff because they feel that although they try very hard to improve their teaching, a chance of getting promoted is rare. This is our weakness in terms of incentives (Dr. Paula).

Many Thai universities still operate on the basis of the traditional civil service system. Teachers and staff in public institutions are employed based on civil service rules and regulations, which includes life tenure. Whereas teachers and staff in autonomous universities

are employed on the basis of the contract system, which is a relatively new concept for the Thai academic culture, causing teachers and staff in autonomous universities to feel less secure about their employment. For this reason, the autonomous institutions find it difficult to attract qualified academic staff compared with the public universities (Bovornsiri 2006).

The key tool for measuring the quality performance of universities is self-assessment reports. Therefore, self-evaluations and submission of self-assessment reports to the Quality Development Office are required. As a Dean in a university puts it:

> The Quality Development Office requires us to submit self-assessment report, and requires us to be visited by an assessment team, and they give feedback to our college. The top management has to report to our board. Another implementation is how to translate feedback into action for improvement … it is not just to satisfy the requirement, but we have to bring back what recommended to improve … SAR reports have to show evidence based on KPIs and student satisfaction (Dr. Yuthya).

According to the interviews, many participants put heavy emphasis on student feedback as a major measure that their universities use for improving the quality of their teaching. However, they are not quite sure yet of how to use it in an acceptable and appropriate manner. A President in one university confesses that, 'we conduct student evaluations in every semester, but we do not use its results' (Dr. Paula).

3.3.6 Strengths and weaknesses

Weaknesses

Academics and managers in Thai universities are not much different from those in many universities in the UK and Australia, academics and managers in Thai universities also complain about weaknesses in relation to quality assurance activities. These weaknesses are illustrated as shall be seen in the following:

First, it creates a heavy workload and much paperwork for academics, and staff, and it adds incremental costs for universities. As a Dean in one university put it:

> It is time-consuming for data gathering, and we need to use a lot of staff, and paperwork. When we put quality assurance in, it costs us more … it is a waste of time doing QA, not doing the real work, and real business – teaching and research … just putting more resources and money does not guarantee that the quality is improved (Dr. Yuthya).

Likewise, Dr. Paula: ‘we have to do a lot of paperwork, complaining from staff members … now the government policy requires us to evaluate programs so we have to do three jobs and too many assessments a year’.

Second, academics and staff do not want to cooperate and to be involved in this process. As Dr. Sumatra, a Professor in one university, states: ‘it is hard to get data due to a lack of cooperation from staff members because they are busy doing their designated jobs – teaching and research’. Likewise, Dr. Amy asserts, ‘we lack support from academic staff because they have over teaching load. Some teachers have to teach 24 hours per week so they don’t have time to do research’.

Similarly, a President in one university expressed his difficulty in involving staff members in quality management activities because most teachers and staff members are civil servants and get paid by the government, so they just work to rules with less productivity (Dr. Pechthoeurn).

Third, quality assurance is a relatively new concept for the higher education sector in Thailand and a quality culture has not yet been embedded in the mindset of a majority of academics and staff. As Dr. Thinaroth, a Vice President contends: ‘quality assurance has only just started in Thai higher education, so it has not yet become a culture in its university system ’.

Most academics and staff do not understand the concept of quality assurance and its importance. They think that it is ‘playing game’. According to Ms. Phallayadeth, a director in a university, ‘at first, most people didn’t think it was important and they might think we just played with documents’. Mr. Martinara complains, ‘we are affected by a rapid change of policies in relation to quality assurance’.

Fourth, the need for consistency and compliance to the national standards has led to a lack of diversity, as Dr. Linavy argues: “the university’s mission focuses heavily on cultural preservations, so the College of Sciences tends to get low grade on assessment and is underfunded compared to other faculties in the university’.

Based on these findings, one can argue that quality is still a new concept for many academics and staff in Thai higher education institutions. The culture of quality assurance has not yet been embedded in the mindset of academics and staff, and it is considered to be ‘playing game’ with documents by many academics and staff. Participation and the involvement of teachers in quality activities still remains limited, as there is a lack of interest by staff. It is

especially true for public universities, as teachers and staff members are civil servants receiving salaries from the government so they tend to work to rules, leading to a lack of active participation and involvement.

Most participants view quality assurance as a time-consuming process, as they have to deal with a lot of paperwork in order to meet the requirements of the central government agencies. Universities have to bear a lot of complaints from academic staff about their excessive workload on top of their academic responsibilities. Moreover, universities have to pay extra costs for running these activities rather than spend the money on real businesses, teaching, research and learning facilities. Another weakness is a lack of diversity due to an over-emphasis on consistency and compliance.

Strengths

Notwithstanding many weaknesses, participants consider that quality assurance offers a number of strengths, including clear directions, a systematic way of collecting data, more understanding of its importance and increasing involvement, consistency, and student participation in quality improvement.

The participants argue that the quality management system provides them with a clear direction of where they want to be. As Dr. Yuthya states:

> We have a concrete system for improving quality. Without QA, the step to improve quality can be random. With this we can tell ourselves at least we know where we are. It is like a meter to tell us that we are doing little of this and too much of that, so we can balance our priorities.

Many participants are in agreement that having an explicit quality management system provides an institution with a systematic way of collecting data. In this respect, Dr. Thinaroth maintains that:

> Although quality assurance just starts, the policy for quality stimulates and motivates teachers and managers to work in a systematic way. They participate in data collection and in the process of quality management. If the university is assessed by external assessors, and the result is not good, it will affect the reputation of the university. It is a kind of motivation.

In addition, participants indicate that there is an increasing understanding among staff about the importance of quality assurance, and an increase in involvement from academics and

staff, as Mr. Matinara contends: ‘first, they [teachers] refuse to do what they are not familiar with, but after they know the university’s goals exactly, they are happy to follow, and to participate in quality activities’. A similar assertion is made by Dr. Linavy, that ‘it is getting better because the people [teachers] start participating in the process of quality management’.

Quality assurance helps an institution achieve greater consistency across the whole higher education sector. As Dr. Pechthoeurn asserts:

> We also set up policy at [an] institutional level in line with the policy of the government because we receive [a] budget from the government. We have to follow the national guidelines and adapt it to suit the context.

Student participation in quality improvement through course and teacher evaluations has substantially increased in Thai higher education, so students’ voices are heard in higher education unlike in the past, when teachers had absolute power in classrooms. Dr. Linavy argues that:

> In the past the students did not participate in evaluating their teachers. I think it is because they do not realise the importance of quality management, but now only a few of them do not participate in evaluating their teachers.

Weaknesses contributing to difficulties in the implementation of quality assurance in HE in Thailand are very much similar to that in the Cambodian context, especially since most faculty members of public HEIs in Cambodia are civil servants paid by the government, and the HEIs have no autonomy to recruit and manage their own staff.

Table 3.6 below presents a summary of the major quality assurance systems in Thai higher education. The summary is based both on the literature review and interviews with some senior managers in higher education, which are analysed by employing the fundamental policy choices proposed by Perellon (2007).

Table 3.7 Framework for analysing a quality assurance system in Thailand, at the professional and institutional level.

Approaches	Levels	Values
Standards-based	**System level** **Objectives:** Summative **Areas**: Institutional and program evaluation based on 9 aspects; **Procedures**: Outcome-oriented; Qualitative and quantitative; **Uses**: Reports to the Minister; institutions, public; Ranking and funding	Accountability, efficiency, consistency
Market-oriented & standards-based	**Professional level** **Objectives:** Summative **Areas**: Programs **Procedures:** Outcomes-oriented **Uses**: Accreditation; recognition and reputation;	Response to the market needs
Managerial & governmental indicators;	**Institutional level** **Objectives:** Formative **Areas:** 9 aspects set by ONESQA; **Procedures:** Process-oriented & quantitative procedures; **Uses:** Preparation for external validation for accreditation;	Compliance

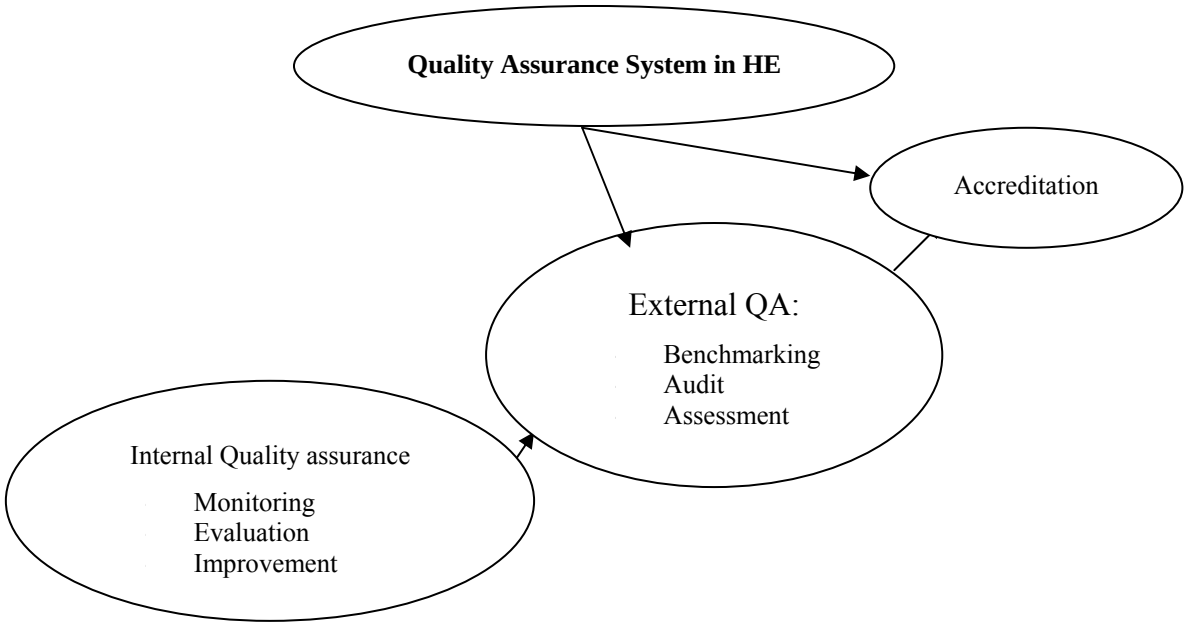
3.4 Comparison between Quality Assurance Systems in Australian, British and Thai Higher Education

3.4.1 Introduction

This section is intended to compare and contrast higher education systems employed in three countries, Australia, the United Kingdom and Thailand, with a view to ascertaining good practices in quality assurance in the three contexts which may be relevant to the Cambodian higher education context. The aim of this comparative study is to adapt some aspects of quality practices considered relevant and suitable for the Cambodian context, or not to adopt and adapt any particular features from the three systems, as some aspects of quality practices may not work in the Cambodian context.

Despite the fact that the aim of this study is to develop an internal quality management system for a university, the researcher looks at both internal and external quality assurance system, 'both sides of the same coin', in this comparative study because internal and external systems are interrelated. Though universities have autonomy to develop their own internal quality management systems, the need for a link between the two systems is important to ensure consistency and compliance to the required standards set by external agencies as illustrated in figure 2.1 below.

Figure 3.1 Quality Assurance System in Higher Education



Source: (AUN-QA 2006, p. 20)

In order to insightfully understand the differences in the quality assurance landscape in different countries, an analysis was conducted of a number of policy aspects in higher education, based on the fundamental policy choices in quality assurance in higher education. These aspects include objectives, controls, areas, procedures, and uses; each of these facets is elaborated in the following paragraphs.

3.4.2 System levels

Higher education systems in both the UK and Australia have been through considerable changes with the abolition of their binary systems and the constant increase in governmental attention – interventionist in the UK and more gentle in Australia. The Australian system puts more emphasis on quality assurance processes than the UK (Harman 1996). The financial incentive for good performance has had enormous impact on the pace of change in Australian higher education institutions, leading to a greater cultural change in Australian universities than in the UK or other countries (Harman 1996). There is no direct link between quality and funding in the UK; however, high quality programs were allowed to recruit more students. The British system has put less emphasis on statistical indicators than the Australian and Thai systems (Harvey 2005; ONESQA 2006).

Higher education systems in the UK have shifted from a self-regulating to an external regulating approach or a combination of the two. University systems are pressured into accountability and efficiency in the use of public resources. The process of the external quality assurance comprises many layers, such as professional, statutory or regulatory bodies, external examiners and government. The UK government is interested in all aspects of quality assurance relating to universities and higher education providers.

The systems of external quality audit and quality assessment in the UK have added to an array of existing systems that include professional accreditation in certain subjects, regional accrediting consortia, inter-institutional subject-based networks, an external examiner system, and the internal assurance systems within several higher education institutions (Gaither 1998).

Over the past 20 years, the Australia government has been seen as less intrusive than the UK government into quality issues in higher education. However, since 1995 the government has moved to lessen direct government responsibility and increase accountability of institutions to government. Managerial and governmental indicators have been used to measure the quality of university education, even though the Commonwealth Government has encouraged

higher education institutions to monitor their own performance by means of self-assessment (Bradley et al. 2008; Lim 2001; Taylor et al. 1998).

The increasing expenditure on higher education in Australia requires that universities be more accountable. The significant decrease in expenditure per student with less government responsibility and more government accountability are also the cause for concern among the universities about the quality of higher education. The quality of teaching and research has become a national policy issue (Harman 1996; Lim 2001).

In Thailand, quality assurance in higher education is controlled by central government agencies. The central government agencies tightly control curricula and standards in universities. Although each university has the authority to develop and design its own curricula and study programs, it must receive approval from the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and submit the program to the Civil Service Commission to receive scholarship for the students (Harman 1996).

The main objective of the UK government could be seen being the development of a strong focus on accountability and efficiency. More importantly, the government attempts to influence universities in the service of the government's goals for the economy, and to encourage universities to remain competitive in the global market place (Brown 2004).

Likewise, the Thai government policy is aimed at enhancing quality in higher education by providing some higher education institutions with autonomy in terms of their administrative, managerial and financial arrangements. However, the need for accountability, efficiency (value for money), and compliance to standards is strongly required (ONESQA 2006).

In order to ensure a national consistency of quality education across the sector and retain international credibility in quality provision, Australia uses national and international benchmarking and international reference points (Bradley et al. 2008). Likewise, in the UK higher education system, national and international benchmarks as well as international reference points, are used for both subjects and research assessments. However, international benchmarking, and external reference points are less likely to be seen in quality assurance in the Thai higher education sector.

The Australian and Thai systems link academic audit with performance funding and institutional rankings. However, the funds are allocated as additional funds to general operating grants of institutions. This is as an incentive to institutions which have in place mechanisms designed to assure and improve quality. The main focus would not be to monitor

performance, but to examine what higher education institutions really do and achieve in quality management with respect to institutional missions and objectives (fitness for purpose) and to evaluate whether their missions and objectives are acceptable and adequate (fitness of purpose) (Harman 1996; AUQA 2007; CHE 2006).

In the UK, institutional audit does not link with performance funding incentives, while teaching and research assessment is linked with performance funding. Therefore, accreditation in higher education in the UK is on a voluntary basis. Likewise, accreditation in Australia higher education is voluntarily based, but there is a tendency towards being compulsory according to a new statutory requirement (Bradley et al. 2008). However, like other ASEAN countries, accreditation in the Thai higher education is a must, meaning all higher education providers are compelled to be accredited on the basis of a five year cycle (ONESQA 2006).

Besides public and government accountability and requirements for efficiency and consistency, higher education institutions in both Australia and the UK have employed a formative approach to quality with the purpose of continuous quality improvement. For example, there is a requirement for higher education institutions to use a number of surveys to gather student feedback for internal quality improvement. In addition, governments provide support for improving teaching and learning performance in higher education through the establishment of the Higher Education Academy in the UK and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council in Australia (ALTC).

The UK Quality Assurance Agency focuses on a great extent on standards of academic achievement. It has developed separate processes for research quality assessment (Gaither 1998; Brown 2004). Similarly, Thailand has developed separate processes for whole-of-institutions and programs, but there is no separate research assessment as in the UK (AUQA 2007; ONESQA 2006).

There are controversies in the UK that regulation appears to be an external concern, while improvement has generally come from the internal responsibility of each institution. Generally, external imposition has not been accepted by internal stakeholders and has been more effective for regulation than for quality improvement and innovation (Gaither 1998).

The current Australian accrediting system focuses on a whole-institution approach. AUQA assesses the quality of the institution against its missions and objectives, and ensures that the institution's quality management system and mechanisms to implement it are in place.

However, a new statutory regulation requires a new national accreditation body to focus on outcomes or a standards-based approach to quality assessments at both the institutional and discipline level (Bradley et al. 2008). The Thai accrediting system focuses on both institutional and program-level assessments (ONESQA 2006).

There have been many criticisms of the Australian system. Australia uses the holistic approach or whole-of-institution approach to quality audit, which does not provide sufficient and rigorous information because it focuses on the whole university which allows non-performing departments to have 'free-ride'; a university might excel in one area, but might not in the others (Lim 2001; Bradley 2008). Likewise, there have been a lot of reactions from Thai university managers to the assessment criteria and standards set by ONESQA in the 2008-quality assessment. They believed that ONESQA must change its assessment criteria, especially criteria for research assessment, as it does not cover a wide enough variety of fields (Saengpassa & Aramnet 2009).

In response to these criticisms and the 2008 Bradley review, the Australian Government has proposed a new national accreditation regulation requiring higher education institutions to be assessed at both institutional and discipline-level based on outcomes and standards (Commonwealth of Australia 2009).

The Australian government also aims to link funding allocations to higher education providers to the results of evaluations at the institutional level. There is a need for higher education providers to negotiate with the government about their educational profiles in terms of funding allocations, which require the universities to use strategic planning and performance indicators in the quality assessment (Lim 2001).

The results of quality assessments are publicly published. For example, in Australia reports of quality audits are distributed to institutions in the form of commendations, affirmations and recommendations, and submitted to ministers for informed judgement in terms of funding allocation. In addition, information in relation to the assessment is made available to the public, especially potential students through the media and on a website. As well, universities are unofficially ranked based on their performance on institutional assessments.

However, there are some criticisms in relation to ranking institutions on the basis of data of marginally statistical significance, which has enormously negative impacts on institutions receiving low scores in terms of student recruitments and resource allocation. More seriously,

it is difficult for the universities with low scores to attract international students, as Australia is one of the largest education exporters among the OECD countries.

In the UK, reports of quality assessments are first distributed to the institutions for internal improvements and then are submitted to the Funding Councils for informed judgements on funding allocation to the institutions. However, institutional assessments are not linked to resource incentives, except for subject and research assessments. The reports are also published in the media and on a website so that parents and prospective students can make informed decisions about where they would like to study. However, complaints about the negative impacts of assessments on the institutions in terms of resource allocation and student recruitments exist, especially in new-established and lower resourced institutions (Brown 2004; Lim 2001).

In Thailand, the government has recently announced its performance-based funding policy that a university is not entitled to receive subsidies from the government if the university fails to pass assessments by ONESQA. The reports of assessments are available in the media and on a website. In the 2008 quality assessments, universities and colleges were ranked on the basis of a five-point scale, causing a lot of reactions from senior managers of universities and colleges, especially well established, older universities (Bunnag 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Saengpassa & Aramnet 2009).

3.4.3 Professional bodies

Although universities in Australia are self-accrediting, universities and other higher education providers are periodically evaluated by government agencies. However, courses in medicine, dentistry, law, engineering, architecture, accountancy and veterinary science are legislatively required to be assessed by professional bodies (Bradley et al. 2008).

In Australia, the relationships between the higher education sector and the professional bodies are very complicated and the requirements of accreditation differ from one professional discipline to another. Accreditation and regulation of programs are influenced by industry requirements, student needs, government policy, and the environment and international tendencies of development. Professional bodies are strongly involved in course design, course approvals, reviews, teaching and assessment of a university (Churchman & Woodhouse 1999).

However, a concern about the overlapping role between the new national accreditation body, which is known as TEQSA, and professional bodies and associations such as in the UK, emerges because TEQSA will also assess quality at discipline or course level.

Similarly, in the UK, various professional bodies or associations have different influences on the different academic community (Watkins 1999b). Professional bodies employ different approaches to examining syllabus content. Some professional bodies give a model syllabus to higher education institutions. Other bodies do not have a specific syllabus but specify the type of content and requirements. Some bodies are involved in curriculum development or program reviews (Churchman & Woodhouse 1999; Enser 2002). Some strictly maintain control over the examinations procedures themselves; for example, accountancy examinations are designed and marked by the accountancy professional bodies. Others give authority to higher education providers to control their professional qualifications. For instance, the Law Society gives this responsibility to higher education providers. The Law Society is responsible for validation, accreditation and quality control (Watkins 1999a). However, there is a criticism about the overlapping role between the QAA and professional bodies because some courses are accredited under a joint accreditation between the QAA and professional bodies (Enser 2002).

In Thailand, close links between higher education institutions and professional bodies do not exist for some universities. However, recently, new competitors from international universities have emerged in the Thai educational market. Quality assurance is, therefore, also driven by international competitions. To survive in this challenging environment, universities have to establish a partnership with international universities and customise their curricula to satisfy students in different market contexts.

For the above reason, there is some tendency to move from government monitors to professional monitors in quality assurance in Thai higher education. The market plays an increasing role in quality assurance in higher education in Thailand because most higher education institutions want to expand their education market to attract students from other countries in the region (Islam & Liangrokapart 2006). Recently, Thailand debated the introduction of the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award Framework to the higher education sector (Phetdee 2009).

Based on the above discussions, one can argue that professional bodies are interested in a summative rather than a formative approach to quality assurance, despite employing different

approaches from one professional body to another. Their ultimate objectives are to focus on the educational outcomes rather than educational processes. They are the keys players in advising and influencing government policies in terms of funding allocations and industry policies with respect to student employability in the UK and Australia.

3.4.4 Institutional level

Some differences and similarities in the Australian and UK higher education systems surface after an in-depth investigation, although they both have the differences in size, and geographical arenas. Australian universities largely used a traditional British style and approach to quality assurance. At institutional level, the main mechanisms are strict control over student admission; internal course approval checks at department, faculty and academic board levels; periodic reviews of courses and departments; and efforts to improve the quality of teaching through the work of special teaching and learning centres (Bradley et al. 2008; Harman 1996; Lim 2001).

Australian universities are regarded as autonomous institutions and they receive funding from the Federal Government. Most universities in Australia are self-accrediting institutions, which means they evaluate themselves and they have authority to approve their own courses, but they try to fit in with a broad range of Protocols, like the National Qualifications Framework and other standards. Over the last 20 years there have been concerns about how the universities are performing, and the growth of universities with a diminishing of resources (Tennant 2009).

Universities and colleges in the UK are not compelled to develop their internal quality management procedures aligned with the guidelines set by the external quality assurance bodies, but they are required to go through multiple-layer processes of external assessments based on self-critical studies. The processes of external reviews involve peer review with external assessors for institutional audit, and peer review with external assessors drawn from the private sector and the professions for teaching and research assessment (Brown 2004).

The Internal approach to quality assurance in universities in the UK is based on a wide range of information collected from the following sources: survey of student views; internal peer review of teaching; internal audits of quality procedures; external reviews of teaching and research; professional body scrutiny of programmes; survey of recent graduates; and employer views of graduates. Every internal audit of academic institution is expected to

address three dimensions: the student experience; the quality assurance systems; and the mechanism for quality enhancement (Brown 2004; Geall, Harvey & Moon 1997).

Both the UK and Australian higher education institutions regard their students as customers so student views are an important contribution to continuous quality improvement. To ascertain whether universities are responsive to the needs of customers, various tools for collecting student feedback have been introduced such as performance indicators, league tables and benchmarking (Lomas 2007). Many argue that students in Australian universities are over surveyed. Likewise, universities in Thailand also gather student feedback, but some universities are not ready to translate the student feedback into action, as student evaluation of teaching is a relatively new concept in the Thai academic culture.

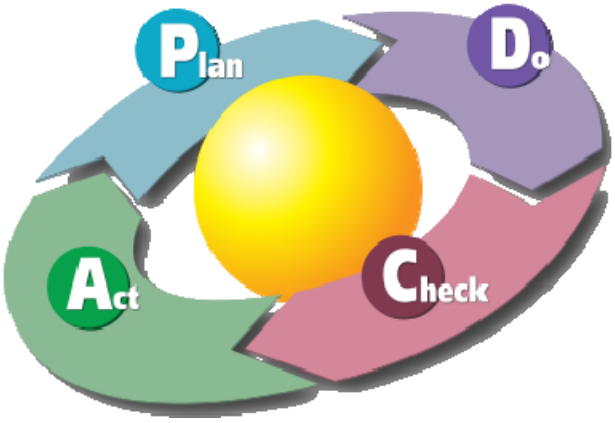
In Thailand, universities and colleges are required to conduct their internal self-assessment on the basis of their own internal quality arrangements; however, the requirements for a link with external quality assurance procedures, and for the institution to go through external assessments undertaken by central government agencies, are mandatory. The process of the review is based on self-assessment reports written by the institution, and followed by site visit of a review team to validate the reports against an agreed set of quality measures determined by central government agencies (ONESQA 2006; Suttiprasit 2002).

Tenure and promotion systems of academic staff in UK and Australian universities are based on a merit performance in teaching, research and community service, and partly on student evaluations, whereas Thai universities still use a traditional style of academic staff promotion which is based on civil service procedures for public universities. Research and student evaluation do not count for tenure, promotion and employment, although student feedback is collected.

3.5 Conclusion

The outcomes of a comparative study of quality management approaches that have been implemented in universities in the United Kingdom, Australia and Thailand are consistent with the arguments of McTaggar (2006) and Lim (2001), that internal quality management system should adhere to five components, including aims or missions, strategic plans for achieving the aims or missions, policy for delivery of a course, policy for professional development for staff, evaluation from student and employers, and response to students and employers' views. These arguments are also compatible with the Deming Cycle Framework: 'Plan-Do-Check-Act' (PDCA).

Figure 3.2 The Deming Cycle Framework 'Plan-Do-Check-Act' (PDCA)



Source: www.anythingresearch.com/Strategic-Planning/PDCA-Plan-Do-Check-Act.htm

The 'PLAN' was a step to establish of the objectives and processes necessary to deliver services in accordance with the expected output. The 'DO' was to implement the new processes. The 'CHECK' was to evaluate the new processes and compare the results against the expected outcomes to identify any problems. The 'ACT' was to analyse the problems to determine their cause. When the cause is determined, action will be taken to improve it. When the results do not involve improvement, the scope of the four steps PDCA must be refined. Keep employing the four steps until there is a plan that involves improvement (Deming 1993).

Despite the fact that universities and other higher education providers in Thailand have integrated the (PDCA) Quality Cycle into their internal quality arrangements, they tend, at this stage, to fail to implement the whole Quality Cycle, as the main focus of internal assessment of most Thai higher education institutions is on input and process, while the focus on outputs and outcomes of graduates is the responsibility of the ONESQA (Suttiprasit 2002). As well, although student feedback is collected, some institutions are reluctant to translate it into actions because student evaluation of teaching is a relatively new concept in Thai academic culture, and student feedback is not included in staff recruitment and tenure positions, or in funding allocations from the government to higher education institutions (Sinlarat 2004). For these reasons, one can argue that Thai higher education institutions tend to fail to close the quality loop.

In the Australian and UK system, student feedback is a critical component and seriously collected for both internal and external purposes. For internal purposes, student feedback is part of information that institutions use for staff promotion and tenure, and for continuous

improvement. As for external purposes, the governments use it for informed decisions on funding allocations to higher education providers.

However, the key question is whether a quality management system used in a certain context would be transferable to another context. Although quality assurance systems that have been employed in higher education sectors in the United Kingdom and Australia are considered successful, these models may not be suitable for use by universities in developing countries like Cambodia, because Cambodia is in a different stage of its development. Lim (2001) also warns that quality assurance, which is useful for universities in developing countries, must suit the conditions existing in their contexts. This means that one does not just copy quality management systems employed in universities in developed countries. The quality assurance system should have less ambitious missions for universities; both internal and external quality management systems should be simple.

In this respect, the Thai model might be suitable for use in the Cambodian context due to the fact that both Cambodia and Thailand have a similar cultural, geographical, and social context. However, the evidence is less visible, and somewhat anecdotal. Although self-assessments and external assessments have been conducted in many universities, and some research into quality assurance has been undertaken in higher education in Thailand, the evidence is not a clear cut. Therefore, inputs from key policy planners, decision-makers, academics and staff in the Cambodian higher education sector, based on the questions drawn from the literature review, are critical for this study so as to determine a suitable and workable approach to quality management for a Cambodian university.

There are multiple stakeholders such as governments, professional and statutory bodies, students and staff and the like involved in discussions about quality issues in higher education. A university should align its quality management system with other national protocols, requirements, national and international benchmarking and performance indicators, as higher education will become a global phenomenon.

To ascertain the stakeholders' perceptions in relation to quality management landscape in Cambodia, research based on a case study was conducted within a university and two central government agencies responsible for quality assurance. A methodology of this study is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4. Methodology and Ethics

4.1 Assumption

The purpose of the study is to understand the participants' perceptions in relation to quality assurance so that the researcher is able to determine what constitutes a locally relevant and suitable quality management system for a Cambodian university. The findings of the study will be used to inform policy for quality assurance in higher education in Cambodia.

Before the researcher was able to achieve the above-mentioned purpose, there is need to conduct an extensive literature review related to research question 1 and 2 to explore the features of well-developed quality assurance systems in higher education in countries like the UK and Australia, examine their strengths and weaknesses, then conduct a comparative study between the quality assurance systems in UK, Australia and Thailand.

The reason for the choice is that the UK (English) system is similar to the Australian system – both are well documented and there is plenty of commentary on them – they are not treated as 'models' to be followed but rather examples of well developed systems that have addressed a number of issues and practices in this area. In the thesis these issues and practices can inform the Cambodian context. Australia is a country that is in the region and has provided substantial aid to Cambodia including educational aid and of course Thailand is a neighbour.

The researcher employed a document analysis approach to data collection of quality assurance systems in UK and Australia due to the fact that information about the two systems was available as on-line and printed documents and reading materials. However, there were limited written documents and materials in relation to quality assurance systems in Thailand. The researcher decided to employ a primary data collection method with a view to complementing the limited secondary data. The detailed process of data collection in Thailand will be explained in next section of this chapter.

The results of the data analysis of the three systems were used as a framework to guide the development of the survey questionnaire and interview questions for participants in Cambodian higher education with a view to examining what constitutes a suitable approach to quality management for a Cambodian University, and answering the related sub-questions 4 and 5.

In the Cambodian culture, policy makers are interested in the findings that can provide an empirically sound and quantifiable generalisation. Therefore, one component of this research employs a quantitative method of data collection.

However, within the quantitative approach, the researcher is relying heavily on a questionnaire survey as a primary source of information and data. Therefore, the researcher might not be able to obtain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and opinions of the subjects that are being studied. There is a danger that the data are left out and phenomenon are not deeply understood; it does not take into account individuals to speak for themselves (Denscombe 2003).

However, as mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study was also to understand the participants' perceptions and experiences. The researcher believed that an interpretive research paradigm would allow him to delve in depth into the participants' perceptions and experiences in relation to quality assurance in higher education in Thailand and Cambodia. A qualitative approach to data collection fits in well with the interpretive theory of research.

To complement each other, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed, in particular a quantitative survey and a case study approach. Each of the research approaches has specific methods that could be used to conduct a scientific investigation when those methods and tools are appropriately and correctly applied. The reason why a case study approach to data collection was used is because the research focused on one university in Cambodia.

Most case studies are predominantly qualitative (Punch 2005). A common criticism of the case study concerns its generalisability, as the study is based on only one case, so how can it be generalised? The intention of the study is not to generalise but rather to understand the case in its complexity and its entirety, as well as in its context. There are two ways that a case study can produce generalisable results (Punch 2005; Stake 1995).

According to Denscombe (2003), case study research characteristically emphasises:

- Depth of study rather than breadth of study
- The particular rather than the general
- Relationships/processes rather than outcomes and end-products
- Holistic view rather than isolated factors
- Natural settings rather than artificial situations

- Multiple sources rather than one research method (p. 32).

This approach involves allowing the researcher to utilise multiple research methods. Using multiple methods and multiple sources of data allows the researcher to capture in-depth insights into perceptions and opinions of the participants concerning a quality management framework, and, in return, this facilitates validation of the data (Denscombe 2003). He also stresses; 'If the researcher wants details and depth, then the case study might be more beneficial' (Denscombe 2003, p. 28).

This approach fits in well with this study since the focus of the research is on one specific university in Cambodia as a case study in order to gain an in-depth understanding of holistic views of the subjects (i.e. key policy planners, decision makers, and staff members) in relation to the proposed quality management framework. Another advantage of employing a case study is that:

> the focus on one or a few instances allows the researcher to deal with complex situation. Particularly, it enables the researcher to grapple with relationships and social processes in a way that is denied to the survey approach (Denscombe 2003, p. 38).

Conducting a case study enables the researcher to describe and interpret the perceptions, opinions, and experiences of the participants relative to a phenomenon. Yin (2003) points out that it allows the researcher to maintain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life experience, that is, individual life cycles, organisational and managerial processes. Case study is an effective approach to theory-building and theory-testing (Denscombe 2003; Yin 2003). 'The real value of a case study is that it offers the opportunity to explain why certain outcomes might happen – more than just find out what those outcomes are' (Denscombe 2003, p. 31).

Based on this approach, the researcher was able to predict 'a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance' (Denscombe 2003, p. 32). 'The researcher should be able to predict certain outcomes if the theory holds true' (Denscombe 2003, p. 34). Constant predictions allows the researcher to capture an in-depth insight into the subjects' perceptions on the phenomenon (i.e. the proposed quality management framework), and the researcher is able to decide how much information and data is used in order to satisfy these findings.

The researcher was able to predict the participants' perceptions with respect to the phenomenon through relationships and experiences that the researcher had with them, as both the researcher and the participants were in the same workplace and used to share experiences about this phenomenon. These experiences allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' views in relation to the quality assurance agenda.

The strong point of case study is that it can use a variety of methods and multiple sources of data, including interviews, documents, artefacts, participant observation, and fieldwork to explore 'social reality'. Therefore, it gives the researcher rich information of the reality, represented from the participants' point of view. Case study can create new institutions, new social programmes or new policies, which stem from the participants' perspective (Denscombe 2003; Somekh & Lewin 2005).

No research paradigm is perfect and a judgment of the validity of the findings was accepted when appropriate and correct methods or sets of procedures of data collection are employed (Smith & Heshusius 1986). Similarly, to deal with the above criticisms the researcher had meticulously chosen appropriate and proper instruments for collecting data by piloting the survey questionnaire and interview questions prior to translating them into Khmer. In addition, the researcher used a purposive sample for selecting participants, who might have some minimal concept of quality assurance. The detailed process of data collection and analysis is presented in the following section in this chapter.

4.2 Data collection

Stage 1: Interviews in Thailand

Two sets of structured interview questions were designed to gather the participants' views and opinions in relation to a quality management system in three universities in Thailand and three institutions in Cambodia. One set of interviews was conducted with a small number of senior managers and academics at Thai universities.

The purpose of the interviews at Thai universities was to explore experiences of the participants in relation to quality management in higher education in Thailand, and ascertain how they developed and implemented it. Twelve (12) senior managers, ranging from presidents to deans and directors, were interviewed. Three universities participated in this study, two in Bangkok and one in a province.

In addition, public texts about quality assurance and accreditation in the Thai higher education institutions were gathered and analysed in order to determine the effectiveness of the policy implementation in regard to quality assurance in Thailand. The outcomes of the interviews were used to redesign the survey questionnaire and interviews for participants in the Cambodian higher education.

The purpose of selecting the three universities in Thailand was because these universities are public universities which were supervised by the central government. Although they were accredited, they had faced similar challenges which all public universities in Cambodia experience at present such as staff being civil servants, central government control, quality concept and culture. Lessons learned from the three universities provided the researcher with explicit and insightful understanding of the quality assurance system in public universities in Thailand. Another reason was that the leaders of the three universities had a good relationship with one of the researcher's supervisors that allowed the researcher to conduct extensive interviews with senior managers and faculty members of those universities.

Stage 2: Piloting of survey questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was distributed to four participants in a Cambodian university with a view to piloting it. The participants were asked to complete and give comments on each item or statement of the survey about its clarity and suitability. The comments were used to modify the survey.

Stage 3: Survey questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was distributed to 120 participants in higher education in Cambodia. One hundred and four (104) completed questionnaires were returned, constituting a response rate of 86.7%. The participants were categorised into three groups. The first group consisted of current key policy planners and decision makers in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and in the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC). The second group comprised key decision makers and policy planners at a Cambodian university. The third group was composed of academics and staff members of the university.

A survey questionnaire was distributed to one key policy planner and decision maker at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), one respondent at the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), and 118 sets of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents at the City University. Despite the fact that the purpose of the research was to design a quality management system for a university, inputs from the participants from

MoEYS and ACC are important because they are the main stakeholders of any quality assurance arrangement in Cambodia. It was decided that mail and telephone survey methods were not viable; the mail system was not reliable and telephone survey was expensive and time-consuming. Moreover, it was not possible to access the telephone contact details of the target population.

The survey contained three sections: Section 1 was related to the quality management system; Section 2 provided for additional comments; and Section 3 was associated with demographic information. At the end of each part in Section 1 of the survey, the participants were asked to provide additional comments if they wished. As the survey design overlooked some required information, the additional comments provided by respondents fortuitously helped to complement the survey (see Appendix 4).

The questionnaire was developed and arranged based on the issues identified in the literature review. It was organised under the various headings because it was easy for the researcher to develop items of the questionnaire in a logical way which corresponds to each of the headings. The main aim of the survey was not to compare its findings against the findings from interview; it was aimed at providing complementary strengths to each other.

Stage 4: One-on-one Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

In order to increase the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher used another method of data collection, that is, interview. Triangulation of interviews with a survey questionnaire was utilised as it gave complementary strengths. As suggested by Denscombe (2003), 'the interview and questionnaire can be combined in order to corroborate facts' (p. 166). The researcher could use the interviews to delve in depth and in the detail required to identify that the questionnaire asked valid questions, or the researcher might have missed some interesting points in the design of the survey questionnaire (Denscombe 2003).

Triangulation of research methods of data collection has become popular at the present time. Questionnaires are employed to corroborate findings and interviews are used to provide the richness and detail to elaborate quantitative findings (Rossman & Wilson 1985). More importantly, the researcher should be able to decide what method of data collection is appropriate for a particular context or situation where the study is being conducted.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with key policy planners and decision makers at their office in MoEYS, ACC, and in the university. It was decided that focus group interviews were not viable with them because they were not available for the group interviews. If they

were asked to participate in focus group interviews with the faculty members, the faculty members might not be able to express their views frankly.

Focus group interviews were conducted with the faculty members and staff of the university. This method of data collection was viable for them since they were the researcher's colleagues, and willing to participate. Data collection would include participants' (current key policy planners and decision makers, academics, and staff) perceptions, opinions, and experience in regard to the proposed quality management framework.

Each interview was digitally recorded (MP3) so that it was easy for locating information and important perceptions concerning the proposed quality management framework. The interviews were conducted in Khmer (Cambodian language), and the answers were translated into English. When the interviewees felt uncomfortable with voice recording, the researcher just listened, took notes and asked for clarification of what they meant rather than transcribing the exact words of the interviewees.

4.3 Data analysis

The researcher analysed the collected data by employing statistical analysis methods. The statistical analysis was made in order to see if there were any significantly different perceptions and opinions of the population with respect to the proposed quality management framework. Data was also analysed by comparison with the body of literature.

The quantitative data was analysed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Statistical analysis could provide quantifiable data, which could be used to support the knowledge claim, and it is required for development of the quality management framework for a Cambodian university. The raw data was entered into SPSS. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to provide illustrated descriptions of the sample. The detail of descriptive analysis is described and discussed in Chapter 5.

Qualitative data was analysed by coding the data of the interviews into categories. Coding is the process of putting tags, names or labels against pieces of data. There are two main kinds of codes: descriptive codes (low-inference descriptive codes), and inferential (or pattern) codes (higher-inference pattern codes) (Punch 2005). A descriptive code is some kind of summary or précis of text or segments of the data, which provides for later higher-order coding. Referential or (pattern) code is more interpretive and requires some degree of inference beyond the data (Punch 2005). Punch also suggests a decision on coding may be

dependent on other decisions related to research questions, conceptual framework and the structuring of data generally (Punch 2005, p. 200).

Based on Punch's suggestion the researcher categorised the data of the interviews into seven inferential or (pattern) codes, or seven themes. These themes were: 1) general perceptions of quality; 2) effective approach to quality measurements; 3) quality management tools; 4) strategies for quality improvement; 5) quality tracking system; 6) implementation; and 7) leadership in the development of the framework.

Under each theme, the data was coded into many descriptive codes. Theme 2 included mission and objectives, student employability, job market analysis, multiple-aspect approach, and benchmarking (external reference point). Theme 3 included the reasons for the lack of quality management tools, the significance of quality tools, and the link with external quality assurance. Theme 4 included teaching and learning, lack of critical thinking skills, disciplines, problem-based approach, link theory to practice, student-centred approach, student-background awareness approach, feedback and comment, incentive structures, research quality, staff development policy, promotion and remuneration system, and the prioritising of scarce resources. Theme 5 covered the accessibility to, and usage of, the data. Theme 6 included the elucidation of the system, job descriptions (roles and responsibilities), good governance, seeking funding from external funding agencies, autonomy, carrot and stick policy, and Theme 7 covered leadership.

The data was compared with the literature review on quality management in higher education in Australia, England and Thailand, and analysed in order to ascertain the most desirable, relevant and workable approach to quality management for a Cambodian university, and determine the key elements for how implementation should be managed.

Although interviews have a number of advantages, there are some disadvantages. Analysis of data can be difficult and time-consuming, and interviews seem to provide non-standard answers. Therefore, reliability, and objectivity may be difficult to achieve (Denscombe 2003).

To increase the level of reliability of the results, the researcher compared and contrasted the results from the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the investigation, with that of good practices for quality management in higher education found in the literature review. By comparison between the three aspects, the researcher was able to evaluate and determine the aspects that were relevant and suitable for the proposed approach to quality management,

what major challenges were likely to be confronted in trying to implement it in this university, and how these challenges could be overcome.

Punch suggests, in order to increase generaliseability of the case study there is a need to raise the level of abstraction, but it is still widely regarded as generalisation from a sample to a population (2005). Firestone asserts that 'there are three levels of generalization: generalization from sample to population, analytic or theory-connected generalization, and case-to-case transfer' (Firestone 1993, cited in Punch 2005, p.147). In this case, the researcher's aim was to make generalisation of the findings from a sample to a population.

Triangulation of research methods of data collection is popular at the present time. Questionnaires are employed to corroborate findings and interviews are used to provide richness and detail to the quantitative findings (elaboration) (Rossman & Wilson 1985). More importantly, the researcher is better able to decide on what method of data collection is appropriate for a particular context or situation where the study is being conducted.

A qualitative case study rarely asks the same questions of each informant; rather, each respondent is expected to express his/her unique experiences and to tell special stories. It is often important to ask the same questions to confirm what is asked in the survey, and to compare between the two groups (Stake 1995). In studying urban bureaucracies, Yin found that they both provided similar results; however, Stake and Easley found that the results of the survey simply confirmed the findings of the case study (cited in Stake 1995). Interviews allow for an in-depth and in detail understanding of the subjects' perceptions in relation to the topics being studied. Moreover, interviews allow informants to expand their views, and are more flexible. Accuracy and relevance of information can be justified when data collection is evolving (Denscombe 2003).

4.4 Limitations of the study

Although case studies provide different forms for empirical inquiries, there are some criticisms of the method by many researchers. First, they provide little basis for scientific generalisation because they explain more about general issues, and are generalisable to theoretical propositions, not to populations or universes (Somekh & Lewin 2005). A second criticism is that a case study lacks rigor; it takes too long and its results are massive, and unreadable (Yin 2003). Another criticism is that a case study stresses the unique and the particular 'instance'.

This research was mostly conducted in the researcher's workplace, so the role of the researcher and the researched must be very much connected. The researcher attempted to understand practice 'from the inside' – from the perspective of the individual practitioner (Kemmis 2000). It is frequently said to be a 'subjective' view of practice. The relationship between the researcher and the researched is understood in the 'second person'.

Despite difficulty in seeking participants at the ministerial and national level, the researcher could gather interview data from a number of key policy developers and decision-makers both at the ministerial and national level. The participants ranged from Deputy Director General of the Department of Higher Education to the Secretary of State, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), and the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC). At the university level, participants were vice rectors, deans, and associate deans, heads of departments, and offices, and faculty members. Unfortunately, the top leader of the university, who was the prominent player in the development and implementation of the quality management framework, was not able to participate in this study.

The study used one university as a case study, so the results of this research might not be able to be generalised for the whole Cambodian higher education sector. However other universities can certainly use the results to inform their practices in their own contexts.

Employer and student views are very important for closing the quality loops and they may have provided additional internal and external insights into the nature of and the scope of an appropriate quality management framework for the City University. However, their views were not included in this study due to time constraints and limited timeframe permissable for this study.

4.5 Ethical considerations

The researcher took three aspects of ethics into account during the research process. These were respect for democracy, respect for truth and respect for persons.

Respect for democracy refers to the freedom to investigate and to ask questions; the freedom to give and to receive information; the freedom to express ideas and to criticise the ideas of others; the freedom to publish research findings. Respect for truth means researchers should not deceive themselves and others deliberately. Respect for persons means that researchers should respect a person's rights, dignity and privacy in taking data from that person (Bassey 1999, p. 74).

The research dealt with human subjects so ethical issues needed to be meticulously considered. In the case of Cambodia, there were inevitably some political ramifications. Before conducting the research, a number of ethical and political issues were taken into consideration as outlined below:

First of all, the researcher applied for ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the University of Technology, Sydney. Once the application for the ethics approval was granted, the researcher then sought approval from the Executive Board of a Cambodian university in which the research was conducted. The process of obtaining approval was undertaken in accordance with top-down procedures within the hierarchy.

Second, the researcher sent the participants the consent forms explaining clearly the purpose of the research and ensuring that their personal information was stored in a secure place, and in good quality. The participants were allowed to correct their contribution where appropriate, prior to the data being transcribed and analysed.

Third, the participants were notified that what they shared in the research was kept confidential and was used for research purposes only. They could have access to their personal information as needed. Anonymity of the participants was maintained.

Finally, as it is common in Cambodian culture, small incentives were given to the participants, that is, small souvenirs, or lunch was provided to some academics and staff members at the university. Stake (1995) suggests, 'it is not unusual, with the host's knowledge, for the researcher to pay in some way for the information a special informant can provide' (p. 65).

This research was mostly conducted in the researcher's workplace, so the role of the researcher, and the researched, must be very much connected. The researcher attempted to understand practice from the inside of the individual practitioner. The relationship between the researcher and the researched was understood in the 'second person' (Kemmis 2000). Practitioners were asked to reflect on and talk about their experience in quality management in the university.

Chapter 5. Data Descriptions and Discussions

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter was to present data descriptions and findings from both the survey questionnaire and interviews in order to answer research question 3, which examined what constitutes a suitable and workable quality management system for a Cambodian University, also to answer two sub-research questions which explore who should lead the development of the system and its implementation and how can a quality management framework be implemented effectively in daily practice in the Cambodian setting. There are two sections of the chapter. The first section presents the data analysis from the survey and additional comments provided at the end of each part of the survey. The second section presents the findings from the interviews.

The data of the survey questionnaire in section 1 were divided into three categories which were adapted from Scott (2004). Category 1 explores what constitutes a suitable and workable quality management system for a Cambodian university, asking the participants to rate their level of agreement with thirty-six variables (item 1-36) based on the five-point Likert Scale. The data for this question consisted of three elements which were quality management instruments, a strategy for quality improvement, and the quality of teaching and learning.

Category 2 focused on how a quality management system can be implemented effectively in daily practice in the Cambodian setting, asking the respondents to rate their level of agreement with six variables (item 37-42) associated with a quality tracking system.

Category 3 examined who should lead the development of this system and its implementation. At the end of each category, the respondents were asked to give further comments with a view to capturing their in-depth perspectives of the respondents that could not be captured by numerical scales.

Section 2 explored additional information about the participants' perceptions in relation to quality issues and/or a quality management system suitable for a Cambodian university based on an open-ended question. This was designed to collect other relevant information that might be not have been forthcoming in Section 1 of the questionnaire. Section 3 gathered demographic information about the participants.

Descriptive analysis was conducted to describe and summarise the data from the sample used in this study. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to portray the sample. The tool used to assist the analysis was the SPPS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

The purpose of the descriptive analysis was to learn how people in the university responded to standards of quality assurance instruments, implementation processes and the measurement of quality of teaching, and to find out what they supported and what they did not support as well as identifying what were problematic so that an acceptable quality management system for the Cambodian context could be developed.

The interview data were coded into 3 categories and 7 descriptive themes. They were: theme 1 general perception of quality; theme 2, effective approach to quality measurement; theme 3, quality management instruments; theme 4, strategies for quality improvement; theme 5, quality tracking system; theme 6, implementation of the framework; theme 7, leadership. Each theme was classified into smaller elements of data which are described and analysed in the next section of this chapter.

Although there were different groups of the participants of the study such as key policy makers from outside the university, key policy planners, decision makers, academics and staff members from within the university , the study did not aim to provide the contested nature of the perceptions of different groups. Its aim was to gather overall perceptions of the participations in relation to what constitutes a suitable quality management framework for a university.

5.2 Participants

Participants in this study were academics and staff employed in the City University in Cambodia. The sample size of participants was 104, the majority of whom were males, constituting 70.6% of the sample, while two of the respondents did not indicate their gender. Of the sample,15.5% of the respondents had been working at the university less than 5 years; 24.7% had been working between 6-10 years; 18.6% had been working between 11-15 years; 21.6% had been working between 16-20 years, and 19.6% of the subjects had been working at the university for more than 20 years, with the mean length of service at the university falling in the range 10 to 16 years. The participants were also asked to indicate their positions of employment; among the respondents, 51.0% were lecturers, 9.0% were administrators, 36.0% held management positions, while 4.0% held other positions (see Table 5.1). Due to the non-existence of a professorship system, and a promotion system such as assistant, or

associate professors, the researcher decided to label all academic staff as lecturers, regardless of the number of years' experience in teaching.

Table 5.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents (N=102)

Gender	Percentages
Male	70.6%
Females	27.5%

Number of respondents (N=97)

Number of years working	Percentages
1-5	15.5%
6-10	24.7%
11-15	18.6%
16-20	21.6%
>20	19.6%

Number of respondents (N=98)

Status of employment	Percentages
Full-time	91.8%
Part-time	8.2%

Number of respondents (N=100)

Positions	Percentages
Lecturer	51.0%
Administrator	9.0%
Management	36.0%
Other	4.0%

Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

Level of qualifications

The highest level of qualifications attained by the respondents ranged from Bachelor's degree to PhD degree in different fields of study. Of all respondents, 18.2% had a Bachelor's degree,

2.0% had an Advanced Diploma, the majority of the respondents (75.8%) had a Master's degree, and only 4% had a PhD degree, while none had a Professional Doctorate degree.

Table 5.2 Proportion of respondents by highest level of academic qualifications (N=99)

Academic qualifications	Percentages
Bachelor's degree	18.2%
Graduate Diploma	2.0%
Master's degree	75.8%
PhD degree	4.0%
EdD degree	0.0%

Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

In addition to the level of academic qualifications attained, the respondents were asked to indicate the academic discipline in which they had obtained their qualifications: 30.5% of the respondents had a degree in Education, 11% had a degree in Sociology; 9.8 % had a degree in Physics; and the rest can be viewed in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 Proportion of respondents by academic discipline (N=82)

Disciplines	**Percentages**
Geography	2.4%
History	1.2%
Khmer Literature	2.4%
Philosophy	1.2%
Psychology	1.2%
Sociology	11.0%
Tourism	2.4%
Biology	3.7%
Chemistry	6.1%
IT	8.5%
Environment	3.7%
Mathematics	3.7%
Physics	9.8%
Foreign languages	6.1%
Education	30.5%
Political Science	2.4%
International Development	1.2%
Others	2.4%

Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

The relationship between gender and level of employment of the subjects was also examined with a view to identifying gender representation in the employment level. The level of employment was classified into four categories, that is, lecturer, administrator, management and others (office staff). To examine the interaction between gender and the level of employment, a cross-tabulation is presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Cross-tabulation of respondents by level of employment and gender (N=100)

Level of employment	Males	Females	Total
Lecturer	36 (36.0%)	15 (15%)	51 (51.0%)
Administrator	7 (7.0%)	2 (2.0%)	9 (9.0%)
Management	25 (25.0%)	11 (11.0%)	36 (36.0%)
Others	4 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (4.0%)
Total	72 (70.0%)	28 (28.0%)	100 (100%)

Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

According to Table 5.4, of 51respondents in the "Lecturer" category, 36 were males, and 15 were females. In the "Administrator" category which referred to administrative and support staff, seven were males, and two were females. In the "Management category" which referred to managers, 25 were males, and 11 were females. Males dominated females in management positions in the university. "Others" referred to someone who held both management and teaching positions. All "Others" were males, with no females represented in this category. Four did not declare themselves.

5.3 Quantitative Data Analysis

5.3.1 Quality management framework

To explore this aspect, thirty-six items were incorporated in the survey questionnaire, designed to ascertain the perceptions of academics, staff and managers in relation to what constitutes a suitable quality management system. Each item was Likert scaled from 1 to 5. In addition to the Likert scale responses, the respondents were also asked to provide additional comments at the end of each part of the questionnaire, so as to provide a qualitative basis for probing the underlying conditions to the numerical responses.

The Likert scale response choices were: 1= Strongly disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Neutral (N), 4=Agree (A), 5=Strongly agree (SA). The responses were calculated by counts and percentages and can be referred to in Appendix 1.

In order to make it easier for readers, the scores of 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' choices for each item were summed and labelled 'A+SA%' (refer to Tables 5.5 to 5.9). The researcher

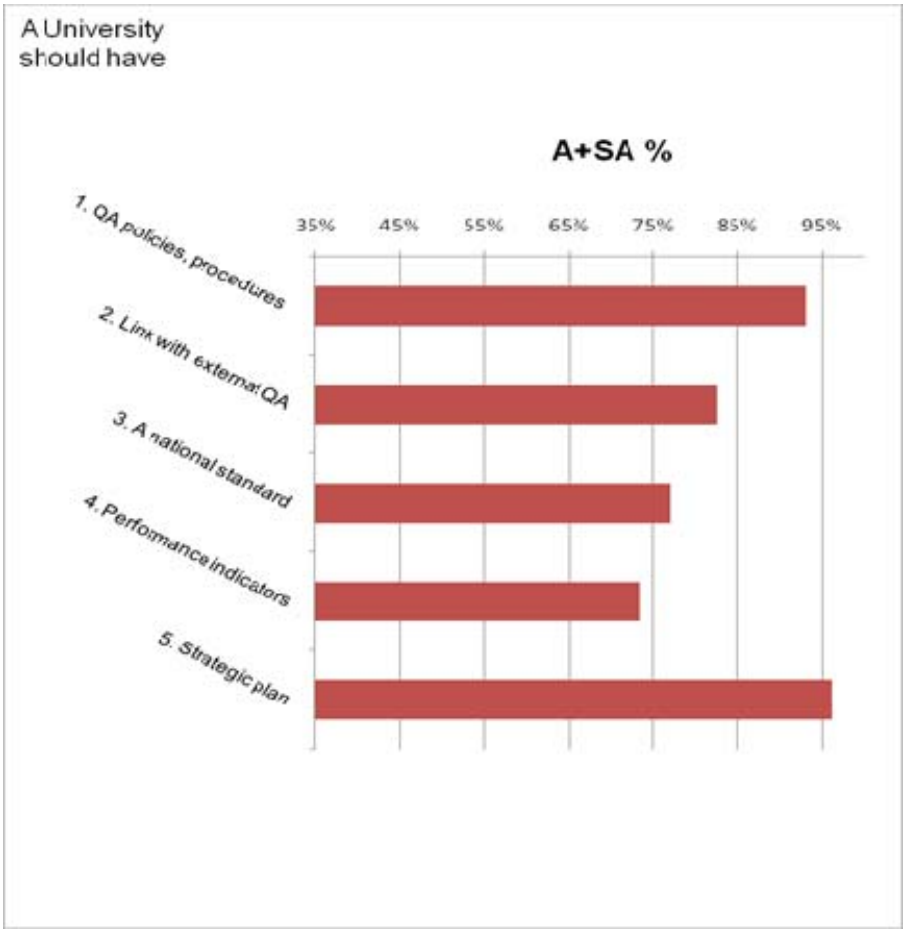
determined that if any item received 80% or higher of the 'A+SA%' choice, it became an acceptable element of quality assurance and a priority item for inclusion in developing a quality management system for a Cambodian university.

At the end of each category of the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide additional comments in relation to quality assurance activities in higher education institutions around the three research questions. This format allowed for a greater range of responses not possible in the questionnaire. Additional comments are analysed and summarised at the end of each category of the survey.

Category 1: quality management tools

Item 5 in the first category of the survey questionnaire labelled quality management instruments received the highest level of agreement (Figure 5.1). (Also refer to Table 5.5 in Appendix 1). The statement was related to 'strategic planning for teaching, learning and research', for which 96% of the respondents chose the 'A+SA' option. Item 1 related to 'quality assurance policies, manuals, and procedures', receiving the second highest level of strong agreement; followed by item 2 with the statement relating to 'internal quality management system linked to external accreditation standards, e.g. the ACC standards'; and then item 3 related to 'a set of national agreed minimum criteria for assuring specific professional programs (such as sciences, engineering, and so on) by professional bodies'. However, Item 4 which related to 'key performance indicators for teaching and learning outcomes', received below 80%. Although the proportion of those in agreement with this item 4 was low, there was no exclusive disagreement, as many respondents chose neutrality, constituting 24.5% of respondents. Moreover, the respondents expressed their support for having performance indicators as an element of a quality management system in the additional comment section of the questionnaire.

Figure 5.1 Quality management tools



Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

Additional comments related to Category 1

The data of additional comments for this question was classified into three categories: quality management instrument; strategy for quality improvement; and quality of teaching and learning.

For 'quality management instrument', when a university wants to develop and implement its quality assurance system effectively, it needs to have in place the following quality elements: communication and information dissemination processes within the institution, quality assurance officers, a strategic plan, policy, guidelines and performance indicators for all areas, such as clear student admission, examination, staff promotion, and staff retention policies.

The comments for each element of quality were elaborated in detail. First, participants argued that in order to sustain the process of a quality management system, the university must build up its communication and information dissemination processes within the institution,

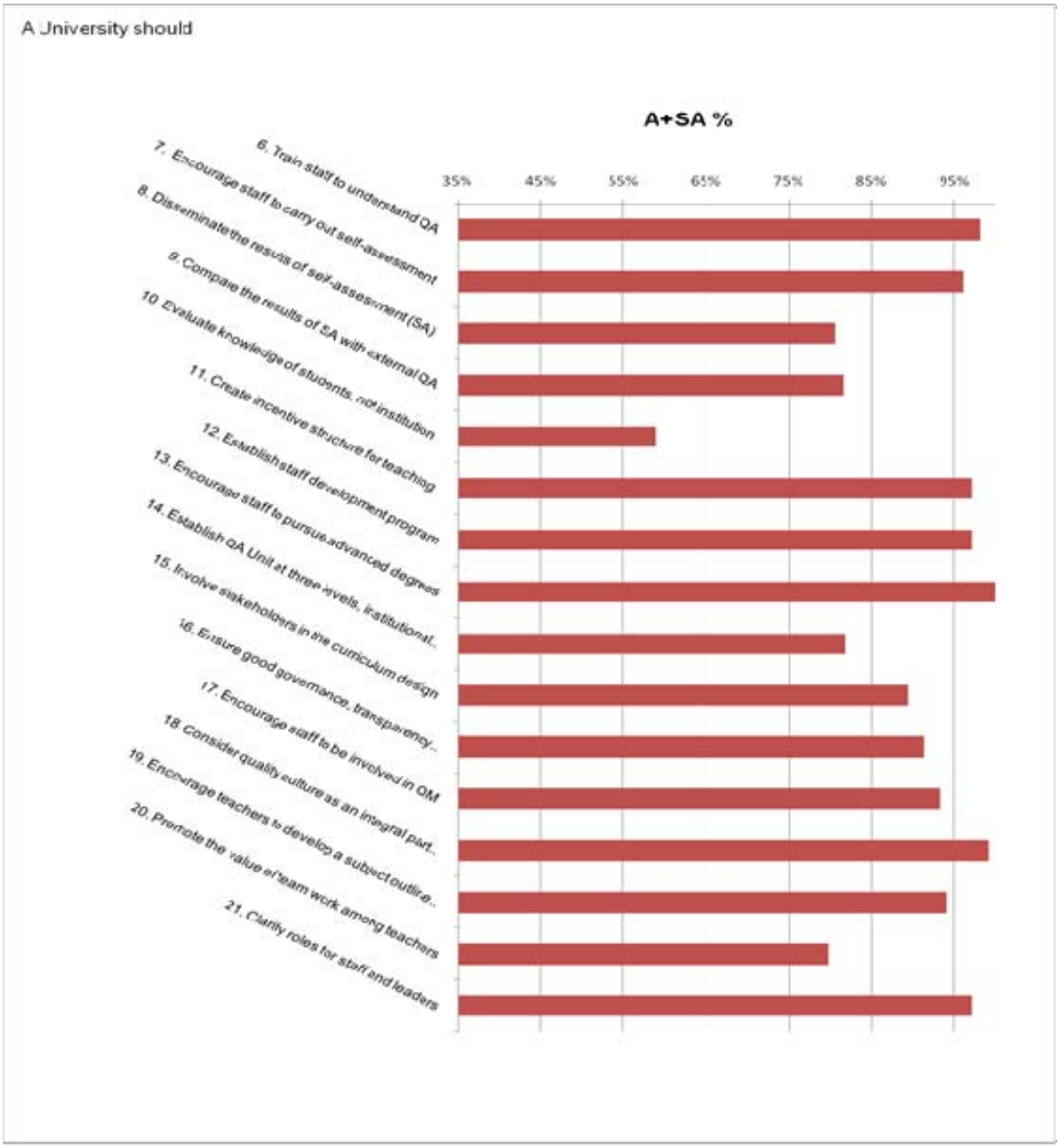
allowing for effective liaison between all the departments and faculty members. Second, the number of QA officers should be increased and the officers given enough time to organise quality activities. As well, a QA Office should be registered as a unit of the university and officially recognised by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS).

Third, respondents asserted that the university must set up a clear plan and objectives for teaching and learning and there should be a clear policy, guidelines and performance indicators for all areas, including staff promotion, recognition, retention, student admission, examination policies and the like.

Category 2: strategy for quality improvement

For the second category of Section 1 labelled strategy for quality improvement (Figure 5.2), the items were numbered from 6 to 21. Item 13 relating to 'encouraging academic staff to pursue advanced degree (Masters, PhDs, etc.)' received the highest level of agreement. The second highest level of agreement was item 18 relating to 'considering quality culture as an integral part of each academic's mindset'. Item 6 had the third highest level of agreement, namely 'training academic and administrative staff to understand the concept of quality assurance', and followed by items 11, 12, and 21. Item 11 related to 'creating incentive structures for good teaching'; item 12 related to 'establishing staff development programs'; item 21 related to 'clarify roles/responsibilities for staff and leaders'. Item 7 related to 'encouraging staff members to carry out self-assessment at the discretion of their department'. More than 95% of respondents were in agreement with the aforementioned statements.

Figure 5.2 Strategy for quality improvement



Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

There were eight statements relating to strategy for quality improvement, for which between 80% and 95% of the respondents expressed their agreements. These were items 19, 17, 16, 15, 14, 9, and 8. Item 19, referred to 'encouraging teaching staff to develop a subject outline for their students at the beginning of each semester'; item 17 related to 'encouraging staff to be involved in quality management'; item 16 concerned the need to 'encourage good governance, transparency, and accountability to stakeholders'; item 15 related to 'involving stakeholders in the curriculum development'; item 14 referred to 'establishing Quality Assurance Unit/Committee at three levels, including institutional, faculty and department';

item 9 concerned ‘comparing the results of self-assessments with external reference points’; and item 8 related to ‘disseminating the results of self-assessment of each department through publications’.

Two statements in relation to a strategy for quality improvement, which had the lowest level of agreement, were items 20 and 10. Item 20 was associated with ‘promoting the value of teamwork among academic staff’ and recorded 79.8%, whilst item 10 related to ‘evaluating knowledge of students rather than institutional processes’. About 59% of the respondents agreed with item 10, another 26% of the respondents were neutral, and only 16% expressed their disagreement with this statement. This indicated that both evaluating knowledge of students and institutional activities were important for measuring the quality of a university education and for improving quality. Further arguments are covered in the additional comment section.

Additional comments related to Category 2

With respect to the strategy for quality improvement, the respondents believed that the university should take into account multiple aspects of quality, including staff and student involvement in quality management, self-assessment, incentive structures and improving living standards for teachers, professional and staff development, training teachers and administrators regarding quality concepts, funding allocations for research, staff evaluation and appraisal, strict codes of conducts for teachers and students, building up a culture of trust and teamwork spirit, transparency in management, and office space and facilities for teachers.

In regard to staff and student involvement in quality management, respondents suggested that teachers must be given an opportunity to be involved in management, adding that students and teachers should be involved in discussions regarding quality management systems and students’ opinions and comments must be taken into consideration. Teachers and staff should be allowed to share their views in decision-making. The participants complained that there was a lack of attention by the management to teachers, leading to a lack of commitment and motivation.

For the self-assessment element, respondents pointed out that the university should examine its vision and mission through a regular self-assessment to find out where it stands, but the results of the self-assessment of departments should not be publicised. The university should use them for the purpose of continuous improvement, and it should compare the results of

internal self-assessment with that of other institutions which were at a similar stage of development. This comment was consistent with item 7 of the survey questionnaire.

In regard to incentive structures and living standards for teachers, participants strongly criticised that teachers did not have enough time to focus on their subject material; to make ends meet they had to 'moonlight'. The majority of the respondents strongly argued that living conditions of teachers must be improved so that they could pay much more attention to their teaching and research. They raised an example that if raw materials were good, but the factory was not good, the products would be of low quality. They went on to comment that the quality of the university could be improved if the university and the government provided teachers with reasonable salaries and paid attention to their well-being. For example, 'a cow needs to eat grass, and an engine needs to consume petrol, to be maintained, repaired, etc'. In addition, the respondents asserted that incentive structures did not exist in the university, and they argued that incentive structures for staff should be established. This comment paralleled item 11 of the survey questionnaire, which had a very high level of agreement.

Concerning professional and staff development, respondents stated that it was important to encourage teachers to pursue an advanced degree to upgrade their knowledge. The university should make it possible for qualified young staff to continue their studies, such as a Master's degree or PhD, in developed countries. Those whose English was limited should be trained within the country. Each department must establish staff development programs for its teachers, and organise regular workshops/seminars within the university, as well as provide staff with opportunities to attend workshops locally, regionally and internationally so that they could exchange their experience of good practices with each other. These comments responded to item 12 and 13 which also had very high levels of acceptability.

Regarding the training of teachers and administrators about quality concepts, respondents argued that the university should train teachers and administrators to understand the concept of quality management before its implementation came into force. This comment was consistent with item 6 of the survey questionnaire.

On the subject of research funding allocation, respondents pointed out that the university should allocate funding or a budget package for research and establish research teams on the basis of the field of expertise. It should encourage the teachers to do research and publish their work.

For staff evaluation and staff appraisal, participants suggested that the university should create staff appraisals and staff evaluations accompanied with incentive structures. At present, there is a lack of recognition of the staff's achievement and commitment from the management, and staff promotion is based on unclear criteria and procedures. They continued to comment that evaluating knowledge of students is important, but evaluating the management should not be forgotten because it can leave quality vulnerable. This statement responded to item 10, which received the lowest level of agreement.

Relating to the strict codes of conduct for teachers and students, respondents asserted that there should be proper entrance exams without cheating. Teachers and students must be strictly disciplined and exams must be strictly controlled, not allowing students to cheat. Teachers must be responsible for any misconduct during exams. Students must be instilled with a culture of hard work. The university must keep track of students' attendance. If they are absent, the university must ascertain the reasons for their absences.

As for transparency in management, participants argued that there was no transparency in financial management so top managers must demonstrate transparency and fairness regarding quality management. There must be no partisan behaviour and interference from leaders or powerful people for students who want to pass exams without working hard. These behaviours de-motivate teachers from participating in quality assurance. There should be a clear accountability from the leaders of the university to the faculty members. The university should be given freedom and autonomy to recruit its own staff, and a policy for staff retentions must be established to retain qualified staff.

Participants generally agreed that the university must establish a governing board to check and balance responsibilities. Rectors must be elected by staff members rather than appointed. Each member of staff has to play different roles in developing a quality management system. Position allocations were not based on expertise and knowledge of staff, as there was political interference in academic affairs. These comments were in response to item 21.

In connection with office space and facilities, participants suggested that there should be enough office space equipped with suitable facilities and equipment for teachers in order to motivate them to do research to update their knowledge.

With reference to building up a culture of trust and teamwork spirit, the participants asserted that there must be regular department, office or technical meetings so that teachers could discuss issues and share experience relating to teaching and management. Teachers should be

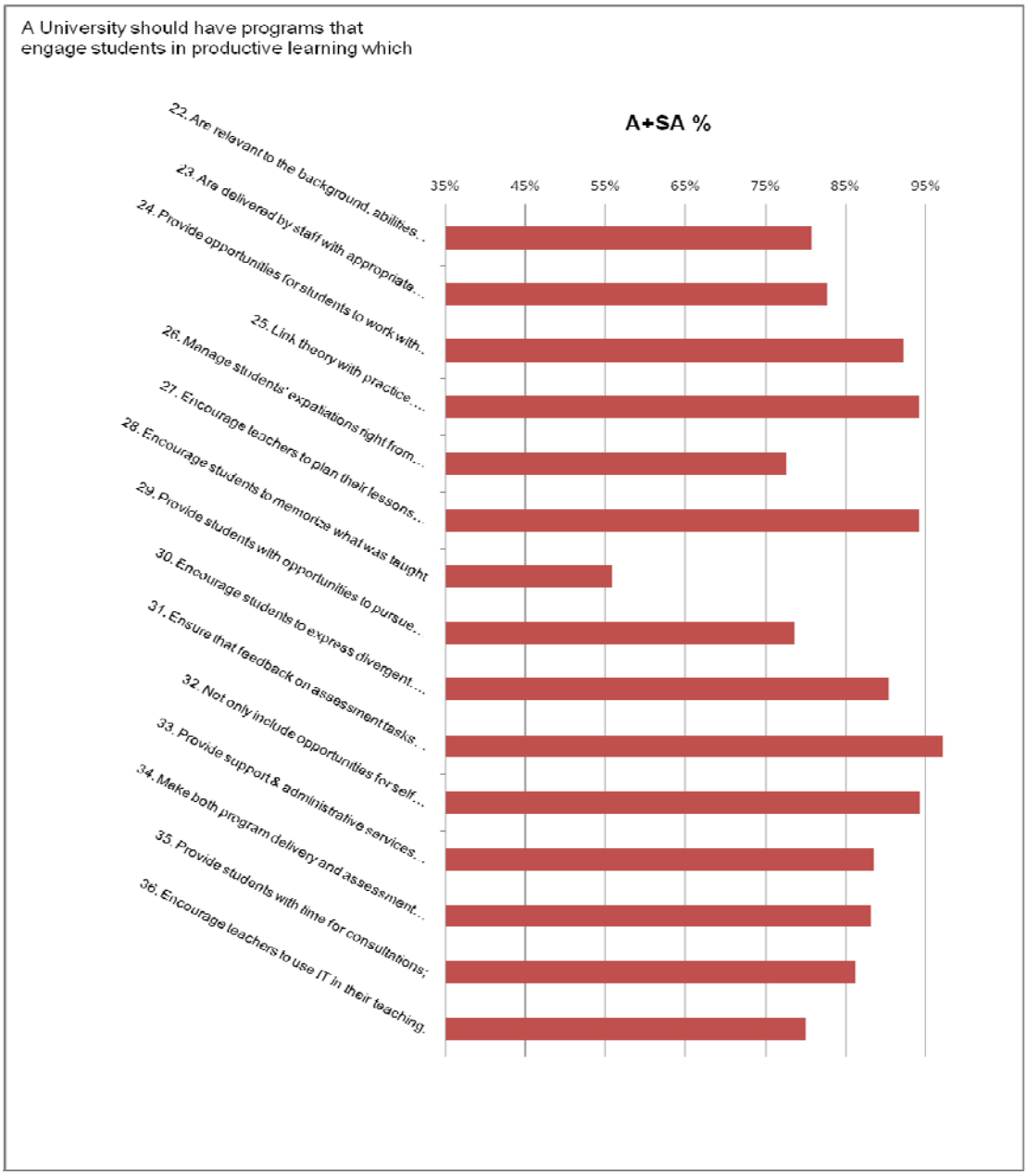
provided with opportunities to get to know each other better so that a culture of mutual trust and teamwork spirit such as peer observations of teaching could be established within the university, as there was a need for cooperation and mutual trust among faculty members in order to achieve quality goals. This statement was relevant to item 18 of the survey questionnaire.

Category 3: quality of teaching and learning

For the third category of Section 1, labelled quality of teaching and learning (Figure 5.3), item 31 received the highest level of agreement, for which over 95% of respondents expressed their agreement. This statement related to ‘ensuring that feedback on assessment tasks is both timely and focused’.

Between 80% and 95% of respondents agreed with 11 items in this section. These items were described according to the level of agreement. These were items 25, 27, 32, 24, 30, 33, 34, 35, 23, 22, and 36, listed in decreasing order of their response frequency.

Figure 5.3 Quality of teaching and learning



Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

Item 25 was related to 'linking theory with practice, especially through problem-based learning opportunities, real-life, and work-placements'; item 27 was related to 'encouraging teachers to plan their lessons with up-to-date contents'; item 32 stated 'not only include opportunities for self-managed learning but actively assist students in how to undertake it'; item 24 was related to 'providing opportunities for students to work with each other (student-centred)'; item 30 was associated with 'encouraging students to express divergent thinking'; item 33 was connected with 'providing support & administrative services which are responsive to student needs'; item 34 stated 'making both program delivery and assessment

suitable to students' knowledge"; item 35 was related to 'providing students with time for consultations'; this latter item also had a high level of neutrality.

Item 23 related to 'programs are delivered by staff with appropriate qualifications, e.g. PhDs', but this item recorded 14.4% of respondents as being neutral. Item 36 related to 'encouraging teachers to use IT in their teaching', and in this item a relatively high 15% of respondents recorded a neutral response. Item 22 was associated with 'university programs that engage students in productive learning are relevant to the background, abilities, needs and experiences of the students'. Although this item received relatively high level of agreement, 7.7 % chose the neutral option and 11.5% disagreed (refer to Table 5.7 in Appendix 1). This indicates that this aspect might not be relevant and suitable for the Cambodian context.

In this category, items 29, 26 and 28 received the lowest level of agreement, being well below 80%. In item 29, 17.5% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, indicating that the respondents were not familiar with 'providing students with opportunities to pursue flexible learning pathways'. Item 26 was related to 'managing students' expectations right from the beginning about the level of service, and support'.

Notably, 28.8% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to item 28. This might be due to the belief that memory (rote learning) was not a good thing, and that some elements of analysis or critique were viewed as important for engaging students in productive learning.

Additional comments related to Category 3

First, in regard to the quality of teaching and learning, respondents maintained that teachers should not be allowed to teach too many subjects and for too many hours in each semester so that they had time for student consultations. Allocating time for student consultations was essential as an aid to improving the quality learning of students. However, there must be a funding allocation to support this process. The managers must set up some rules that could minimise the burden of the teachers' workloads. This comment was compatible with item 35.

Second, teachers must provide feedback and comments on students' assignments in a timely manner. Comments should be short, precise and to the point. Third, education programs should provide students with not only knowledge, but also with morality, virtue and culture. As well, teachers should have high knowledge and morality. This comment was consistent with item 31 of the survey questionnaire.

Fourth, the university should create study programs which respond to the job market and economic growth. In order to do this, the university must conduct needs-analysis studies of the job market before developing new programs. The contents of science subjects should be up-to-date. The medium of instruction should be in English, avoiding translations and out-dated contents.

Fifth, respondents asserted that exam questions should be more analytical and less theoretical. Students should be encouraged to use critical thinking, not rote-learning because knowledge kept changing from time to time. The university must train students how to learn in a way that broadens their critical thinking ability rather than simply rote-learning. It could be concluded that this argument provided a strong support for items 28 and 30 of the survey questionnaire.

Sixth, participants argued that students should be advised about how to self-study. Students must be trained how to do research and to be innovative. Students should be assigned to undertake research projects relevant to their courses. Teachers should be encouraged to present papers and publish research papers. This comment corresponded to item 24 of the questionnaire.

Seventh, study programs must be delivered by teachers with a suitable degree, and teaching pedagogy. Teachers must be knowledgeable about their subject matter. Some argued that both experience and degrees are equally important, but experience stemmed from possession of a degree. However, some argued that the quality of teaching depended on activities and experience of the teachers, not only on having a higher degree. There was no guarantee that teachers with a Master's or PhD degree were always good teachers. Some teachers held a Bachelor's degree, and they could be good teachers if they had extensive experience, were willing to teach, and did research. This comment was congruous with item 23 of the questionnaire.

Eighth, teachers should be trained in how to use IT in their teaching. Teachers and students must be able to use IT for their research, teaching and learning. Laboratories must be equipped with modern equipment so that students could conduct their research and experiments. To facilitate students to do this, there was a need for competent and experienced teachers, who should be sent to receive training in universities in developed countries. Teachers should be able to provide students with documents and references relevant to their subjects and teach the students how to search for information via the Internet. There should

be remedial classes for slow learners. This comment was in line with items 36 and 26 of the survey.

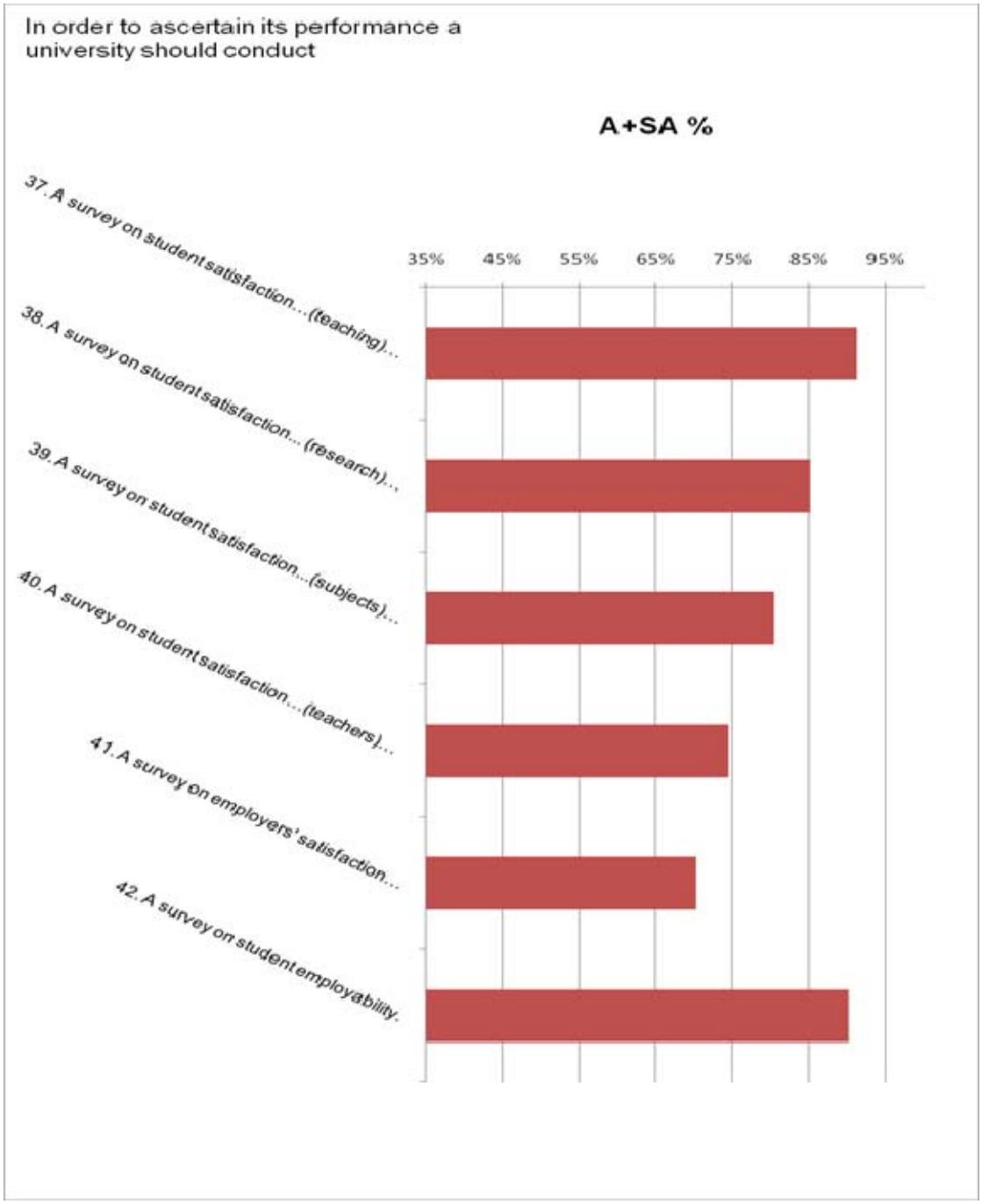
Based on the above-mentioned information, one could argue that for university programs to engage students in productive learning, it should first balance teacher workload and allocate time for student consultations. Second, teachers must give feedback and comments on assignments or students' work in a timely manner, direct and to the point. Third, the content of study programs must be relevant and up-to-date. Fifth, the program must instil students with analytical and critical thinking skills. Sixth, students should be trained to be independent learners and provided with research skills, and programs should be delivered by teachers with a suitable degree and pedagogy. Last, teachers and students should be provided with teaching and learning support, such as IT, Internet, etc, and trained how to use them.

5.3.2 Implementation of the framework

In order to examine this aspect, six items of the survey questionnaire were used to ascertain the perceptions of academics and staff in relation to how quality was tracked and managed effectively in daily practice in higher education systems. There were six statements in this category numbered from 37 to 42 (refer to Figure 5.4 below, and Table 5.8 in Appendix 1). Each item was scaled according a five-point Likert scale.

Two items had the highest level of agreements for this category, being item 42 which relates to 'a survey on students' employability', and item 37 relating to 'a survey on student satisfaction with its teaching programs'. Both items 37 and 42 achieved the same high proportion of responses, above 90%.

Figure 5.4 Quality tracking system



Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

For item 38 relating to 'a survey on student satisfaction with research degree programs', 30.7% of respondents chose 'strongly agree' and 54.5% chose 'agree', constituting 85.2% when consolidated. This was followed by item 39 relating to 'a survey on student satisfaction with subjects'.

However, items 40 and 41 had the lowest level of agreement, being well below 80% of response, and which was pre-determined as a border-line of acceptability. Item 40 was related to ‘a survey on student satisfaction with the teaching of individual teachers’, and item 41 was about ‘a survey on employers’ satisfaction with graduates’. Although the percentage of item 40 was lower than 80%, there was no exclusive disagreement since 17.6% of respondents chose a neutral position. Similarly, item 41 had a higher percentage of neutral responses, consisting of 26.7%.

In this respect, in 1988 when Australia introduced its first student survey of teachers, it was on a voluntary basis, meaning that individual teachers could use it for the purpose of self-improvement if they wished. However, it was then used for promotion because the system demanded some objective proof to show they were good teachers, although they did not have to use a survey. Most people used the survey because it was in common use, even though students did not really know what characterised good teaching.

Additional comments

For this question, responses were classified into the six elements, including course and teacher evaluation, a student employment survey, a student satisfaction survey on university activities, teacher satisfaction survey on management, assuring accurate student feedback and using it in appropriate manner, and the formation of a QA committee.

With respect to course evaluation and a teacher evaluation survey, participants asserted that the university should conduct course evaluations. However, there was a disadvantage using a survey on student satisfaction with the subjects studied because it was asserted that difficult subjects tended to receive a low rating from the students. In addition, a survey of student satisfaction with teachers’ teaching performance should be conducted. Teachers should be evaluated based on informed judgments to avoid affecting the feelings of staff members. As well, the management must observe teachers teaching. The results of the survey should be distributed to individual teachers so that they could improve their teaching performance in response to the needs of the students. This comment was consistent with items 37 and 40 of the survey questionnaire.

With reference to a student employment survey, the respondents suggested that the university must survey student employability from institutions concerned. We should conduct a study on graduates to ascertain how many students were employed and to find out whether their

studies are relevant to the jobs because some students might get a job that did not require a degree; for example, factory workers. This argument was also in line with item 42.

Regarding a student satisfaction survey about university activities, respondents contended that we must conduct a survey of student satisfactions with classrooms, facilities, computer laboratories, parking space, parking fees, canteens and food costs, and the library.

In addition, the university should conduct a survey of teacher satisfactions with facilities and the management of the university, such as teacher workload, policy for minimizing the burden on the teachers, and the like.

More importantly, the university must ensure that the student feedback is accurate and used in an appropriate manner. They were concerned that information from the survey on subjects or teachers might not be accurate because students did not like to study difficult subjects. Some students did not like teachers who were strict so they gave these teachers low points. However, the key question was whether the university had enough time to do them, as there were a lot of surveys.

Last but not least, they suggested that the university should form a QA committee, consisting of professional people in similar fields of studies. For example, people whose areas of study were in Chemistry, should not be involved in an evaluation of Khmer Studies.

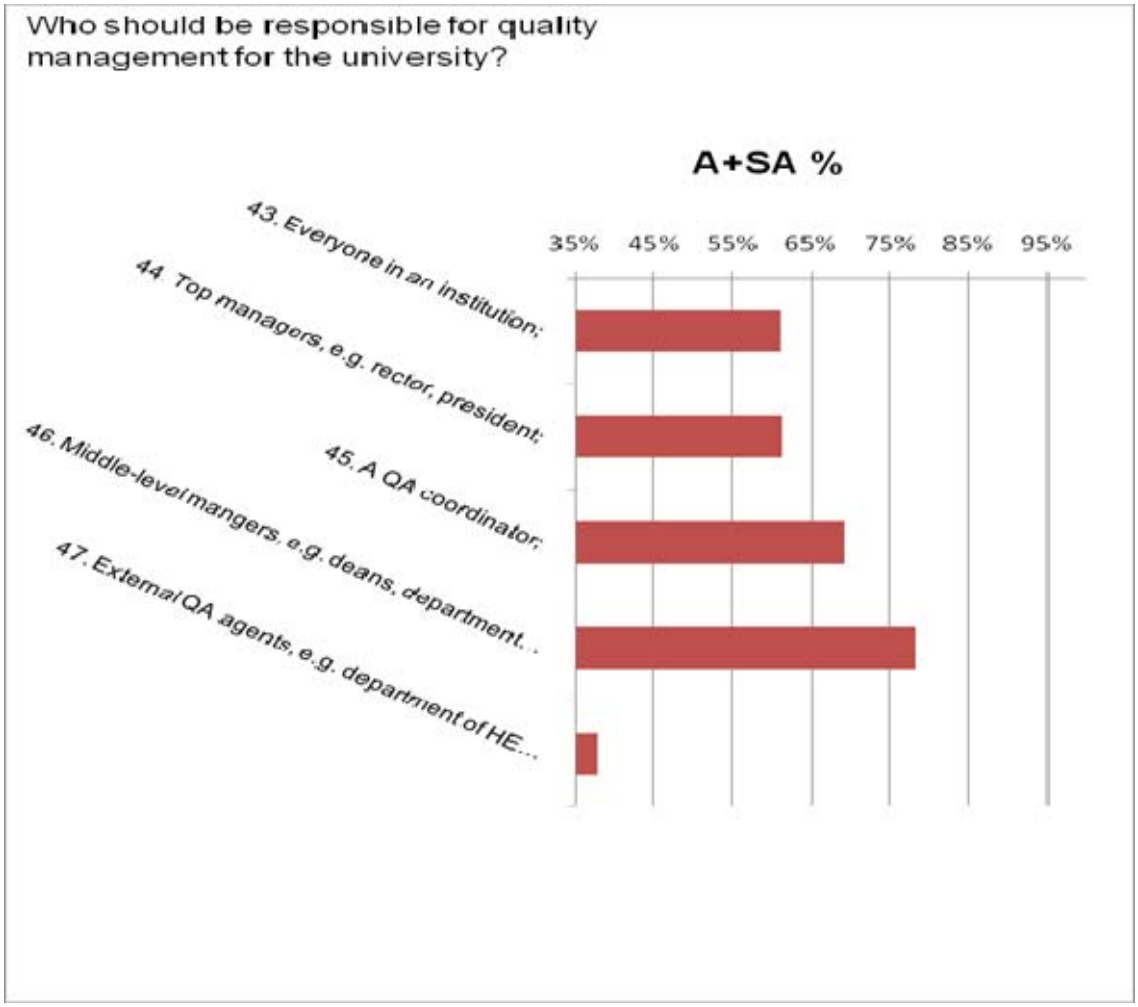
5.3.3 Leadership in the development and implementation of the framework.

With respect to leadership in the development of the system and its implementation, five statements were itemised using a five-point Likert scale, and numbered 43 to 47 (refer to Figure 5.5 below, and Table 5.9 in Appendix 1). Items with lower than an 80% score for ‘strongly agreed’ and ‘agreed’ were determined as being of borderline acceptability. No items scored higher than 80%.

For item 46 relating to ‘middle-level managers, e.g. deans, department…’ 29.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and 48.5% agreed, summing to 78.2%, were of the view that quality management for the university should be led by middle managers, while 11.9% were neutral, 5.9% disagreed and 4.0% strongly disagreed with the statement.

For item 43, which referred to ‘everyone in an institution’ being involved, 31.6% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 29.6% agreed, constituting 61.2% in total, while 23.5% chose the neutral option, 9.2% disagreed, and 6.1% strongly disagreed.

Figure 5.5 Involvement in Leadership and Implementation of QA



Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

For item 44 relating to 'top managers, e.g. rector, president', 61.4% of the respondents agreed to this statement; whereas 21.8% were neutral; 16.9% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed, constituting a total of 19.9% in disagreement. To find out the proportions of participants in various positions who answered this question, a cross-tabulation of level of employment, or positions, and the 'top managers' item, was conducted (refer to Table 5.10 in Appendix 1). The table showed that of the 39.8% of respondents who 'strongly agreed' with item 44, 19.4% were in management roles, 6.1% were lecturers, and 4% were administrators. Of 22.4% of the respondents who 'agreed' with this item, 6.1% were management, 14.3% were lecturers, and 1% was an administrator. Of the lecturers, 9.2% disagreed, while only 3.1% of management disagreed with this item. Based on the sample size of 51 lecturers and 36 managers, one could argue that the management had a higher level of agreement with this item than lecturers.

For item 45 relating to ‘a QA coordinator’, 69.3% of the sample agreed that a QA coordinator should be responsible for quality management for the university, while 12.9% disagreed, and 17.8% chose to adopt a neutral stance. Last, but not least, for item 47 on ‘external QA agents…’ only 38% agreed, but 36% neither agreed nor disagreed, and about 26% disagreed that external quality assurance agencies had a role to play in implementation of the quality assurance within the university. Although percentages of these items were low, there were no exclusive disagreements due to the fact that many respondents chose neutrality for these two items (45 &47), especially item 47.

Additional comments

For this category, there were conflicting ideas, as some argued that top leaders should be responsible for the development of the quality management system and its implementation, as there was political interference in academic affairs in Cambodia. This indicated that top leaders had power and authority to make decisions, and decisions could also be made at a political level – a top-down process. This required a strong commitment from the leaders. Top management must direct the QA Unit to act as a coordinator. This comment was consonant with item 44.

Some argued that there should be an involvement of all levels of staff members. A quality management system worked effectively depending on the acceptance of responsibility and the commitment of all staff and top leaders. If any level of staff was weak, the whole system would be weak. There was a lack of cooperation and agreement among members, leading to difficulty in the implementation of quality systems. A QA committee should consist of a QA coordinator, middle managers, and technical staff. In order to assure the quality of an institution, individuals should have a sense of responsibility for the institution. In addition, to develop a quality management system there must be cooperation between the university and external quality assurance agencies. This suggestion was in accord with item 47. Based on a global perspective and through observation, external quality assurance agencies play a significant role in quality assurance arrangements in other countries.

However, there was a need for QA officials to facilitate the process of quality management and its implementation. The key question was whether the quality management system would provide teachers with academic freedom and independence of political pressure.

The findings of this section indicated that in order to develop a quality management system and implement it effectively, there was a requirement for the involvement and cooperation of

all levels of staff, including administrative staff and lecturers, middle and top-level managers of the university with facilitation from QA coordinators.

5.4 Qualitative data analysis

This section presents the results of both one-on-one and focus group interviews. The researcher categorised the data of the interviews into three inferential or (pattern) codes on the basis of three aspects presented in the survey questionnaire. These categories were: 1) quality management framework; 2) Implementation of the framework; and 3) leadership in the development of this framework and its implementation.

The interview data were coded into descriptive themes under each category. Under category 1 there were: theme 1: general perception of quality, theme 2: effective approach to quality measurement, and theme 3: quality management instruments. Under category 2 there were theme 4: strategies for quality improvement, theme 5: quality tracking system, and theme 6: implementation. Under category 3 there was theme 7: leadership. There were small elements of the data presented under each theme.

Category 1: Quality management framework

5.4.1 Theme 1: General perceptions of quality

This section explores views from participants in relation to conceptual approaches to quality with a view to determining a suitable approach to quality for a university. The interview data was analysed against various conceptual approaches to quality which were discussed in the literature chapter. These were: ‘conformance to specifications or standards’; ‘fitness-for-use’; ‘continuous improvement’; ‘fitness-for-purpose’; ‘multiple-approaches’; ‘exceptional performance or excellence’; ‘value for money’; ‘satisfaction of client’; and ‘value added’.

There was an on-going debate regarding the above approaches, as various conceptual approaches to quality emerged from the interviews. Two approaches suggested by the majority of the participants were ‘fitness-for-use’, and ‘satisfaction of the client’, followed by another two approaches which were ‘multiple approaches’ and ‘fitness for purpose’, followed by a further two approaches namely ‘conformance to specifications or standards’ and ‘value for money’, with the last one being ‘value added’. The ‘continuous improvement’ and ‘exceptional performance or excellence’ approaches, were not suggested.

Apart from the above-mentioned approaches, the participants also brought out questions and issues not apparent in the literature. These were: ‘quality as an abstract thing’ – having to do

with the ‘value we give to things or human beings’ (Sona). This illustrated the problem of quality management and quality assurance – to make something that was inherently abstract, more concrete, so we could assure it, dissect it and report on it. This issue here was to ensure that quality was not simply reduced to the instruments which were designed to measure it – the instruments must always be subjected to critical analysis, they should not be reified as being ‘quality’ – quality was something that lies outside the instruments used to measure it. Perhaps a quality assurance system needed to have an inbuilt and ongoing review of its own practices, and the values and conceptual and philosophical thinking which framed those practices. For example if we say that quality was about ‘conformance to specifications’, we were treating education as a commodity – the desirable qualities of which could be determined in advance and the ‘product’ measured against these qualities.

In higher education we attempt to measure quality through specifying graduate attributes, course outcomes or competencies that needed to be achieved. But what was the difference between ‘producing’ a material product and ‘producing’ an educational product? First, the variables affecting the quality of a material product could be controlled more effectively and so improvements in quality were concerned with improving control over all the variables, which often means standardisation and fine-tuning of processes. However, educational institutions and teachers could not possibly control all the variables influencing graduate attributes. One participant argued that ‘virtue’ was an element of quality (Martine) – but ‘virtue’ was not something manufactured in an educational environment. The best that could be said was that educational experiences could influence the attainment of ‘virtue’ – but universities could not measure, let alone be held to account for, the attainment of ‘virtue’ by their students.

5.4.2 Theme 2: Effective approach to quality measurements

Some higher education institutions in different countries use a different kind of measurement of quality. Some evaluate their quality against the mission or objectives of the institution; some evaluate against the job market and a notion of employability; some evaluate against student satisfaction. So the key question is what approach to quality measurement fits in well in the Cambodian higher education sector.

The participants in this study provided various arguments in relation to quality measurements that would be used to measure the quality of a Cambodian university. The interview data was

coded into small elements of quality, namely mission and objectives, student employability, job market analysis, benchmarking, and a multi-aspect approach.

5.4.2.1 Mission and objectives

The participants who participated in this study argued that a university should measure its quality against the stated missions and objectives (fitness for purpose). The mission and objectives must be relevant to the Cambodian context. As one participant put it:

> I think the university should measure its quality against the mission statement because it gives us a clear direction where we should go (Darony).

Similarly, another participant also argued:

> We need to have vision and mission statement; if we can't achieve our mission, there must be something wrong. We need to achieve our goals and mission and at the same time we need to provide our students with the ability to pursue lifelong learning and they must, in return, contribute to society. So we need to achieve both. For example, our students are good but we do not achieve our mission, meaning we lose one aspect (Praksokhon).

This shows that the university must set up its mission and objectives, as they provided the university with an explicit direction where it wanted to go. The evaluation of mission and objectives should be done on a regular basis to observe how the university performs. However, there were some contradictory arguments against the idea of quality measurement of the university relative to its mission, for, as it stands, the university quality was measured against its mission only as long as the university was well established with quality assurance processes. Most of the participants argued that measuring the quality of a university against its mission and objectives was not good enough because some institutions might use an inappropriate or an inadequate mission which could be achieved easily. It was hard to establish an appropriate mechanism to measure the mission. Another participant also expressed in a similar way that if an institution just looked at its mission, the question was whether its mission was appropriate or acceptable or not and whether it was measurable.

Another participant asserted that when an institution placed more emphasis on a mission, the institution might not be able to respond to an ongoing demand of the job market, in which context there might be a lack of relevancy to the needs of the job market. He added that:

> If a university measures its quality against a mission that is based only on its relevance to the job market, no matter how a university sets up its mission, it is only ever training students for that job market. (Monak).

They went on suggesting that the university should be evaluated against student employability.

5.4.2.2 Student employability

In this section, some of the participants contended that the quality of a university must be measured against student employability. One participant argued that:

> I think we should look at students whether they are equipped with knowledge, know-how and morals and respond to the job market and the development of society and a knowledge-based economy. They not only can work for others, but also can create job for themselves and for others (Martine).

Other participants contended that:

> Society consumes our products so let society evaluate our products because we train people to work for society. If we provide our students with the knowledge required by society and are meeting the needs of the society, the society will consider that our university is of quality (Khoeurn & Menghong).

However, some participants argued that to measure quality against employment one must ensure that students were employed in the related field of their training programs at a university or higher education institution. Some students got a job but it was completely irrelevant to what they studied at the university. It was not acceptable to measure the quality against such employment.

> For example, a student studied sociology, but he or she worked in a restaurant upon his/her graduation. I think it was not acceptable when we measure quality against employment (Kura).

Another participant strongly argued that it was hard to measure quality against student employability since sometimes students could not get a job right away after their graduation. He illustrated:

> It is hard to assess a university against student employability. I think if so, it might take two or three years for a university to be accredited. If students can't find a job today, they will find one in the future. They won't be unemployed for the whole life.

> Some people do not understand while studying, but they can understand later in life. (Theng)

5.4.2.3 Job market analysis (or market-oriented approach)

Some participants asserted that job market analysis was a critical approach to quality measurement because the labour market was the place which provided graduates with employment. There was a need for job market analysis so that a university could develop its curriculum or study programs in response to the needs of the labour market. The need for flexibility was needed, as our system was being affected by globalisation. Mary argued that:

> Quality refers to products that respond to the needs of the market. If we produce a large quantity of products which can be absorbed by the market, we can say that our products are of quality but if we produce more than the market can absorb, it is an issue ... The products that are considered quality last year may not be relevant to the needs of the job market today (Mary).

Similarly, another participant was also in agreement with the job market analysis, as he believed that it would help an institution with its curriculum development and instructional designs in response to the demands of the labour market. He went on:

> We should conduct a needs-analysis of the job market to ascertain what skills are needed when they recruit employees and use the results of the study for developing a curriculum. So we need to have a network with the market because each individual student aims at getting a job, so the job market is important. If students' knowledge responds to the requirement of the job market, our training programs are of quality (Huiy).

Likewise, participants, Kolphanha and Charley, suggested that the job market such as community or society that employed our students is the one that can make the judgement about quality. They were ones who made decisions about the quality of our graduates so feedback and comments from the community and society were significant. In the meantime, their inputs must be integrated into our study programs or courses.

> We can't determine [the] quality of our programs by ourselves and let the job market decide because we produce students but the market uses our students. So in order to satisfy customers we need to look at the needs of the job market and society (Kolphanha & Charley).

However, there was a concern over too much emphasis on the responsiveness to the job market, as it might contradict the university's mission and the university also focused on other dimensions of quality besides the job market. Maley argued that:

> A university should organise workshops or conferences to get input from employers for developing our curriculum but we can't teach our students to be responsive to the job market only because the university's mission is more than satisfaction of the job market and it needs to focus on other aspects of quality as well (Maley).

5.4.2.4 Multiple-aspect approach

In this respect, the participants considered that the quality of an institution derived from the various dimensions of the institution. All institutional activities and daily practices of the faculty members contributed to the success of the institution. Therefore, multiple aspects of quality must be taken into account. As Bona put it:

> In the case of our university, we should reform student admission policy and criteria for scholarship students. We should have a clear admission policy for fee-paying students, making sure that students are appropriately selected and avoiding selling degrees. The process is very important because we need to look at teaching staff, facilities, IT support for teachers and students, so there are a lot of things that we need to consider (Bona).

In addition, other participants also expressed a similar agreement that multi-faceted elements of quality must be assessed, as quality was an abstract thing that is needed to be reified. As Khoeurn described it:

> We need to look at every dimension of quality – internal and external … employers, society, job market, etc. (Khoeurn).

> We need to integrate all dimensions into one. We should synthesise all measures. If an institution can achieve its mission, the institution almost fulfils the requirement. But we should not ignore employer satisfactions because they absorb our products so we need to combine employer satisfaction survey and mission achievement (Martine).

> When we measure quality we should not look at a few factors of quality. We should not look at mission only. So we check all factors and to which factor we want to give priority. We should integrate all aspects – management, teaching, learning, services and outputs (Boeurn).

> We should look at vision, mission, student satisfactions other supporting services, etc. I don't agree with 'value for money', which is popular for the government. We need to look at various dimensions such as mission, student employability and the image from employers (Mony).

These comments indicated that the university must evaluate multiple aspects of quality. However, it was impossible for the university to conduct all activities at a time. There was a need for the university to make an agreed decision about how to prioritise its aspects or activities of quality. However, the question is how the university was able to use a multi-aspect approach to measure in tandem with scarce resources, as this approach is time consuming and needs more resources. As it stands, the university is in the face of financial constraint and almost all its staff 'moonlight' to top up their minuscule salaries from the government. As Rathana illustrated:

> Based on my opinion, if teachers are reasonably paid, quality will be improved. I have been thinking for quite a long time about the reason why our teachers do the moonlight because they are under paid. If they are well paid, they will pay much attention to their teaching and research. Teachers can't afford to buy books for their teaching and research. For example, teachers and students of my department can conduct research provided that the department receives financial support from some external funding agencies.

In addition, there were two big constraints, one of which was political interference that did not allow higher education institutions to implement their quality assurance processes to the full extent of their academic freedom and professional autonomy. Another issue was related to student assessment, where teachers were pressured by leaders to pass students, irrespective of the students' abilities, in an attempt to prevent students leaving the university to participate in other institutions. Both the assessment and independence of the institution are crucial, for if the institution achieves the right balance with the assessment, it would be able to maintain and enhance the quality of the students. As Ravy described:

> Universities in Cambodia are special because almost all universities are linked to political parties. Whatever they do is for a party. I agree that people need to affiliate with political parties, but they should use university to serve political purposes that's why we need to wait for a green light from party leaders before we can do something … Another, the university must be strict with student assessments because even

> though students perform poorly, they are still able to graduate. In fact, of 80 students only 10 or 20 can graduate but the leaders asked the teachers to compromise this matter. The leaders have no willingness to tighten the student assessments, as they are afraid of affecting popularity of a party. They just count the number of the graduates; if the number of the graduates increases they claim that they are successful. I would like to appeal to the university that it must be independent of political control (Ravy).

5.4.2.5 External reference point (Benchmarking)

The participants argued that there was a need to utilise external reference points to allow the university to see where it stood in comparison with some local and regional higher education institutions. However, comparison with universities in developed countries was not suggested at this stage, as the university was still in its development infancy.

> At this point, our country is a developing country; it is true that we should use our standard, but we should not forget to compare with some universities in the region to find out at what level we stand compared to universities in the region ... If we don't compare, we do not know how good we are. So we need to compare it with that of local and regional universities (Huiy).

With respect to external reference points another participant provided a similar argument that benchmarking was significant, as it allowed the university to compare its performance with that of other universities in relation to student employability. He stated that:

> Personally, to measure quality the university should compare its quality with that of universities in the region, but we can't compare with that of universities in developed countries (Narak).

Having said that external reference points were important for the university to see its performance in comparison with other universities, it was difficult for the university to compare its quality, as it offered courses or programs mostly related to liberal arts education which made it hard for the graduates to compete in the job market, particularly in the private sector. In regard to this argument, Menghong pointed out:

> It is hard to compare with graduates from other universities in the country, as most of the courses (liberal art education) are not relevant to the job market in the private sector. Most of the university students are from low socio-economic backgrounds, while students from affluent families study at universities offering courses demanded

by the job market in the private sector such as business, accounting, marketing (Menghong).

5.4.3 Theme 3: Quality management tools

A lot of well-established higher education institutions in the world have clear quality management instruments – QA policies, manuals, procedures, guidelines, key performance indicators, and the like. Based on a global perspective, external quality agencies played a critical role in influencing quality assurance in the higher education sector. However, a key question was whether a Cambodian university had these instruments or not, and whether its internal quality management system should be linked to external accreditation standards, for example the ACC standards, the Department of Higher Education, and so on. So the purpose of this section was to ascertain the participants' views concerning quality management instruments of a Cambodian university. The interview data was coded into four issues which related to the non-existence of quality management tools, reasons behind the lack of quality instruments, their significance, and strong internal standards linked to external quality standards.

Quality management instruments – including quality assurance policies, manuals, procedures, guidelines, key performance indicators – were very important for use in measuring the quality performance of universities and higher education institutions, but almost all higher education institutions in Cambodia did not have them in place. Although some higher education institutions claimed to have some of these tools, they were not good enough, and there was little or no implementation. As one participant put it:

> Both private and public universities do not have these instruments yet. Even the City University does not have these either. Although the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) recommends that all universities establish their internal Quality Assurance Units (IQA), they do not pay attention to it and do not have suitable people to manage it. The MoEYS's recommendation on the establishment of the IQA is to help institutions to establish their quality mechanism, as these Units are responsible for establishing these tools. Honestly speaking, not only universities do not have these tools but also the MoEYS does not have all of them. Although the Ministry has some of them, they are still not good and so does that of the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC). I think these tools are important. If you don't have them how [do] you measure the quality. For instance, litre is used to measure liquid (e.g. water) or

> kilogram is used to measure solid materials (e.g. iron). The level of a river is measured by using a pole …. When we have these instruments, we need to have a clear mechanism to make them work (Martine).

There were a number of reasons behind a lack of commitment to the establishment of the quality tools. First, it might be in part due to a political interference and the top management's lack of commitment to policy enforcement. Second, an information dissemination system in relation to quality management agenda was not well developed. Third, there was a lack of an explicit guidance from the central agencies, which were responsible for quality assurance. Universities regarded them as not important because there was no legal ramification for universities for not having them. Fourth, there was a lack of people who had a broad knowledge related to an area of quality management. The participants observed:

> We have some of these instruments, but they have not been used. The top leaders must enforce these policies. When there is a directive from them, my department will enforce them (Lihak).
>
> Some universities are afraid of conducting, for example, teacher evaluation. This may be due to political interference …. Sometimes they produce a good handbook but it is not available to students and teachers… (Monak).
>
> Our university tends to do something behind closed door, and they may think it is associated with politics (Maley).
>
> In regard to QA policies, guidelines, etc I think we have them but information about them is not spread across the campus, so the university should disseminate this information widely to all levels of management and staff as well as students. We need to discuss this issue with staff, management and students to ascertain which QA instrument is suitable (Boeurn).
>
> When there is a legislative requirement and legislation is enforced thoroughly, it will move on automatically. As it stands, the reform of quality agenda should be incremental, not radical. I think the reform will be successful but it takes time (Khoeurn).
>
> We lack human resources because most teachers do not fully understand the concept of quality yet and they don't even know why we bother with quality. They can't participate in this process until they understand its importance (Hady).

Another participant also expressed in a similar way to Hady that the institution lacked human resources with the expertise related to quality management. This hindered the process of its development and implementation.

> The QA committee is developing these instruments, but I do not have in-depth knowledge in this area. The process progresses slowly. Every move we make and every step we take is as slow as a snail's pace (Mary).

On the subject of quality instruments, most participants strongly argued that they were important, as they provided an explicit direction that could lead to goal achievement of the institution. As well, they were significant for use in measuring the quality of teaching and learning and the quality performance of the whole university. Participants pointed out that:

> These instruments are important because they guide us in the correct direction. Without them, people walk on their own ways without a clear direction (Heang & Masar).

Likewise, another was also in agreement with the above participants with respect to the importance of quality management instruments:

> We must have KPIs so that we can measure the quality of teaching and learning …. Strategic plans give us an idea of what we are going to do in the future, such as vision, mission … if we don't have a strategic plan, we will be uncertain [about] what we are going to do (Tynarak).

However, there existed a counter argument among the participants about quality tools. They argued that quality tools are partly important, but they are not as significant as work ethics, resources and a culture of continuous quality improvement because quality kept shifting over time. Therefore, the university needed to conduct evaluation research so that it could redesign its programs to meet an increasingly changing technology. As one participant put it:

> It is partly important. More importantly, teachers must have work ethics in combinations of resources such as materials, technology and human power. Quality keeps changing over time. For instance, we receive an award of quality this year and we let it be. It means we need to work harder because quality next year is different from what we have now. We should not say this year's quality is better than that of last year, meaning that quality needs to grow according to time and place and to ascertain whether this year's quality matches with the requirement of this year or not (Bona).

Another participant expressed a similar view that quality tools were not as important as discipline for students, he asserted discipline for students has declined. They were also dependent on political will of the management because they were not willing to take any action, no matter how good the tools were.

> I think policy is just in a piece of paper. If there is no implementation, these tools are of no importance. Through my observation, after introduction of fee-paying programs, most teachers loosen the university disciplines for the students … if they are not willing to implement, these tools will be useless… (Krimeng).

The participants argued that the university should establish a strong internal quality management system but linked to external quality assurance standards determined by external quality assurance agencies, such as the AAC accreditation standards, and regional quality assurance agencies. However, there should be a strong link to external quality assurance standards set by central government agencies, as recommended, as accreditation in Cambodia is a must, meaning that an external evaluation conducted by the central agency is inevitable no matter whether the university claimed to use a regional or international quality standard. As the participants illustrated:

> Of course, IQA plays a very significant role in improving quality. Without IQA, the external quality agencies can't do anything; however, in the present situation, an internal QA system must be linked to the external one because the accreditation in Cambodia is a must. Although you use, e.g. ISO or whatever standards, you still need to be accredited by the ACC (Martine).

Some participants argued that the purpose of the university education was to train students to work for the society and community so there was a need for a link between the internal and external standards in order to obtain recognition and trust from the government, and the agencies concerned. Without these, our students would not be employed.

> There must be a link between an internal QA system and the external QA system. In our context, we need to stay under the umbrella of the central agency. If we are not under the umbrella, we will get wet (Mary). We can say our quality is good but if there is no validation from the external one, it won't be recognized and our students won't be employed (Samreth).

> In the current situation, we have to link the internal with the external standards although we want it or not because we are centrally controlled by the government, and if we do not abide by them, they won't accredit us (Krimeng).

Some participants suggested that the link between the internal and external quality system could lead to consistency between the two systems.

> We should link the internal and external quality standards because it leads to consistency between the two (Mony). Before formulating any policy we need to look at not only the ACC's policies, but also the MoEYS's because we are concerned about a lack of consistency with theirs (Nyda).

However, some participants expressed opposite views in reference to the link between the internal and external quality system, that each university had a different philosophy and was situated in a different context. Too much focus on consistency and a strong link could lead to bureaucracy, and a mismatch between the system and the philosophical, as well as contextual, relevance.

> Usually, we need to look at the external standards, but it is not necessary that we need to link with them completely because we need to look at our context. More importantly, the institution must have its own philosophy. For example, where does the university want to go? What does it want? To what extent does it want to contribute in the future? Based on this philosophy, we match it with the external standards. To me, we should meticulously select some which match with our philosophy... (Bona).

Similarly, another participant argued that although there was a need to use external guidelines contextual relevance was also needed to better suit the needs of the students.

> We don't have to follow them in everything but we need to use their guidelines to direct us and we can adapt it to suit the real situation because the external agencies do not know better than we do and what we need (Kolphanha).

In addition, Phalvirun pointed out that the key question was whether the university was technically and financially strong enough to establish an independent quality management system. There was a need to build up a culture of trust from the government. To do this requires a strong leadership and competent human resources so that the university could be independent of external control.

Category 2: Implementation of the framework

5.4.4 Theme 4: Strategies for quality improvement

There were a number of small elements of quality emerging from the interview data, which included teaching and learning, incentive structures, materials in Khmer, research, staff development, promotion and remuneration system, and prioritising scarce resources. Each of these elements is detailed below.

5.4.4.1 Teaching and learning

A relatively new approach to teaching and learning – a student-centred approach – was recently introduced to the Cambodian higher education sector. So a 'chalk and talk' approach to teaching and learning is still being employed in the university due to a lack of understanding of the effectiveness of the student-centred approach, and a lack of training about how to apply it. A supporting system for teaching and learning, such as materials, IT support, facilities, was inadequate and electricity was unreliable. Some teachers did not know how to use a computer and the Internet.

> The way that our teachers teach is 'chalk and talk'. We have not applied a student-centred approach yet … At present, our students completely depend on teachers and they only learn what they are taught. We do not promote an independent learning notion that is why our students lack self-confidence when they graduate (Bona).

The participants argued that the students' critical and analytical thinking skills are limited, as a spoon-fed approach to teaching and learning was well embedded and was preferred by most of the students in the Cambodian education system, making students passive and heavily reliant on teachers; there was the lack of a culture of independent learning, teamwork and sharing ideas and knowledge. These led students to lacking self-confidence and critical thinking skills. Another issue that limited students' ability to think critically was the fact that there was no balance between technical or professional knowledge and general knowledge (liberal art education). So, the key question was how the university could help students improve their critical and analytical thinking skills, as the majority of higher education institutions offered only technical and professional courses that were popular in the job market. Although the Foundation Year Program has recently been introduced for an undergraduate program, a formal study, or program, evaluation does not exist yet. The participants argued:

> It is difficult to introduce a student-centred approach because in our academic culture students get used to being spoon-fed. If I apply the student-centred approach, I will never get a good evaluation from the students (Samreth).

> Teachers still use a traditional approach to teaching, making the students passive (Kura). Through my observation, some teachers just go to classes and teach without giving students assignments. When students ask for something new, teachers might be angry with the students (Martine).

In addition, there was no IT support for students and teachers, and as a result most students did not have access to the Internet and did not know how to use it. For this reason, a spoon-fed approach to teaching and learning is employed on a regular basis, which did not allow the students to learn independently.

> As I observe most of the students learn in a way that is called a 'spoon-fed' approach. Most of the teachers just give lectures while the students sit still and take notes. Of 30 students of the third year in my department, only 3 or 4 students use the Internet and no one has an email address so the key question is, what era it is? From this experience I can make [the] assumption that the students in other departments are not much different (Darony).

5.4.4.2 Discipline

The participants highly valued discipline, as it was believed to contribute to quality. Students were not well disciplined and had little respect for teachers, especially fee-paying students, and they suggested that there should be a mix of scholarship and fee-paying students so as to increase the competition between them. As one participant complained:

> Fee-paying students are difficult to manage even though they bring benefits to the university. If we try to be strict with them, they will react against the teachers, leading to teachers being fired, so the teachers just ignore them to avoid conflict (Kura).

In order to avoid confrontation with the students and to retain them at the university so that they do not leave to participate in other institutions, the university lowered the fees and relaxed discipline. However, the participants argued that these kinds of policies and practices would not maintain student retention and was not a sustainable development.

> If we lower the fees and loosen our disciplines, we will not be able to sustain the quality in the long run (Kura).

Despite problems, some participants claimed that they used a number of approaches to teaching and learning which they thought workable and effective for their students. These were problem-based approaches, linking theory to practice, student-centred, divergent thinking, timely feedback and comments, and a student-background awareness approach. However, there was not an empirical study to justify these claims, as there were no teaching evaluations or peer reviews being conducted in the university.

5.4.4.3 Problem-based approach

The participants claimed that they used a mixed approach to teaching and learning between a problem-based and a 'chalk and talk' approach in their department. They thought that the problem-based approach was good and important but it required supporting facilities and teachers needed to be trained in how to apply it. As well, the problem-based approach required teachers to be involved in research activities, a reason why this approach was less likely to be used. Despite being claimed that they used this approach, its effectiveness has not been examined, as it was a new concept for the university and there was no any study conducted to ascertain how effective it was applied in the Cambodian setting.

> In my department we mingle a teaching-based with a problem-based approach to teaching … but we are not sure of how much success we receive because its results cannot be found in a short period of time and it is a new culture … so it requires that staff be trained how to use it … if we want to change the culture without an explicit explanation to the people, it won't be possible … a problem-based approach is good but if we do not have supporting elements, it won't work well … it is lucky that our department has young teachers who receive training abroad possessing the culture we want (Nyda).

5.4.4.4 Link theory to practice

The participants claimed a 'link theory to practice' approach was employed in their department. To assists students in linking theory to practice, the participants suggest that the university must align with enterprises and industries, as people in the market are more creative than people in university. As a participant argued:

> If they just work in a square office and don't have any contact with [the] outside environment, they will lack creative ideas. People in businesses and enterprises are at least more creative than people in universities. People in universities are good at something in a book, but they are not as creative as people in businesses (Bona).

In this respect, another participant was also in agreement with Bona and he expressed the view that:

> I have been teaching here for 20 years. To lift up quality we have to link theory to practice. For example, teaching about ecology we can't just talk about it in the class and they have to know ecology in the nature, so the students have to go on a field trip … other departments are akin to my department. For instance, Khmer Literature Studies students were taught in the classroom only, but now they are exposed to a fieldwork, visiting the Cambodian historical sites… (Narak).

5.4.4.5 Student-centred approach

The participants also asserted that they utilised a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. They found this approach is workable for their students, as it provided the students with an opportunity to express and share their thoughts and views. However, they admitted that it was difficult to introduce this approach to a large class. As one interviewee put it:

> Based on my experience, I have found that one teaching technique that works quite well with my students is that I ask them to read some parts of the article and to read another part in the class in groups and ask them to present what they read to whole class and I give feedback and comments alongside a handout with a summary of [the] whole lesson. By doing so, they have an opportunity to express and share their views and we just provide additional comments on what they miss. If a class is large I always give lectures so we need to be flexible to fit the real situation… (Bunthoeurn).

5.4.4.6 Student-background awareness approach

Understanding of students' backgrounds right away from the beginning of the course was significant, as the teachers could adapt their teaching to better meet the needs of the students. As one participant put it:

> A good teacher is the one who knows students' backgrounds right from the beginning, through chitchatting with them outside the classroom and gathering information concerning their feelings toward our teaching and then we synthesise it into a better solution… (Masar).

In this regard, other participants were also in agreement with Masar that it was necessary to learn the socio-economic backgrounds of the students from the beginning of a program, as this allowed for a readiness to find a suitable solution to a problem.

> Actually, in teaching we should not forget students' backgrounds and socio-economic backgrounds so that we can use a teaching methodology suitable for them (Bunthoeurn). … Students' profiles must be understood clearly. If we don't understand their problems and we just force [them] to work hard that is not going to work (Monak).

5.4.4.7 Feedback and comments

The participants also claimed that feedback and comments on students' assignments were important, as it helped students improve their studies if the feedback was meaningful, right to the point and fair. The results must be returned to the students in a timely manner. Some teachers never returned the marked assignments to the students, and they did not have enough time to give feedback or comments because they taught many hours, making the students lose interest and to be unsure of where to improve. The participants explained:

> For my subject, students are asked to do assignments and quizzes. I marked and gave feedback in a timely manner … but I am not sure of how other teachers do [it] for their subjects (Krimeng).

> Assignments should be assessed in [a] meticulous manner and given meaningful feedback and comments. Assessment criteria must be fair. The results should be returned to students in a timely manner (Trophy)

There was not an empirical study of these claims, as a formal teaching or program evaluation system did not exist. Some approaches were difficult to apply in the current situation for many reasons, such as a lack of well-trained teachers, facilities, resources, and an adequate remuneration system.

5.4.4.8 Incentive structures

Although some departments of the university claimed that they introduced an incentive structure, especially for the departments which were able to generate incomes through charging student fees, the incentive structure was in the form of responsibilities which were based on observation and judgement of the management team without being based on any explicit criteria or evidence. However, an institutional incentive system for good performance in teaching, research and community services did not exist, due to a concern about some possibilities that it might lead to having a negative impact on teachers' feelings and the relationship between teachers, and this culture was not well understood by most staff.

The participants strongly argued that the current system not only made the teachers de-motivated, but also passive. The teachers lacked motivation and commitment to participating in institutional activities. They lowered their productivity, as there was no difference between good and poor performance. As the participants put it:

> We are not advised to do it by the top management of the university. They said it affects teachers' feelings, adding why one person is the best, but no the others … we also propose the idea of introducing an incentive structure to the top management but they said it is not the right time to do it yet. They said it might lead to jealousy if there is something wrong happening and it might lead to ruining our solidarity because of a small thing (Mary).

> If there is not any incentive structure for good teaching and bad teaching, it makes no difference, good teachers will minimise their willingness and lower productivity (Bunleng).

> If there is no difference between good and bad teachers, we can't encourage them to teach better and there is no competition. To me, this is a must because it contributes to quality (Monak).

At this stage, monetary incentive is more important than others because the teachers' salaries are limited, but there was a need for clear criteria for assessment to avoid biases.

> I believe that a reward for good teaching is very good; for example, when I was first employed at a private university, I was paid $12 an hour and a few months later I received a good evaluation from the students and then my pay rate was increased up to $15 an hour so this is a kind of incentive … After that I pay very much attention to my teaching and work very hard to motivate the students ... I think it is important … in our university; although I try my best, it doesn't make any difference. I try to minimise my teaching hours little by little because the salary is not enough to support my life (Menghong).

The participants strongly argued that despite the monetary incentive being important, money was not the only thing that guarantees improvement of quality. There was a need to have accountability for all educational stakeholders, with transparency in financial management, and justice within the system. Moreover, there was a need to develop explicit criteria for evaluating good teaching and research performance.

> It is [a] very difficult thing to do and we need three components: accountability, transparency, and justice. We need to take responsibility for whatever we do must be just and fair. It doesn't mean that money can guarantee quality… (Bona).

Due to the current situation in the Cambodian context, some participants argued that the introduction to the establishment of an incentive structure could possibly lead to some disadvantages rather than positive impacts since this notion was not fully understood by many academic staff despite being well accepted by academic staff in developed countries. One participant strongly warned that:

> With respect to awards or incentives for good teaching, I think it can be good for universities in developed countries, but in our context we need to consider it carefully because it might affect the feelings of the teachers, leading to teachers having low morale. It won't work well with our culture in the current situation since people do not understand this concept well enough … we should wait until we have more people with higher degrees and reasonable salaries (Kolphanha).

Similarly, another participant asserted the introduction of the incentive structure might trigger a serious problem if there were no explicitly fair and just criteria for performance evaluation.

5.4.4.9 Materials in Khmer

The participants maintained that most reading materials and documents were published in foreign languages, such as English and French. There were not enough documents in Khmer. This made it difficult for students whose English was limited, to do research. Therefore, they always relied on the Khmer-translated materials from the teachers. As the participants illustrated:

> The majority of the students depend on the teachers so their knowledge is not broad enough due to several reasons. First, the students lack a reading culture. Second, there are not enough documents in Khmer so the students need to read materials in English but it is hard for those whose English is limited. These factors make the students lose their interests in reading (Bunthoeurn).

> We also lack documents and reading materials in Khmer (Heang). So far, there have not been enough documents, in particular in Khmer. And documents written in English are also hard to find because they are [an] exorbitant [price] (Masar).

5.4.4.10 Research Committee

The participants suggested that the university must set up a research committee to encourage and coordinate staff to do research. The committee's role would be to review the quality of research conducted by the faculty members, and to seek support and network with international publishers.

> First, we must establish a core team with a clear mechanism … because one person can't be the Hindu God with eight hands so we need to set up a committee within departments and encourage staff to do peer reviews … we need people who can work as a team to share knowledge and give each other feedback and comments… (Bona).
>
> I am in agreement with the idea that we need to have a committee or individuals responsible for checking the quality of research (Boeurn).

Of course, there was a need to form a research committee. However, the key issue was how the university generated funding for conducting research and retaining the trained researchers so that they did not leave the university. It was difficult to evaluate research quality since the university was in a desperate need for people holding a PhD to stand as a committee member.

> We should establish a research committee for the university, but we are concerned that how we can get funding because the MoEYS has no budget for research … We have also trained a number of teachers to do research, but they left the university to participate in other institutions (Heang).
>
> It is difficult to ensure the quality of research because the key question is who will evaluate its quality. I think the starting point is to establish a committee to evaluate research and then we should establish peer reviews with universities in the region and then in the globe (Narak).
>
> We do not have people with a PhD standing as a research committee to supervise students' research and it is hard for us to encourage our students and teachers to do research (Mary).

With respect to the question about how the quality of research should be measured and what level of recognition was given to the perceived of quality, almost all participants argued that research which was perceived as quality was the one which was relevant to the needs of local community and society at large. As the participants observed:

> Research that is considered good quality is the research contributing to the needs of the society … for example, the research on bats and its results contributes to Biology, and students can benefit from it, so we can say the research responds to the needs of the society (Trophy).
>
> To me, it is important that the results of the research is used. If it serves the public interests, it is of quality. I put more emphasis on its contribution to the needs of the society than quality (Nyda).

At this stage, developing a research culture within the university is more important than too much emphasis on recognition from regional or international communities in higher education in terms of quality assurance. The introduction to research should be started from small-scale research which would be published in a university journal. Despite this, there was a need for regional and international recognition in the future. As the participants put it:

> At this stage, we should build up a research culture first, and quality comes next … in the first place quality of research should respond to the national context .... We are not concerned much about the quality at this point of time because we just want to encourage our staff to participate in research actively (Mary & Lihak).
>
> First, we must encourage our staff to do research in order to promote their motivation to do research. We should start from a small-scale research to a large one and we need recognition from an internationally academic committee as well (Sona).

5.4.4.11 Staff development policy

A few departments of the university claimed that they conducted a staff development program for their teachers. The program was organised in the form of workshops, seminars, conferences, or presentations. However, an institutional policy for this program was not systematic or did not exist due to a lack of financial support, good governance and political will of the leaders. As a participant observed:

> Through my observation, there is little or almost no staff development program in both public and private universities and colleges. They do not even want to send their staff to attend workshops or conferences because they think that it does not benefit the school, but benefits teachers … the key question is whether we can catch up with the advancement of technology and economy … I have never seen any university paying their staff to attend trainings or workshops. I am not referring to poor universities but although some both public and private universities are rich, they have never spent on

> staff development. It is even more important that teachers receiving new knowledge can share it with their colleagues (Martine).

Some participants argued that most universities did not set up a clear objective as to staff development program, and teachers seldom shared their experience or knowledge with their peers even though they had an opportunity to attend local or international workshops or conferences. The participants contended that the university had a policy for staff development, but staff development activities existed in some departments only. To introduce this culture, the top management must take an initiative or appropriate action to ensure that the staff development policy was implemented across the university.

> Although some staff have a chance to attend conferences or workshops abroad, they rarely share their experience gained from that with others when they return. More importantly, there are no people taking an initiative to kick start the idea that when someone attends … they must share it with other staff … the question is when this program should start is hard to answer, but I think when a leader of the university thinks it is important, the project can start, but if he doesn't care whether they do it or not, it will never be able to start … If the rector sets up a policy and delegates it to the QA Unit or any office to do that job, it will work. But today no one cares about it because they think that it is an additional workload…. Even a monthly department head meeting, sometimes we can't make it, so I think staff development will be even harder to organise … because the people do the moonlight … So money and good governance have to go together… (Trophy).

The participants argued that the policy for a staff development program must be developed to avoid ad hoc decisions. Without an explicit policy, it was hard for departments and the university to organise this program in response to the needs of the departments and in an effective manner.

> It is difficult to manage staff development programs because we do not have a clear plan, instead we base [it] on a given opportunity. If any teacher is given the opportunity, he or she will seize it no matter whether their duty is completed or not. Although staff development is important, we need to have a clear plan to ensure that it is relevant to areas of teaching. So we need to have a clear objective of what we want in terms of staff development (Nyda).

Some participants argued that the top management expressed their views in support of staff development activities and expressed also their so-called commitment to it. Despite this, the participation of staff was limited, as most staff had another engagement outside the university to earn extra money to top up their minimal government salaries. Another issue which virtually became a culture of the university was that if there was no per diem for attendance, staff participation was low. In response to this, the participants maintained that if a policy for staff development were not strictly enforced, this culture would be deeply embedded in the academics' mindset. As one participant observed:

> We have conducted quite a number of workshops, to name a few, Chemistry, Physics Department etc., but the problem is that there are not many participants. It is a matter of time and money because they need to work at other institutions to earn extra money. It is difficult to organise it because if we want them to attend any training workshops, they need to be paid. This habit becomes a culture of the institution … I think even though they receive a decent salary, participation of staff won't increase unless a strict policy for staff development is imposed on them… (Theara).

5.4.4.12 Promotion and remuneration system

Academic and professorship rankings, which were based on a merit-based promotion system of teaching, research and community services, did not exist yet in the Cambodian higher education sector. Seniority and patronage played a crucial role in promotion or appointment for a position in the university. This led to having confusion over teachers' identities, as teachers proclaimed themselves as senior lecturers or professors once they were in the job for a quite a long time. For these reasons, the teachers' morale, productivity, motivation and commitment to the development of teaching, research and community service were low. As the participants illustrated:

> At present, some young teachers are good but they are not given a chance. If they can't be promoted as a rector or dean, they can be promoted as professors so they have a chance to move on. This encourages people to work harder and to improve their own competence in teaching and research (Bona).

> Now we get mixed up with the word 'professor', as this word is translated from French. Teachers who teach at secondary schools or universities are labelled professors, but we don't have the system yet. Even students, who graduate from

> Health and Science University with a Bachelor's degree, are called doctors, so we need to establish the law, criteria and requirement (Theng).

The possibility of establishing the policy on the subject of the academic staff promotion system is beyond the jurisdictions of the university, as the university had no autonomy to adopt it. There was a requirement for recognition from the MoEYS in conjunction with an agreement from the Ministry of Public Functions with political support from the central government because it was associated with civil servant regulations or laws in terms of salary structures which are complicated.

> I have raised this issue for a long time, but we don't have authority to adopt this policy until there is a directive form the MoEYS or from the Council of Ministers because it is to do with amendment of public functions and it is beyond our jurisdictions … if this language does not come from the top leaders of the country it is useless. We can adopt it when the university becomes autonomous but it is internally recognised only … in our context, if we do that, we might be spat in the face (Bona).

A similar argument made by another participant was:

> In the present circumstances, it is beyond the jurisdiction of the university because the university has no autonomy to develop this system. The system will not be recognised by the MoEYS … the Ministry of Public Functions determines the civil servants' rankings… (Samreth).

There were different answers to the key question whether there was any possibility of developing an internal staff promotion system for the university based on a merit-based performance in teaching, research and community service, and what ramifications the university might encounter in relation to its development and implementation. The participants argued that it was not possible to make it, as decisions on this had to be made at the ministerial level. But they expressed a strong support for developing it, arguing that there were more advantages than disadvantages if appropriate and fair criteria for evaluation were employed. Despite this, a conflict of interests would inevitably occur between young and senior teachers. To minimise this conflict and to make it suit the Cambodian context, it was suggested that there was a need to take into account academic performance, seniority, moral behaviour and political tendency in the promotion policy.

> It is impossible to develop this system internally since a decision is made at the very top level of the MoEYS. Frankly speaking, they will look at your ability to work,

> moral behaviour and political loyalty. According to the present situation, taking into account ability, length of service and political loyalty as the criteria for promotion is not problematic, but without one of the three aspects is not possible … in our context the three aspects are critical in the promotion system (Mary).

A similar argument was expressed by Kolphanha that the promotion criteria should not be too heavily based on a higher level of degree. There should be a more emphasis on research, followed by seniority with actual knowledge to do the work.

> I don't mean to humiliate someone who holds a higher degree, but he waffles, writes badly and never accomplishes any achievement. So we should not just base [the promotion] on level of degree. For example, some old teachers in our neighbouring country never had a higher degree, but they had worked for a long time and they are knowledgeable and able to answer all the questions asked by students while some young teachers with a higher degree were not able to answer all of the questions as those old ones did (Kolphanha).

Some participants expressed their ideas which were in contrast to Mary and Kolphanha's arguments despite the fact that they all agreed to the introduction of the system. The counter agreement was that if merit-based performance in teaching, research and community services was introduced, a conflict of interests might arise between senior teachers and young teachers, as most senior teachers' ability to do research was limited and they seemed to have no intention of pursuing further education.

> There are more advantages than disadvantages in the introduction to the system, but we can't introduce it rapidly due to the fact that a legacy of the culture that has undergone different political ideologies and generations. For example, if we design it to suit one cohort, it might not suit another. Although advantages are more than disadvantages, it requires a suitable mechanism to avoid a negative impact or a conflict of interests (Nyda).

> One disadvantage may emerge from this system because there still exists a traditional perspective of old teachers, and they may be jealous of young teachers who hold a Master's degree and publish a few papers, leading to being more quickly promoted. Old teachers may say they have been teaching since 1979 and why are they not promoted. Although they are encouraged to do research, their research skill is limited. If they are forced to pursue further education … they won't be able to go because

> most of them are going to retire soon. This can affect their feelings … This will lead to resistance to change (Maley).

Despite being enthusiastic about the possible introduction of a staff promotion system for the university by the majority of staff, the key question emerged whether under the current situation the university enabled the teachers to do research or not, seeing that their salaries were very low in comparison with the living cost. To make ends meet they needed to teach as many classes as they possibly could. Some participants argued that the promotion system, based partly on research and community service, would not be implemented successfully unless a remuneration system was taken into consideration. As the participants put it:

> Although they are forced to do research, they won't do it … because they have already shouldered over workload of teaching. So, staff's salary must be taken into account…. To me, I won't do it, either … if the MoEYS does not take into account factors affecting the living conditions of the staff members. According to the current circumstances, the research-based approach to the promotion system is not going to work (Cydeth).

> We should introduce the system, but we need to handle it with care … As teachers' living conditions are low, so they are not strongly committed to the system (Kolphanha).

Another participant agreed that the need to improve the living conditions of the teachers must be prioritised before compelling them to do research. However, he argued that a policy should be established to prevent the culture of 'moonlighting' from continuing, as some teachers still want to teach many hours or 'moonlight' even though they are able to earn a decent living wage.

> More importantly, we need to develop a strict policy for research to stop the teachers from moonlighting because they always want more money if they have an opportunity to make it, despite having enough salaries; this is due to the legacy from high-ranking government officials. Even though they are high-ranking government officials, they still have another private business. So it becomes apparent that our society encourages people to be an opportunist. For example, some teachers can earn a decent salary, but they want to teach more and earn more if the opportunity is available to them… (Phalvirun).

Even though the university had a good quality management system, there was no guarantee that its implementation was working effectively in daily practise, because the university is in a situation of financial constraint. As a participant put it:

> Sometimes we have a good plan established by a lot of good ideas from the stakeholders but our economic situation does not allow us to implement it effectively. So the quality management system should be relevant to resources we have. If we just have a good system but it is not implemented, it is of even more failure than we don't have it… (Bunthoeurn).

5.4.4.13 Prioritising scarce resources

Many participants expressed their strong support for the possible establishment of incentive, promotion, staff development policies, and the like. Having said that, the key question was how the university allocated its scarce resources to support the development and implementation of these policies in a sustainable manner. In response to this concern, some participants suggested that the university was able to generate incomes from charging student fees. With scarce resources the university needed to set priorities for the development and implementation of these policies and used these scarce resources in a wise fashion. As the participants argued:

> Right now the whole university runs private programs to generate incomes, so I believe that we will be able to manage quality step by step … we need to select leaders who have a strong commitment and [are] clever and use the money wisely. I believe that we will be able to improve the quality. But when we have the money, we need to select competent people to do the job. Although we put more money in, but people are unqualified, things will not improve… (Mary).

There was a need for the university to prioritise the aspects of quality that needed to be done first and it should not be too much ambitious. It should select a few areas that were believed to be more necessary and they should be managed and put into daily practise in a way that could be achieved in the situation where its financial capacity is limited.

> We need to identify what aspects we need to work on, not be too much ambitious. We should list down that aspects of quality are of priority, and we set up a strategic plan of what we want to achieve within 3 years. In the next three years, we will focus on other areas (Maley).

5.4.5 Theme 5: Quality-tracking system

With respect to the quality tracking system, it was suggested that there were a number of surveys to use for gathering information in relation to quality in the higher education sector, including a student satisfaction survey, student employability (tracer study), employer satisfaction survey, research satisfaction survey and benchmarking. In fact, the university did not conduct any of these surveys.

> In reality, the university does not conduct surveys on student employability, but we look at student enrolment; if the enrolment increases, it indicates that students are satisfied with our programs ... Even the department of English has never done this but we have received this information by word of mouth from employers (Mary).

Feedback and comments from students and employers were important for self-assessment. With this information, the university could determine its own quality and develop its study programs in response to the needs of the students and the labour market as well as society and the community at large.

> I think feedback from students gives us an idea that we can determine about quality, especially departments receiving poor performance in program evaluations and we can discuss with the department heads what should be done to improve their teaching performance and how to train their teachers to be responsive to the requirement of the university and the needs of the students (Trophy).

However, a quality tracking system or tools should be non-punitive. The system should be designed in a way that is accepted by the majority of the staff and in a non-confrontational manner, as it was a sensitive subject and a relatively new concept for the staff members.

> Based on my experience, when we are evaluated, we are happy, but the evaluation tools should be acceptable and not be intimidating. It should be suitably developed and accepted by all staff… (Khoeurn).

Another participant was in agreement that the above-mentioned surveys were important tools to provide information in relation to quality. However, a student employability survey would not be reliable since student employability also depended on the development of the economy of the country. For example, when the country was in a situation where its economy was downsizing, the students would face difficulty in finding a job.

> We can ask the society, the market, and employers about student employability, but these can't tell us exactly because student employability is sometimes based on the growth of the economy. Even in the US students are never employed 100%. A university is considered good, but if country faces economic recession, the graduates can't get a job either. Student employability is associated with other factors, too (Sona).

In addition, although student feedback was important for quality improvement of programs and services, the tools for collecting data must be developed in a reliable and acceptable fashion, as sometimes the results of the survey might not be reliable. As one participant argued:

> We already conduct a number of surveys but the students do not answer honestly because sometimes they follow each other so they do not think about it carefully and sometimes they just answer without thinking. If we apply a good method of data collection, the results will be valid and acceptable (Trophy).

Another participant raised a similar concern that the results of a quality tracking system might not be reliable and acceptable, as this culture was a relatively new notion in the Cambodian context.

> I don't want to put down our country but our people's understanding is still low compared to those of developed countries. I think surveys are good but our students do not understand them well about this culture, because most students give unreasonable feedback and comments … so we need to do [it] with care. If not, it might lead to leaving some teachers behind (Kolphanha).

> The participants tended to regard students and employers as important customers or clients, as they focused largely on students and employers' feedback and comments, but they failed to consider teachers as internal customers as well because they were the stakeholders of higher education and they were the main contributors to the improvement of university education. For this reason, a tool to survey teachers' views must be designed and their views must be translated into action. By doing so, academics and staff were willing to share their views in relation to quality improvement of the university (Praksokhon).

> Data collected from students, staff and employers significantly contributed to continuous quality improvement of an institution. However, benchmarking should

> also be used, allowing an institution to identify where it stood in comparison to other institutions in a similar context (Monak).

With respect to the question of how the results of student feedback could be used, various opinions emerge. First, they should be used to improve teaching performance. As the participants illustrate:

> When we receive student feedback, we will look for our weaknesses. When we find them, we will discuss these issues with our staff in order to improve them … (Mary).
> Feedback from students must be used for [the] improvement of our programs and services (Kura).

Second, data was used for keeping the teachers informed that they should not neglect their duty and responsibility. Data was also used as a reminder for teachers to bear in mind that they must be well informed and updated.

> I think that student evaluation is important as a 'wake-up-call' for our teachers so I would like to suggest that the QA Unit continue conducting student satisfaction surveys (Nyda).

Third, the results of the survey could be used to inform policies and decision-making in terms of a quality arrangement. Based on these data, the university is able to take an informed decision to set forth priorities of what needs to be achieved, and it could avoid making an ad hoc decision and doing things in a random manner.

> We use it for policy implication and decision-making for redesigning our programs in a cycle manner (Bona).

However, it was argued that sometimes, student feedback could improve teachers' behaviours or attitudes only, and it did not help improve quality.

> It is hard to say because student feedback can change teachers' behaviours or attitudes but we can't change a teacher's quality entirely. For example, if a teacher is late for class, we talk to him or her and this habit can be changed, but an unqualified teacher is difficult to change for those whose knowledge is not suitable to the level of their teaching (Trophy).

The participants gave different views in relation to who should have access to the data of the survey on student satisfaction. Some argued that every single individual teacher should have access to them, except teaching evaluations of the individual teacher, as it might negatively

impact a teachers' feelings and it was still a touchy topic. To circumvent this issue, a subject or program evaluation should be employed instead of a teacher evaluation. By doing so, teacher performance can be inferred from a subject or program evaluation, as it is taught by a teacher.

> When we get the results, we will share it with our people in the meetings … we need to discuss good or bad feedback from the students as to how we can improve our teachers' performance. Yet, all staff can have access to the results of the survey but it is hard for teaching evaluation because it might affect [a] teachers' feelings so we tend to use program evaluation but both program evaluation and teacher evaluation are the same because programs are taught by teachers… (Trophy).

Some suggested that options should be given to the teachers whether they wanted the results to be confidential or open to everyone. As a participant put it:

> Upon receiving the results of the survey we call for a staff meeting, informing them about the results of the survey and giving them two options, either being kept confidential or open to everyone. Fortunately, most of the staff are close friends so they opt to open the results to everyone and discuss a better way to improve their teaching performance… (Nyda).

However, some strongly argued that any form of information collecting from the student survey must be disseminated to all teachers in order for them to improve their performance. One participant asserted that:

> We must disseminate the results of the survey to all staff and they should dare to accept their weaknesses. If we just write a report of the survey and place it on a table, it's worth nothing to do it (Narak).

> The data of the surveys should be used wisely, and [a] response should be made, as well as action should be taken according to the results. The results of the survey should be disseminated to all people concerned (Heang and Mary).

Some asserted that the accessibility to the data of the survey should only be given to researchers and decision-makers since they were the ones who needed it to inform their decisions in terms of setting up priority action plans for further development and improvement.

> People that can access the results of the survey are researchers and decision-makers because they do it for policy implications and decision-making (bona). Through my experience … I suggested that the results of student feedback be publicised but the management team said that it was a sensitive issue… (Praksokhon).

5.4.6 Theme 6: Implementation of the system and its development

To implement the quality management system effectively in daily practise, the university should employ the following activities.

5.4.6.1 Elucidation of the system

Prior to the implementation of any quality management system, there was a need for the leaders of the university, in collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Unit, to explain the benefits of the system to all staff. In addition, the leaders must provide them with training about how to utilise it, especially department heads, because they would take the lead in conducting self-assessment or other quality activities.

There was a need for an explicit explanation of how the results of self-assessment would be used, and who could have access to the data gathered from the assessment, as it was a politically sensitive issue.

> To encourage participation in the QA process, there must be a mutual cooperation between the management and IQA Unit to explain [to] the people, especially department heads, how to organise it … the IQA Unit has to explain to them about the criteria, requirement and procedures and what the IQA Unit wants other offices to do because some people do not know what to do to help and they just do their routine jobs (Trophy).

> We firstly make the employees understand about its importance … and they must be explicitly explained about [the] requirement, or internal regulations before getting the implementation started (Khoeurn).

In addition, an information dissemination system must be established to ensure that the information concerning the quality management process was widely disseminated and publicly available to all staff. There were several methods of information dissemination such as seminars, workshops or staff meetings. However, this system did not exist at the City University, leading to poor communication and information sharing within the institution.

> We need to disseminate this matter through seminars or workshops. As you can see, we have conducted a number of workshops on quality but no one was interested in them but later on they seemed to understand their necessity, so meetings for sharing views and ideas are significant (Hady).
>
> All teachers must be kept informed about the strategic plan so that they know where they should start and where they should go … if information dissemination is not well spread, they will not know and there won't be participation. If we just have a good plan but people do not know it, it is useless (Tynarak).

5.4.6.2 Clear roles and responsibilities – job descriptions

Not only an academic institution, but also other organisations needed to clarify roles and responsibilities for its leaders and staff to make the management process more effective and efficient. The participants suggested that when staff and leaders carried out the set roles and responsibilities as a norm, their routine participation and involvement would increase. As the participants observed:

> When they carry out their duties and understand their responsibilities, their participation will maximise (Kolphanha).
>
> We should make it a norm or routine. We can't get them involved actively in the process of quality management, but at least they have to abide by their roles and responsibilities (Sona).

However, roles and responsibilities of the leaders were more likely to align with political activities, while academics and staff just did their routine jobs without there being a clear and unambiguous structure, leading to role and responsibility confusion and duplication.

> Frankly speaking, today, I don't know what my duty is and I feel ashamed of myself. I know how to manage stuff but I don't have authority to do it. Political people just say nicely about quality; however, if they cared about it, they would not allow for mushrooming private higher education institutions without quality control (Samreth).

5.4.6.3 Good governance – accountability and transparency

Good governance was very important to the implementation process of quality, as it was suggested that a good governance could help the process move forward. The participants argued that the university had poor governance which made people lack motivation to

actively participate in the quality management process of the university. As a participant argued:

> Governance is very important that's why we talk about it. Within governance there are accountability, transparency, and participation and the three components are the foundation of good governance. If we deal with it properly, the process of quality management will move forward. These days in Cambodia, governance is poor and they just pay lip service to it. Even transparency does not exist, and accountability is a hard thing to do. As you can see expenditure of budget is not efficient; we are poor but we don't spend the money wisely and effectively (Bona).

Transparency in financial management was a sensitive issue under the current circumstances. Information about financial management was considered confidential. Budgetary plans of the university were not discussed openly, so scepticism about this has existed among teachers and staff. This culture did not only exist in the higher education sector, but also in all sectors.

> We can't have access to information concerning financial management … and we are not allowed to check it so we are not sure of how finance is managed and more importantly we want to know the transparency in using the money … but we are not able to know how much money we have … not only our institution that does not allow staff to access to information in relation to financial management, but also all institutions in the country face the same issue (Trophy).

5.4.6.4 Participation and less external intrusiveness

Staff participation and involvement was critical to the success of the implementation of quality assurance at the university. There was a need for management to formulate the policy and mechanism to encourage staff participation. In the Cambodian culture, people always looked to a leader as an example; if the leader was passive then so were they.

> I believe that participation is a driving force of the success in any institution because all staff members are the stakeholders. A bottom-up approach is more workable than a top-down approach for the encouragement of participation in our department. Staff motivation policy plays a powerful role in encouraging their participation, so the policy and mechanism to drive participation must be in place (Nyda).

To encourage participation by staff, their voices should be heard in the quality management process rather than the imposition of power from the top leaders. In higher education,

academics preferred to use the collegial method to encourage internal participation rather than external intrusiveness from external bodies.

> If people are not allowed to have their voices heard, it is a failure because the top management cannot always impose their power on their subordinates. It is necessary to involve them in developing a mission or vision of the university. If their ideas and the leaders' ideas are consistent, they are happy to work hard to achieve what we want because the success of the university is also their success… (Praksokhon).

> The internal participation is critical because we are the ones who do the job and we know what we can do and what we can't do … pressure from the external quality assurance agencies is a minor thing and the more important thing is the internal participation and if we do not do it every day we will never ever develop our university … if there is a lack of participation, the top management must identify the problem and then find the way to address it (Lihak).

Although the internal participation played an important role in contributing to the success of the quality implementation in higher education institutions, the external quality assurance agencies also played a significant role in contributing to quality improvement of universities.

> To me, I think we need to help each other … if there is not an internal quality assurance, and no external quality assurance agencies, there will be no accreditation (Monak).

Similarly, another participant argued that involvement from external quality assurance agencies was not an imposition on the internal affairs of a university, as there was need for discussion and collaboration between an institution and the external quality authorities.

> I don't think the involvement from outside is a pressure because a university might not know whether it does the right thing or not, so we need to sit down and discuss together … we need to give up an irrational idea that outside involvement is a pressure. If we keep thinking that way, we will never ever get to the end … a discussion between universities and external assessors is necessary (Sona).

5.4.6.5 Seeking funding from external funding agencies

At present, the university was not able to stand on its own feet due to scarce resources. Therefore, there was a need for the university to seek extra funding support from external

funding agencies to kick start the implementation of any quality management system; if there was no first step, there would be no second step.

> We need resources to support our strategic plan, as a failure to achieve at the first time; might lead to a failure in the future. In fact, the university has no budgetary package for supporting the strategic plan so we need to seek funding from external funding agencies. If we are able to get financial support from outside bodies, our strategic plan can be achieved; if not, it will be hard to accomplish it (Kolphanha).

> The IQA Unit will be sustainable if we have financial support from external funding agencies, but if we completely depend on the government, sustainability cannot be guaranteed and working performance will decline (Trophy & Rathanak). However, the question was how the university maintained the implementation of the would-be quality management system in a sustainable fashion. According to the experience of some departments, when they received financial support from external funding agencies to develop and run their programs, the implementation process was good, but when the funding project was over, the quality and research activities gradually declined, as the departments were not able to generate incomes to sustain their quality (Kolphanha).

A self-assessment report was important to attract financial support from funding agencies; they made decision on funding allocation based on the results of self-assessment. To gather information for a self-assessment report, a quality tracking system and quality measurement needed to be established.

> Marjorie Peace Lenn's study shows that self-assessment reports provide benefits to society, government, industries, students and funding agencies. So they will look at the self-assessment of the school before providing financial support to the school (Monak).

There was a warning that despite the fact that the government's policy allows higher education institutions to seek financial support from external funding agencies, universities must stand clear of any funding support involving any political motivation.

> The government's policy allows an institution to seek support from donors as long as there is no political interference. If there is no politics coming along, there is not an issue (Monak).

5.4.6.6 Autonomy

Autonomy allows the university to manage its resources in a flexible manner, as it had authority to make decisions in terms of financial and staff management in a less bureaucratic way, and political interference could be minimised, while professional freedom could be maximised. However, at present, the university is under the central government control, with decisions made in a bureaucratic fashion. Professional autonomy and academic freedom were limited. As a participant put it:

> I think the university should be given autonomy in relation to financial management or internal management. When the university becomes autonomous, it has authority to make decisions. Now, before we do something, we have to wait for the decision which is made in a top-down approach from the central authority, leading to bureaucracy. Recently, I have heard that some funding agencies such as ADB, and the World Bank want to help universities, but the decision-making process is bureaucratic, so donors decided to withdraw their support (Keosarin).
>
> The university must be autonomous in order to minimise political interference … I was wondering why the ACC is under the Council of Ministers because it is the work of the MoEYS (Cydeth).

In this respect, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) encouraged all public universities to transform themselves into autonomous institutions; however, the MoEYS itself was not sure of what constituted autonomy, allowing some institutions to run their programs in the same mode as being used in businesses and enterprises. As one participant explained:

> The MoEYS encourages all public universities to become autonomous, but the MoEYS itself does not understand what autonomy is. They think that autonomy is a public administration institution (PAI), which is applied to enterprises and businesses. When we apply it in higher education, it is not working; that's why some universities run their institutions as business centres. I always raise this issue several times; please do not get confused between autonomy and PAI. If we do like this, it is like we train university leaders to be businessmen. When they talk about autonomy, they always think that an institution must bear its own responsibility for any loss or profit (Bona).

The participants saw that private universities tended to have flexibility in terms of financial and internal management, as they had more autonomy than the public universities.

> Through my observation, internal quality assurance in private universities is more effective because if teachers are not good, the universities have [the] authority to fire them (Theng).

The participants argued that globalisation had an enormous impact on higher education, leading to an increased development of technology. The government was not able to cope with the swift changes, so universities must be given autonomy so that they were flexible enough to cope.

> The reason why autonomy is given to universities is because the government can't cope with a dramatic change of technology so the university must be flexible … the government does this because they want universities to be flexible so that they can keep up with an increasingly advancement of technology… (Bona).

> I believe that if the university is not a public administration institution, it is difficult to reform… (Monak).

For these reasons, public universities that were able to generate more incomes through charging student fees, transfer their status to a public administration institution (PAI) and run their programs in the same way as business enterprises. Whereas institutions that offered courses less popular in the job market were reluctant to change their status to PAI, they were concerned that they were not able to support their operations by themselves. To deal with this issue, there was a need for the government to establish a 'carrot and stick' policy.

5.4.6.7 'Carrot and Stick' policy

There was a need for the establishment of a 'carrot and stick' policy, meaning that the government should develop a financial support scheme given to universities based on good performance. This measure allows for more competition between higher education institutions.

> When public universities become PAI, the government should set up a supporting scheme like India. When a university passes an institutional accreditation, the government will pay the university. So when individuals see the money, they will compete for that (Monak).

> There must be a policy on sanction; a positive sanction is used for those who perform well, while a negative sanction is used for poor performance. If we do this, there will be a dramatic progression (Darony).

Category 3: Leadership in the development & Implementation of the framework.

5.4.7 Theme 7: L eadership

With respect to the question of who should take the lead in the development of the quality management framework and its implementation, five major categories emerged from the interview data, labelled as follows: top management; middle management; Quality Assurance committee/QA coordinator; all levels of staff; and external QA agencies. Each category is elaborated in detail as follows.

The majority of the participants said that the top management should take the lead in the development of the quality management system and its implementation because politics played a significant role in the higher education sector in Cambodia. Therefore, a top-down approach to decision-making is embedded in the Cambodian culture. As participants observed:

> More importantly, the question is whether the top management want it or not, and if they don't want it, we will not be able to do it no matter how hard we try … I think it will work when the initiative comes from the top management due to political interference (Kura).
>
> The rector is the one who must take initiatives and forms a team to work on it; there is no support from him or her so the question is who has authority to do it because he is the king of the clan … if the initiative starts from the top and the middle-level managers do it, the process will be successful (Martine).

Another participant expressed in a similar vein that the top management of an institution must take the responsibility for this as decisions were made based on the political situation rather than on any research. The university was a public institution so there was inevitably an influence and intervention from the central government agency.

> Our university is a public one so it is partly dependent on the MoEYS, too … the rector is the key player in QA management … because he/she is the one who is involved in ministerial meetings and if he/she helps push this issue, it will proceed progressively. If all rectors are quiet and lazy, things will not happen (Trophy).

A leadership role model was important in the Cambodian culture because it had an enormous impact on followers' behaviours and perceptions. In this respect, the leaders must perform their model roles in an active and decisive manner as an example for their subordinates.

> In our context, I think the top management must take the initiative in developing these tools because people want to look at good examples from leaders. If the leaders show a good example, people will follow in their footsteps. If there is a good example from them although there are some differences between [the] senior and young teachers' perspectives, their leadership will affect the teachers' perspectives (Nyda).
>
> In our culture, people listen to their leaders so I think that initiatives must be from the top because we usually follow the leaders, but it would be good if there were many discussions, encouragement and involvement (Sona).

However, most participants strongly argued that although the top management was the key player in this process, participation and involvement of all levels of staff were also key factors contributing to the success of the implementation. Of course, the initiative and guidance must be started from the top management, but without participation and involvement from all stakeholders, the whole system would fail. As some participants argued:

> There must be an involvement from the bottom to the top, including the IQA Unit, [the] ACC and experts from each department. There must be a negotiation between them and one person should not determine a yardstick; all staff must be involved in making decisions to ensure that the yardstick is workable for their departments or not. There should not be one yardstick used for all (one size fits all) (Charley).
>
> The initiative must be started from the top management with participations from all staff, allowing for consistency between the top management and staff. If the QA tools are established by the management only without engaging all staff, it won't be successful… (Lihak).

Although a top-down approach to quality assurance played a powerful role in keeping the ball rolling, staff empowerment also played a critical role in making the system move forward. The tension between top-down procedures and staff empowerment must be balanced, allowing for a compromise acceptable to both parties.

> I think there are many stakeholders but if there is no guidance from the top management, it will be hard for the low-level management to take initiatives … the top management must take the initiative, but must open an opportunity to professional

> people to do their respective plan and make decisions. Without teacher empowerment, they won't be able to do anything (Bunthoeurn).

Another participant expressed in a similar vein that there was a need for a combined effort and shared responsibility by all levels of staff along with support and encouragement from the top management. Teachers were the people who carry out the tasks in daily practise.

> Participation from teachers is important and we have to take responsibility; however, we need support and encouragement from the top management, but all teachers are implementers (Phalvirun).

Some participants believed that in the first place, each department must take responsibility for the development of a quality management framework for their own department, as they had an explicit idea of what they wanted to do and how to achieve it. When each individual department's framework was in place, there was a need for incorporation of the collected frameworks into an institutional framework which could be used in the university as a whole.

> Respective department must be responsible for developing these instruments, moving from the department to university level.… The initiative should be started from the department level … we will integrate it into the university level.… When these instruments are in place, I am optimistic that the implementation of the QA system will work, as I have seen all departments are able to generate incomes so they can retain and encourage their staff to put more focus on the quality improvement. (Mary).

Another similar argument was that the middle level management must take the lead in the establishment of the QA system in conjunction with participation from all levels of staff. Even though the department leaders must bear this responsibility, it should be delegated to staff to do the work, but there was a need for close monitoring and supervision by the department leaders over their staff to ensure that they worked effectively.

> At department level, heads and deputy heads must take the lead in the establishment of these instruments with participation from all staff. Sometimes, the leaders delegate this work to their staff, but the leaders do not care about it, so they can't work effectively (Tynarak).

A few participants suggested that the IQA Unit or quality assurance committee must perform a coordinating role in liaising with all departments and sections of the university to develop a quality management system with endorsement and close scrutiny from the leaders. In

addition, participation from teachers as well as other stakeholders in the university were significant in this process.

> The IQA Unit must serve as a linkage between sections within the university… (Bona). The IQA Unit should play a core role in establishing quality instruments with endorsement from the leadership and involvement from teachers and librarians … The IQA Unit should play a coordinating role in the process of the development of quality management (Maley).
>
> The IQA Unit should establish these tools and then submit them to the Executive Board for endorsement, but without agreement from the grassroots level, it won't be successful (Narak).
>
> I think there should be a QA committee taking responsibility for establishing the framework because departments mostly focus on teaching rather than thinking about it. The committee should ask for participation from all staff… (Masar).

Although the MoEYS had issued a letter recommending all higher education instructions establish their IQA Units, the IQA Units were not officially registered in the ministry's registration list. Within a public university, the IQA Unit should be officially recognised by the MoEYS as an office of the university so that it had power or authority to do the work in an effective fashion.

> So far, the MoEYS has not known about our IQA Unit and so it is not officially recognised. So, the IQA Unit must be included in the system of higher education (Trophy). The QA committee should be given a full extent of power to do the job… The QA committee must be given authority to do the job with recognition and scrutiny from the top management (Lihak).

A handful of the participants argued that there was inevitably an involvement from external quality assurance agencies, as there was a legislative requirement that the external quality assurance agencies play a coordinating role in providing technical assistance to an institution in regard to the establishment of an internal quality management system. The external agencies had a legitimate role to provide advice to the institution, as needed. As politics played an influential role in the higher education sector, so higher education institutions tended to wait for the green light from the central agencies before they decided to do anything related to educational reform.

> It is a legislative requirement in our country concerning internal quality assurance. If universities do not have IQA, there won't be an accreditation given to them … So they need to establish it soon … The internal QA must comply with the ACC standards (Monak).
>
> It is hard to comment in our culture; we should wait for a pressure from the external QA agencies to give us a 'wake-up-call' (Samreth). If there is not an imposition from the top, it won't occur in our context (Bunleng).

There was a need for consistency between the internal QA system and the ACC standards, and accreditation was compulsory in Cambodia. Therefore, universities were compelled to involve the ACC and other agencies concerned in the development of their internal quality management frameworks.

> IQA Units of the university claim they do this and do that, but they don't know whether they are right or wrong, so they need people from outside to check their claims … sometimes they might not know something missing and they need further instruction (Theng & Khoeurn).

5.4.8 Summary

General perceptions of quality

Various conceptual approaches to quality emerging from the interviews, were consistent with the literature review such as 'fitness-for-use', 'satisfaction of the client', 'multiple approaches' and 'fitness for purpose', 'conformance to specifications or standards', 'value for money', 'value added', and 'continuous improvement'. In addition, participants brought out two concepts of quality not apparent from the literature, that is, 'quality as an abstract thing' and 'virtue' as an element of quality. However, 'exceptional performance or excellence' approaches were not suggested.

Effective approach to quality management

The findings of this section revealed that different approaches to quality management measurements were suggested. First, some participants argued that the university should measure the quality against its mission and objectives because this approach responded to the context-dependent situation. Nevertheless, it was hard to rely on this approach, as some institutions might establish an inappropriate or inadequate mission.

Second, the majority of the participants placed an emphasis on measuring student employability, as the aim of the university education was to train students to work. However, there was a concern that this approach might not be appropriate for the Cambodian context due to the fact that some students might not be employed upon their graduation.

Third, some participants believed that the job market analysis was critical, as the job market was the place which provided students with employment. In the meantime, the results of the study of the job market could be used as valuable data for curriculum development and instructional designs. However, there was a concern over too much emphasis on the responsiveness to the job market, as it might contradict the university's mission and the university also focused on other dimensions of quality besides the job market.

Fourth, some maintained that a multi-aspect approach allowed for an in-depth and rich information gathering, as all elements of quality and institutional activities contributed to the success of the institution. That being said, there was a need for the university to set priorities for its activities, although this approach was resource and time consuming.

Last but not least, it was believed that there was a need for the university to measure its performance by comparison with some local and regional universities or colleges as an external reference point (benchmarking) with a view to identifying where it stood in the country and in the region. Yet, a comparison with universities and colleges in developed nations was not suggested at this stage.

Quality management instruments

The findings of this section showed that almost no universities or no higher education institutions had quality management instruments in place yet, although the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has announced that higher education institutions should establish their internal quality assurance units or offices as coordinating agents within the universities. The reasons for non-action were in part due to political interference and a lack of the top management commitment to policy enforcement; the lack of a flow of information being disseminated in relation to quality assurance arrangements; lack of guidance from the central agencies, which were responsible for the quality assurance agenda; the lack of a 'carrot and stick' policy; and people with a broad knowledge related to an area of quality management.

The quality management instruments were important, as they were used to measure the quality performance of the institution, and give an explicit direction for where the institution wants to go. However, they would be useless if there was no implementation and/or the top

management had no political will to take any action to improve teacher work ethics, discipline the students and manage resources in an effective and efficient fashion.

There was a need to link the internal and external quality standards for a number of reasons. First, was the need to ensure consistency across the whole higher education sector. Second, there was a need for accreditation in Cambodia in order to obtain recognition and trust from the government, and the public for degrees.

However, there were some criticisms that too much focus on the link and consistency could lead to a lack of 'fitness for purpose' because universities varied from one another in terms of philosophy, mission and context.

Strategies for quality improvement

The findings of this section suggested that in order to develop strategies for quality improvement, there was need for the university to introduce a number of quality aspects, and approaches to its quality management system.

First of all, discipline reinforcement for students was strongly urged, as it contributed to quality improvement. Concerns over a gradually deteriorating discipline existed, having an enormous impact on the sustainable development of the university.

Second, the participants claimed that teaching and learning approaches that engaged students in productive learning are a problem-based approach, linking theory to practice, a student-centred approach, a student-background awareness approach, and feedback and comments on students' assignments, should be direct and focused and returned to students in a timely manner. However, to introduce these approaches to teaching and learning, teachers needed to be trained, and significant resources were required to support them.

Third, the establishment of the incentive structures for good performance was strongly encouraged to increase teachers' motivation and morale, as if the current situation continued to exist, there would be a reduction in teacher and staff productivity, participation and competitiveness, leading to passivity and working to rules. Despite strong support for the introduction of the system by staff, there was a warning by the top management that it might lead to having a negative impact on teachers and staff's feelings, if the criteria for evaluation were developed in a way that lacked fairness, credibility and transparency. The management's view was that it was not the right time yet for implementation.

Fourth, study materials and documents in Khmer were inadequate, so students whose English was limited find it hard to undertake research. Most of the students relied heavily on the Khmer-translated materials from their teachers. In addition, materials in English and French are too expensive. These limited students' capacity to broaden their knowledge as well as their motivation to read.

Fifth, although research was one of the core businesses of the university, there was very little or almost no research activity conducted in the university due to the inadequacy of teachers' salaries, a lack of research skills, limited research facilities, and scarce resources. Therefore, it was suggested that a research committee be established to encourage and coordinate the involvement of teachers in research activities. To establish a research culture, the teachers should be encouraged to start from small-scale research which was reviewed and published in the university journal. It could then be scaled up for national, regional and international peer review and recognition.

Sixth, despite claiming to have some staff development activities, the university did not have a systematic policy for staff development, with activities organised in an ad hoc manner. Some argued that this was in part due to a lack of budget planning, good governance and the political will of the leaders. Some argued that there was the lack of leadership skills and strategic plans and some asserted that there was a lack of staff participation if there was no financial support, as most of staff had other engagements outside the university (in making extra income to top up their minimal government salaries). In response to these issues, a policy for staff development must be implemented by management.

Seventh, an academic staff ranking system based on merit-based performance in teaching, research and community service did not exist. In the current era, seniority and patronage played a crucial role in staff appointment and promotion in the university. These brought about a lack of motivation, competition among staff and a reduction in teachers' morale, productivity and commitment. To adopt this system was beyond the capacity of the university since the university had no authority and autonomy to adopt it and there was a need for approval from the MoEYS with support from the Ministry of Public Functions, as it was associated with civil servant payrolls (which was based in a complicated structure).

Moreover, there was a concern over the introduction of the system, in that it might bring about a conflict of interests between young and senior teachers. Most senior teachers were less likely to pursue further study and their research skills were limited. To minimise this

conflict, it was suggested that the promotion system should not be too heavily based on the level of degree; there should be a combination of other elements such as academic performance, seniority, moral behaviour and political affiliation. However, the key question related to where the money was to come from to support the development and implementation of the system. Many argued that the project would not work effectively unless the remuneration system was reformed and research-funding allocation was established.

Eighth, although the university was officially given permission to charge tuition fees from the students, and receive a minimal grant from the government for so-called 'budget priorities', it still faced a scarcity of resources. To prioritise these scarce resources, there was a need to set up a list of quality aspects and activities that the university wanted to achieve, and then prioritise the activities according to the needs of the university on the basis of its financial capacity.

Quality tracking system and implementation

The findings of this section indicated that in order to implement a would-be quality management system effectively in daily practise in a Cambodian university, the university should take the following suggested aspects into account.

First, there was a need for an explicit explanation to all staff about procedures about how to use it, and how they would benefit from the system. So a system for disseminating information with reference to the quality management framework needed to be established to ensure that the system was clearly understood and publicly available to all staff. The process of disseminating the information could be in the form of seminars, workshops, or staff meetings.

Second, the university needed to define a clear role and responsibility for its leaders and staff so that they could carry out their jobs based on an explicit job description to avoid role confusions and duplications.

Third, good governance – accountability, transparency and fairness – needed to be established, especially transparency in financial management, because it could lead to a lack of motivation and active participation by staff.

Fourth, staff participation must be encouraged and external intrusiveness should be minimised. To encourage the active participation of staff, their voice should be heard in the quality management process, and the collegial method should be employed rather than a

managerial one. However, external quality assurance agencies played a crucial role in improving university education in many countries across the world.

Fifth, to make ends meet, staff had to 'moonlight', which had an enormously negative impact on the quality system. There was a lack of active participation by staff. It was difficult for the university to retain qualified staff and prevent them from leaving the university to participate in other private institutions. Therefore, prior to implementation of the quality framework, the university must take into account the living conditions of staff.

Sixth, there was a need for the university to seek additional funding support from external funding agencies to top up its scarce resources. The key question was how the university was able to attract the attention of external funding agencies. It needed to produce a reliable and credible self-assessment report, because it was the basis for making decisions on the subject of funding allocation. However, there was a need for caution with respect to any funding support which is associated with political motivation.

Seventh, to gather valid and reliable data for a self-assessment report, there was the need for a quality tracking system, including a student satisfaction survey, student employability survey (tracer study), employer satisfaction survey, research satisfaction survey and benchmarking. The system should be established in a non-punitive and acceptable manner. Sometimes student employability did not provide credible information due in part to the economic situation of the country. It was a relatively new culture for the Cambodian context so students might not answer in an honest manner.

The data from the student feedback should be employed to improve quality performance, to inform policies and decision-making in relation to quality arrangements, and to keep the faculty members informed as a 'wake-up-call'. However, it was argued that sometimes student feedback could change teachers' behaviours or attitudes, but it could not change quality. As well, it was a relatively new concept for the Cambodian higher education sector.

In regard to accessibility to the data, there were different views emerging, as some argued that every teacher should have access to it; some suggest two possible choices – either confidential or open; some suggest that only researchers and decision-makers should have access to all of it to inform their judgements, while others asserted that the results of the survey should be discussed in an indirect way at this point of time in order to circumvent a possible negative impact on teachers' feelings.

Eighth, to implement a quality management system effectively in daily practice, the

university needs to transform itself into an autonomous institution. Institutional autonomy helps the university to minimise some forms of political interference, allowing the university to manage its resources in a flexible fashion and to circumvent the red tape of decision-making. However, there was a need to fully understand the meaning of autonomy, as it was often interpreted incorrectly, leading to an expectation that educational institutions be profit-oriented centres.

Last but not least, a 'carrot and stick' policy should be established and implemented in order to encourage participation and competition between higher education institutions.

With respect to who should take the lead in the development of a quality management system and its implementation, the findings showed that the majority of the participants argued that the top management were the key players in the development of a quality management framework and its implementation in the university, as they had the political power to influence other people. A top-down approach to decision-making was entrenched, and a leadership role model significant, in the Cambodian culture. The initiative in this process must be taken by the top management.

However, there was a need for participation and involvement from all levels of staff. The tension between a top-down approach to decision-making and staff empowerment should be negotiated in an acceptable manner. Without participation and involvement from the grassroots level, the whole system would not work effectively. Coercion to participate without an understanding of the concept and process should be discouraged, as it would probably lead to the failure of sustainable development and implementation.

Some people believed that middle-level management, especially at departmental level, should take responsibility for the development of the framework at the discretion of their department, and then it could be incorporated into an institutional framework to be employed in the university as a whole.

A few participants asserted that there was a need for the establishment of an IQA coordinator or quality assurance committee to serve as a coordinating role in assisting the departments in developing their quality system under a meticulous scrutiny from the top management. This committee or unit should be given the power to do their job in an accountable and responsible manner.

A handful of participants pointed out that in order to ensure consistency between an internal quality system and external quality standards, inevitably the external quality agencies should

share responsibility for the development of an internal quality system as a technical assistance provider. Initiatives with respect to this issue rarely took place internally without a green light from the central government agency.

Chapter 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to address the questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. I will approach this initially by synthesising the main findings from the literature and fieldwork presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 5.

Chapter 2 and 3 analysed the literature of quality assurance systems, past and present, in higher education in the UK, Australia and Thailand. The purpose of this review was to explore the key features of the quality assurance systems in higher education in these countries and issues associated with their implementation, in order to recommend a suitable, workable system for Cambodia. The Thai system of quality assurance was included in the investigation because it has recently been through this development. Thailand is a neighbour and has similar cultural characteristics to Cambodia.

The fieldwork is based on a survey questionnaire, interviews and comments made by the administrators and academic staff of a Cambodian university, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) officials, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) officials, and senior academic staff and administrators from three universities in Thailand. The purpose in interviewing people in the Cambodian higher education sector was to gain a full appreciation of what is relevant, workable and achievable in the Cambodian higher education context. A number of constraints in the Cambodian higher education system prevent a standard Western system being introduced and these constraints will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Based on the synthesis of the findings and an understanding of the constraints, a proposal will be advanced relating to what can be achieved in the medium term (or phase 1) and what can be achieved in the longer term (or phase 2). Finally, recommendations will be made for policy makers and quality assurance planners at both ministerial and institutional levels, which is the main focus of this study.

6.2 Findings from the literature review

Based on the literature review of quality assurance systems employed in higher education systems in the UK, Australia and Thailand (refer to Chapters 2, 3), a simple matrix of an internal quality management framework can be summarised, as shown in the Table 6.1

below. As there are multiple stakeholders involved in discussions relating to the quality assurance agenda in higher education, tensions over its ownership remain unresolved. Universities no longer have a monopoly over their own quality assurance arrangements. They must accommodate other protocols, national and international standards, political agendas, and the like.

Table 6.1 shows that in order to design an internal quality management system one should adhere to five components. The first component is the Mission and/or Aims which should be consistent with government and professional body policies and standards. The government is one of the key players in influencing and financing higher education institutions; professional bodies and associations advise HEIs and ensure that courses and programs are relevant and appropriate for the needs of the job market, and social and economic development.

The second component is the need for a Strategic Plan for achieving the Mission and/or Aims. A university needs to have in place policies, procedures, and performance indicators, to learn whether it is achieving its objectives in response to its targets and strategies. To support their strategic plans, HEIs are legislatively required to develop policies for teaching, research, professional and staff development. These policies must be aligned with the government policies and the requirements of professional bodies and associations.

Third, there is a need to develop a quality tracking system such as student surveys, employer surveys and self-assessment reports, to gather views from students and employers in relation to the quality of the educational provisions. The results of the surveys and self-assessment should be compared with those of other higher education institutions as external reference points, nationally and internationally.

Table 6.1 Internal Quality Management Framework

Table 6.1. Internal Quality Management Framework Government and Professional body policies and standards

(Economic and social development)

↓

Institutional mission & aims:

(Aligned with government policies)

↓

Strategic plan: for achieving mission & aims.

(1) Policy for teaching & learning

using:

- Qualifications framework,
- Student attributes
- Performance indicators
- Professional accreditation requirements
- Industry participation

(2) Policy for research

- Research management process
- Research assessment
- Research outcomes

(3) Policy for professional development

(4) Policy for staff promotion and incentives

(5) Supporting system for teaching, research and professional development

↓

Quality tracking system

(1) Student feedback

- Student surveys

(2) Employer feedback

- Employer surveys

(3) External reference point

- Benchmarking

(4) Self-assessment

- Institutional
- Department, and
- Subject levels

(5) Professional bodies and associations

- Professions satisfaction

↓

Action: response to students and employers' views

(1) Dissemination of assessment results

(2) Publication of the results of self-assessment

(3) Comparison of the results with other universities at similar stage of development

(4) Continuous improvement

↓

Values: focusing on

(1) Accountability

(2) Efficiency

(3) Compliance

(4) Continuous Improvement

Finally, student and employer feedback must be translated into action in a continuous improvement cycle to close the quality loop. Institutions need to discuss issues emerging from the feedback at institutional, faculty and individual levels. An appropriate action in a timely manner must be taken in response to areas that need improvement. In addition, the data from the student and employer feedback should be published in reports and websites, available for current and prospective students so that they can make decisions on which university or program they want to attend.

Based on the available data of student and employer feedback, governments can make informed decisions about funding allocations to higher education institutions with requirements for accountability, efficiency in the use of resources (value for money), and compliance with government policies and regulations. In the meantime, higher education institutions must strive for continuous quality improvement.

6.3 Findings from the survey and interviews

Several approaches to quality assurance have emerged from the interviews with participants in a Cambodian university, the MoEYS, and ACC. These approaches include: a fitness for purpose, student employability, a job market analysis (or a market-oriented approach), a multi-aspect approach, an external reference point, and a continuous improvement approach. However, not all approaches are suitable for a Cambodian university. The reasons are summarised below.

6.3.1 Effective approach to quality measurements

The ***Fitness for purpose*** approach requires a university to set out its mission and/or aims and then evaluate its quality performance against the stated mission and/or aims. This approach provides the university with an explicit direction. This approach is popular for academics and staff in the Cambodian higher education context, because it allows institutions to measure their quality performance in a flexible way based on their own context. Although the mission and/or aims should be appropriate and relevant to an institution's context, there is a need for responsiveness to the needs of society, and alignment with the government policies. Despite fitness for purpose being strongly supported by most members of staff, some believe that it might distract the university from its intended mission. Some institutions or departments might use an inappropriate or inadequate mission in order to achieve it easily, 'lowering the bar'. Some staff believe this attitude needs to be overcome.

The ***Student employability*** approach allows the university to compare its quality education with the requirements of the job market and is strongly supported by many staff members. However, the economy in Cambodia is open to international influences, employability varies from year to year and employment cannot be linked to education because education and employment do not go hand in hand as much as they do in other countries. When graduates are unemployed, some people might perceive that the education system is bad. In fact, it might be due in part to the prevailing economic situation. In general, as the economy varies, so does graduate employment, as happens in other countries around the world. When a country faces an economic crisis, the unemployment rate of graduates will inevitably rise. It is also difficult to determine whether programs match with the labour market, because student employability is also influenced by a number of non-academic aspects, including institutional image, social networks and personal circumstances.

The ***Job market analysis*** **(or market-oriented approach)** approach assists the university in developing its curricula to respond to the needs of the labour market which employs its students, so a market-needs analysis is important. The university needs to seek inputs from the market and integrate them into its study programs and courses. Universities in countries such as Australia and the UK always align themselves with businesses and industries through professional bodies and associations because they wish to link their study programs with the needs of the job market. Similarly, a market-driven approach has enormous impact on quality assurance in the Thai higher education sector. However, a concern emerges in Cambodian higher education that too much emphasis on relevancy and adherence to the needs of the job market can distract the university from its mission and/or aims, which also focus on other aspects of quality besides the needs of the job market.

In a ***Multiple-aspect*** approach the quality of an institution derives from various aspects and activities of the institution which needs to consider not only fitness for purpose or student employability, but also other aspects such as student attributes, virtue, moral and social behaviours, cultural heritage and the like. This approach is difficult because the university is unable to evaluate too many activities at a time when it faces a scarcity of resources, so there is a need to prioritise which aspects or activities of quality are utilised.

Continuous improvement: Quality is an abstract thing that has to do with the values we assign to things or human beings. To assure quality is not simply to use the instruments which are designed to measure it. Quality is something that lies outside the measurement

instruments. A quality management system needs to have an inbuilt and ongoing review of its own practices and the values and of the conceptual thinking that frame those practices.

Customer feedback allows an institution to keep pace with ongoing changes in the needs of students, employers, and the community at large. For example, if a university receives a quality award this year, it does not mean that it will satisfy the quality requirement in the following year, because the quality requirements are not static. Few participants interviewed in the Cambodian higher education sector were able to discuss this approach.

In order to support the above-mentioned approaches, there is clearly a need for the university to develop quality management tools. Well-established universities around the world have explicit quality management tools. These tools are important for use in measuring the quality of teaching, learning and research. These tools are presented and discussed below.

6.3.2 Quality management tools

As previously mentioned, prior to the implementation of a quality assurance agenda, quality management tools must be in place. These tools include:

A ***Strategic Plan*** to provide the university with a clear idea of what it is going to do in the future. Without a strategic plan, the institution will be uncertain. In Cambodia there is a requirement to set up a strategic plan consisting of mission and objectives, policies and practices for quality assurance, a mechanism for measuring policies and practices, articulation of areas of strengths and weaknesses, and action required to be taken to improve them.

QA policies, procedures, manuals and guidelines to be used as a guideline for developing curricula or study programs, and for assessing the performance of the university. Currently no higher education institution in Cambodia has these tools in place. This may be partly due to a lack of policy enforcement, little or no explicit guidance from the central agencies responsible for quality assurance, a lack of legal consequences for not having them, and few people with a broad knowledge related to this area of quality management. Even the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport itself does not have these tools.

Performance indicators are very important for use in measuring the quality performance of the university. Based on a global perspective of quality assurance, performance indicators play a critical role in measuring the quality performance of an institution. Both qualitative and quantitative performance indicators need to be used. The quantitative indicators provide a

clear-cut judgment of the quality performance of a university. However, they do not probe in depth into those quality issues that need improvement.

Although the proportion of survey participants in agreement with the establishment of performance indicators for teaching and learning outcomes was low, there was no major disagreement, as many choose a neutral position. Quantitative performance indicators are strongly supported by most people in Cambodian higher education, especially among policy planners and decision-makers.

A ***Student admission and assessment*** policy provides clear criteria for student recruitment and assessment, and forms part of the QA processes. If students are selected and assessed appropriately, an institution is more likely to recruit better-prepared students and they are more likely to achieve a greater success in their studies than those who are not selected appropriately. For such a policy to succeed, teachers need to be free of pressures to pass students regardless of their actual abilities.

There are instances of partisan behaviour and outside interference from leaders or powerful people for students who want to pass exams without working hard. These behaviours de-motivate teachers from participating in maintaining and enhancing quality assurance. The university tends to leave quality vulnerable when such a tension between quality and benefits is allowed to arise. Similarly there should be no pressure to compromise quality in a bid to improve student retention.

Benchmarking is useful as a reference point, especially for the development of new programs or courses. In addition, it allows the university to see where it stands in comparison with other local and regional higher education providers. Although quality benchmarking is important, it is not realistic to compare with universities in developed countries, as the university is still in an early stage of its development in terms of quality arrangements. It lacks modern technology to gather information efficiently and it would be difficult to find useful local external reference points, as the university offers courses mostly related to a liberal arts education compared with other institutions.

A *Policy for research* is essential as research is one of the core activities of HEIs yet this area is left vulnerable and unattended. There is a need therefore to formulate a policy for research with a view to developing a research culture, first starting from small-scale research projects, which might be published in a university journal. At this stage of development, research assessment should be based on its relevance and contribution to the needs of the

local community and society at large. Prior to the introduction of such a policy, research training needs to be provided to all academic staff, encouraging them to undertake small research projects, especially in areas that will contribute to improving their teaching performance and students' learning. This then allows the university to begin to establish a research culture in every academic's mindset.

A ***Policy for teaching and learning*** is also necessary. A 'spoon-fed' and a 'chalk and talk' approach to teaching and learning is deeply embedded in the Cambodian education system from primary up to higher education. Students are passive and rely heavily on teachers, lacking a culture of independent learning, teamwork and sharing ideas. A 'spoon-fed' approach to teaching is popular among most students, while a 'student-centred' approach is difficult to introduce because teachers are more likely to be unsatisfactorily evaluated by students. Most teachers feel compelled to teach in any way that pleases the students rather than necessarily being informative or effective.

Although some participants claimed that they employ a number of approaches to teaching and learning, such as the problem-based, link theory to practice, student-centred, and student-background awareness approaches, there are no empirical studies available related to their effectiveness, as a formal teaching or program evaluation system does not exist. In this respect, an explicit policy for teaching and learning should be in place.

A *Policy for professional and staff development*: Higher education institutions in UK, Australia and Thailand are legislatively required to develop a policy for professional and staff development in their quality development plan. Staff development is one aspect of the criteria for quality assessment of teaching and learning. To support this plan, the governments also allocate funding to higher education institutions. Although some departments of the university claim that they conduct a staff development program for their teaching staff, which is organised in the form of workshops, seminars, conferences or presentations, an explicit policy for this program does not exist. The surveyed university is not alone here as many universities across the country also lack such a policy. This allows some departments to take a 'free ride'. To establish this activity, there is a need for the university to set up the policy and to ensure that this policy is implemented across the university, taking appropriate action with those who fail to comply with this policy. If the policy is not strictly enforced, a culture of staff development will not be created.

More importantly through this policy teachers should be encouraged to pursue an advanced degree to upgrade their knowledge and skills. The university should make it possible for qualified young staff to continue their studies, such as attaining a Master's or PhD degree in developed countries to broaden their international and global perspectives.

Link with external QA: a link between these quality management instruments and the quality assurance standards, procedures and guidelines set by an external regulatory agency such as the ACC and MoEYS is required, as the university needs to obtain external recognition and trust. Without these, students might not be employed or their qualifications not recognised internationally. Furthermore, a close link between the two systems can help an institution maintain standards consistent with externally mandated requirements, which is especially important as the government tightly controls higher education in Cambodia.

However, some respondents contended that too much focus on a strong link and consistency could lead to a lack of contextual relevance because each institution is different from others in terms of their philosophy, institutional culture, student population, size and the like. Arguably, although these tools are important, without work ethics and adequate resources, these tools might not be helpful.

6.3.3 Strategies for quality improvement

The study suggested that a number of strategies for quality improvement should be established to facilitate the development and implementation of these tools. Each is summarised as follows.

QA committee/coordinator: A top-down approach to decision-making is embedded in the Cambodian culture. Therefore the top management should take the lead in establishing a quality assurance committee in the development of a quality management framework and its implementation. The QA committee needs to be delegated to perform the coordination role in liaising with all departments and divisions of the university to develop a quality management system, with clear endorsement and close scrutiny from its leaders. In order to make it easier to coordinate with all divisions within the university, there should be three levels of QA committees – institutional, faculty and department. This will create a clear role and professional responsibility for each individual staff member.

Elucidation of the quality management system: Prior to the implementation of the quality management system, there is a need for the leaders of the university, in collaboration with the QA Committee, to explain the benefits of the system to all staff, as quality assurance is

still a relatively new concept for them. In addition, the leaders must provide staff with training relating to how to best utilise QA, especially department heads, because they would take the local lead in conducting self-assessment and other quality activities. The university must ensure that the system is clearly understood and publicly available to all staff. The process for disseminating the information could be in the form of seminars, workshops or staff meetings.

Establishing a quality culture in each academic's mindset: There should be regular department, office or technical meetings so that teachers could discuss issues and share experiences relating to teaching and management, so that a quality culture becomes an integral part of each academic's mindset. Teachers should be provided with opportunities to get to know each other better so that a culture of mutual trust and a teamwork spirit could be established within the university. This will be essential if activities such as peer observations of teaching are to occur. Cooperation and mutual trust among faculty members is necessary to achieve quality goals.

***Establishing job descriptions*:** As in other organisations, there is a need for a university to define clear roles and responsibilities for its leaders and staff, so that they can carry out their jobs based on explicit job descriptions and thereby avoid role confusion and duplication of effort. The study revealed that roles and responsibilities currently are more likely to align with political activities, with academics and staff carrying out their activities without having a clear and unambiguous role specification. If the effectiveness of the management process is to be maximised, staff and leaders need to have specified roles and responsibilities as the norm.

Self-assessment at both institutional and department level: There should be an examination of vision and missions through a regular self-assessment, as this allows an institution to find out where it stands, and what areas need further development and improvement. The results of such a self-assessment should be used for the purpose of continuous improvement, disseminated through internal publications available to all staff, rather than externally publicised. There should also be a comparison of the results of internal self-assessment with that of other institutions which are at a similar stage of development, so as to provide external reference points. This will allow the university to see where it stands in comparison to other universities. At this stage, it is not recommended that this comparison extend to universities in developed countries.

Involvement of stakeholders in the curriculum and instructional designs is important, as they are key influencers of quality enhancement in higher education. Their inputs are important to the development of study programs or courses in response to their needs. They serve as a mediator between the market and institutions in giving advice to HEIs in terms of the relevance and coherence of their courses to the needs of the job market. More importantly, they assist an institution in keeping its programs up-to-date and responsive to ever-changing social and economic developments.

Research committee and research culture: Although research is one of the core businesses of a university, there is very little or almost no research activity conducted in the CU due to the inadequacy of teachers' salaries, a lack of research skills, limited research facilities, and scarce resources. A research committee needs to be established to encourage and coordinate teachers' involvement in research activities. To establish a research culture, the teachers should be encouraged to start from small-scale research projects which are reviewed and published in a university journal. The successful projects can then be scaled up for national, regional and international peer review and recognition.

Encouraging teachers to develop a subject outline: Each member of the teaching staff in Australian universities is required to develop a subject or course outline to hand out to students at the beginning of each semester. This allows students to have a clear idea what they are going to study and achieve during the course. However, in Cambodia, virtually no teaching staff develop a subject outline or teaching plan for their students at the beginning of each semester.

Incentive structures for good teaching: The establishment of incentive structures for good performance is strongly encouraged to increase teachers' motivation and morale. If the current situation continues to exist, there will be a reduction in the productivity and participation, and competitiveness of teachers and staff, leading to passivity, working-to-rules and low morale. Despite strong support for the introduction of such a system by staff, top management warned that it might have a negative impact on teachers and staff's feelings, if the criteria for evaluation were developed in a way that lack fairness, credibility and transparency.

Materials in Khmer: Study materials and documents in Khmer are few. Students whose English is limited find it hard to undertake research and their capacity to broaden their knowledge and their motivation to read are hampered. Foreign language materials are also

expensive. Most students therefore rely heavily on the Khmer-translated materials provided by their teachers.

Promotion and remuneration system: There is concern over the introduction of a promotion system based on merit-based performance in teaching, research and community service in that it might bring about a conflict of interests between young and senior teachers. Most senior teachers are less likely to pursue further study and their research skills are limited. To minimise this conflict, the promotion system should not be too heavily based on the level of degree; there should be a combination of other elements such as academic performance, seniority, moral behaviour and political affiliation, because seniority and patronage play an important role in promotion or appointment for a position in the university. Moreover, the possibility of establishing a policy on the subject of the academic staff promotion system is beyond the jurisdiction of the university; the university has no autonomy in this regard. There is a requirement for recognition from the MoEYS in conjunction with an agreement from the Ministry of Public Functions and with support from the central government. Civil servant regulations or laws in terms of salary structures are complicated. Many argue that the implementation of the system will not work effectively unless the remuneration system is reformed and research-funding allocation is established.

Prioritising scarce resources: The study showed that the university is facing a scarcity of resources, and it is criticised for a lack of efficiency in the use of these scarce resources. In this respect, the university needs to prioritise resources that it receives from the government for so-called 'budget priorities' and income that it generates through charging fees from the students. To prioritise these scarce resources, there is a need to set up a list of quality aspects and activities that the university wants to achieve, and then prioritise the activities according to the needs of the university on the basis of its financial capacity.

***Good governance*:** There are many criticisms over a lack of good governance in the Cambodian higher education system, especially in the CU. Many complained that there is a lack of transparency in financial management within the university, budget information is not discussed openly and is considered confidential, leading to scepticism by staff. Transparency is one of the elements of good governance. Poor governance leads to a lack of motivation and active participation by staff. The university must be held accountable for its own actions, and to staff members and students and not just to the central authorities.

6.3.4 Quality Tracking System

To ascertain whether the above-suggested strategies can be effectively achieved, a quality tracking system must be established to gather opinions or views from the service users such as students, and employers, because students use services provided by higher education institutions, and employers employ students to work for them. So their views are important aspects contributing to continuous quality improvement of the institutions. Higher education providers in Australia and UK have employed many surveys such as student satisfaction with subjects, teaching, individual teachers, research, Graduate Destination Survey, Course Experience Survey and so on.

Based on this current study, a few surveys are considered useful and workable for the university, such as a survey of teaching programs, student satisfaction with subjects, a survey of student employment, a survey of student satisfaction with individual teachers, a survey of employer satisfactions with graduates and a survey of student satisfaction with research.

However, there have emerged some concerns about reliability and the usefulness of the data in relation to student feedback gathered from the surveys. First, a student employment survey might not be reliable or suitable, because student employment also depends on the viability of the economic situation of the country. The economy in Cambodia is presently in a difficult situation, so many students will face difficulty in finding a job shortly after their graduation.

Second, the culture of a subject survey is relatively new for Cambodian higher education. Students do not fully understand its importance yet, so they might provide feedback that might not be helpful for actual quality improvement. They might rate a difficult subject with low satisfaction, regardless the value of the subject.

Third, a survey on teaching performance of an individual teacher is a sensitive matter and a new notion for academic staff. Inevitably the result of the survey will have a negative impact on the feelings of some, at least.

For these reasons, the quality tracking system should be established in a non-punitive, and a ‘formative’ rather than ‘summative’, fashion. Student feedback data is of importance for improving the quality performance of the university, informing policies and decisions for quality arrangements, and keeping the faculty members informed as a ‘wake-up-call’. Nonetheless, in the first phase or the medium-term, the university should aggregate the data without identifying any individual or individual subject, and should disseminate the data at faculty or university level. There should be a response to students and staff at the top level,

not at the individual level. The university then needs to discuss how it can work to remedy, improve and resource the problem areas identified. This culture is in every academic's mindset in the UK and the Australian higher education sector because it is visible and the results are aggregated and discussed in academic boards and at each faculty. In the first stage, the aim of collecting student feedback is to establish the concept of student feedback as a quality measure in each academic's mindset.

When a culture of quality is embedded amongst the academics, the university should aggregate the results of student feedback at an individual or subject level in the second phase of the implementation of the quality management system. The results then should be translated into action and should be used for purposes such as staff promotion and tenure.

With respect to who should take the lead and initiative in the development of a quality management system and its implementation, the top management are the key players in the development of a quality management framework and its implementation in the university, as they have the political power to influence other people. A top-down approach to decision-making is entrenched in the Cambodian system, and a leadership role model is significant in the Cambodian culture.

However, there is still a need for participation and involvement from all levels of staff. The tension between a top-down approach to decision-making and staff empowerment should be negotiated in an acceptable manner. Without participation and involvement from the grassroots level, the whole system would not work effectively. Coercion to participate without an understanding of the concept and process should be discouraged, as it would probably lead to failure in implementation and in ongoing development.

Middle-level management plays an important role in the development of a quality system and its implementation, especially at the departmental level, and it should be delegated to take responsibility for the development of a local framework so that it can be incorporated within the institutional framework and employed across the whole university. To manage this, there is a need to establish a quality assurance committee to provide a coordinating role and assist the departments in developing their quality system, under a close scrutiny from the top management. This committee or unit should be empowered to do this task in an accountable and responsible manner.

In order to ensure consistency between an internal quality system and external quality standards, inevitably the external quality agencies should be involved in the development of

an internal quality system by advising and providing technical assistance. As higher education institutions are under central government control, initiatives in relation to quality assurance rarely take place internally without approval from the central government agency.

6.3.5 Constraints

Although the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has encouraged all public universities to transform themselves into autonomous institutions, the term 'autonomy' is not clear for higher education institutions and even for the Ministry itself. They consider autonomy as a public administration institution (PAI), which applies to enterprises and businesses, allowing some institutions to run their programs or courses in a similar way to a profit-oriented organisation. However, PAI universities are expected to comply with regulatory requirements for transparency in governance and financial management, as well as accountability to the stakeholders and public, leading some universities to resist changing their status (Ford 2006).

At present, the CU is under central government control, with decisions made in a bureaucratic manner. The university has no authority to recruit its own staff and no power to discipline any staff members who do not perform adequately. There is no incentive structure for good performance, leading to a lack of motivation and active participation in quality activities.

In response to the requirement of the central government, the university is compelled to use a political approach to its management rather than a technical and collegial approach to quality management, lessening academic freedom and the professional autonomy of the institution.

The quality concept is not yet embedded in an individual academic's mindset or in the academic culture. Faculty members tend to view quality assurance as potentially career threatening.

Good governance is very important for the implementation process of quality assurance, but this does not exist in the university. Transparency in the use of financial resources is not openly discussed and of course the university is held accountable by the government. However, accountability to the teachers and students is neglected across the whole higher education sector.

The university tacks resources and cannot stand on its own feet, although the university is given authority to generate income through charging fees from students to top up its government subsidy. This latter resource of income is mainly used to supplement the small government salaries paid to teachers, and to support minimal administrative activities. The

university thus leaves other important activities vulnerable such as QA, research, staff development activities, and research training for staff. To help them make ends meet; teachers are allowed to 'moonlight' outside the university, leading to a general lack of participation and involvement in university activities. Generally speaking, scarcity of resources is an issue in any quality improvement program.

Staff qualifications are still at a low level and the majority of staff are locally trained, so they are less likely to have exposure to any notion of quality assurance. The university lacks human resources whose expertise is related to the field of quality management.

The university also lacks appropriate technology and infrastructure. This makes it hard for the university to produce information in a form and format so that it can compare its performance with other universities which are at a similar stage of development.

The involvement of professional bodies and associations is not appropriate at this stage; it is too hard for Cambodia at present for a number of reasons. First, the legal framework for accreditation in higher education focuses mainly on a whole- institution approach to quality assurance. This legislation encourages universities to seek institutional accreditation only, allowing universities to leave out discipline, or subject level, assessments. Professional bodies and associations have no role to play in this process. Second, gaining accreditation from international professional bodies and associations is costly. For example, when the University of Technology, Sydney applied for accreditation from an international body based in Singapore for a property economics course, the university spent a lot of money, time and effort to achieve that accreditation. Third, not only the high cost, but also other constraints as described earlier, prevent Cambodia from involving professional bodies and associations and seeking accreditation from international professional bodies and associations. Thus it is a long journey for Cambodia to introduce the concept of professional bodies and associations in its quality processes, thus preventing a standard Western system being introduced into the Cambodian higher education in the near future.

6.4 Implications of this study

The above-mentioned issues will constrain the development and implementation of a quality management framework for a Cambodian University. However, the study showed that as higher education becomes more and more globalised, higher education institutions need to have an explicit quality management system in place in order to survive in this competitive world. More importantly, it is a legislative requirement that all HEIs need to have a quality

system in place. Without such a clear system, the reform of the sector will be done in an ad-hoc and random fashion. In the present context of Cambodia, the university should not be too ambitious or merely copy from quality management systems employed in higher education in Australia, UK and Thailand. The purpose of the analysis of quality assurance systems in these countries was to gain an insightful understanding of what are the key features of those quality assurance systems that may be suitable for the Cambodian setting. Quality aspects that are perceived as important and workable will be adapted to suit the Cambodian context. In this respect, the development of the quality management system will be introduced into two phases. The first phase is aimed for achievement in the medium term and for development of a culture of quality assurance in every academic's mindset, while the second phase is aimed for the longer term.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the City University has conducted a number of quality assurance activities; however, the University does not have in place a quality management system. The main aim of the study is to explore what constitutes a suitable quality management system. Although aspects of the quality management framework proposed for the University as shown in the tables below are employed in higher education institutions in England, Australia and Thailand, each aspect of the framework must be simplified and moderated to suit the Cambodian context.

Basically, the quality agenda requires a planner to think big, but he or she should start small. This means that it is easier to start with simple and basic things that can be achieved with less effort and few resources. The elements of the quality management framework proposed in phase one are basic and may be used in daily operations within the university, but they are not systematically managed. The first phase is discussed below.

Although the university has its stated mission, there is a need for its reform because it is still too broad and there was a lack of participation and involvement of academics and staff in its formulation. The mission should be aligned with the government policies, referring to policies and standards of ACC and MoEYS. The government policies, standards and procedures need to be reviewed to ensure that the university's mission is relevant to and coherent with the mandatory requirements of the external regulatory bodies.

At this stage, a *fitness for purpose* approach to quality arrangement is more appropriate than other approaches. A *fitness for purpose* approach to quality assurance is preferred for higher education institutions in Australia and UK, because it allows them to measure their quality

performance in a flexible way based on their own context. However, there is a great demand for efficiency, accountability, and consistency from governments. Universities are required to abide by the governments' policies which focus on their responsiveness to economic and social needs. In response, higher education institutions have now to shift their approach to quality assurance from a fitness for purpose to a standards-based approach (refer Chapter 3, pp. 46 & 71).

A *student employability* approach might be difficult for the university to implement if the local economy is not buoyant, because sometimes students may not readily gain employment upon their graduation. However, this approach has been employed in quality measurements of higher education institutions in the UK and Australia by requiring institutions to ask students to complete a survey questionnaire about their employment after their graduation, and will eventually be attainable in Cambodia (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 47 & 71).

A *market-oriented* approach might not allow the university to measure other aspects of quality such as ethical and moral behaviour, and other values contributing to general knowledge and generic skills. Higher education institutions in the UK and Australia align themselves with businesses and industries through professional bodies and associations, which give advice to higher education institutions in various forms such as curriculum development, establishment of criteria to ensure suitability of students' abilities for entry to a course, and the like. However, some criticisms have arisen about placing too much emphasis on the market needs, as it can lead universities to a lack of focus on ethical and moral behaviour and other values contributing to general knowledge and generic skills (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 49 & 75).

Despite there being criticisms of the market-oriented approach, the approach is worth introducing in the Cambodian higher education sector because higher education in Cambodia is driven by the market. Much research shows that there is a mismatch between knowledge and skills provided by universities and skills demanded by the job market (Ford 2006).

It will be difficult for the university to use a multi-aspect approach to quality assurance, because of constraints on resources. The quality of an institution comes from various aspects and activities. There must be a need to consider not only fitness for purpose or student employability, but also other desirable aspects such as student attributes, virtue, moral and social behaviours, cultural heritage and the like. An institution must focus on various aspects

such as objectives and/or aims, the process employed for achieving objectives and/or objectives, and how aims and/or objectives are achieved (Garvin 1988).

A culture of continuous quality improvement lies in higher education systems in countries such as the USA, UK and Australia. Universities in Australia and the UK have employed various methods to gather comments and feedback from students and employers, and translated the collected feedback and comments into action. The UK higher education institutions regard students as their customers so student views are significant to continuous quality improvement (refer to Chapter 3, p. 52). However, not many administrators or academics mention this approach in higher education in Cambodia. This might be due in part to a lack of an insightful understanding of the concept of quality assurance.

Quality management tools need to be in place to measure whether an institution achieves its stated mission and objectives, to ensure whether the proposed approach to quality assurance works or not. These tools and their importance and usefulness are presented and discussed below.

There is a legislative requirement for an institution in UK and Australia to develop a strategic plan consisting of mission and objectives, policies and practices for quality assurance, a mechanism for measuring policies and practices, the articulation of areas of strengths and weaknesses, and actions taken to improve them (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 44 & 76). Although the CU has recently developed its strategic plan, it has not identified explicit policies and practices for quality assurance, a mechanism for measuring policies and practices, the articulation of areas of strengths and weaknesses, or actions taken to improve the identified areas of weaknesses.

QA policies, procedures, manuals and guidelines are very important for use as a guideline for developing curricula or courses and for use in assessing the quality performance of the university. Well-established higher education institutions in the world have clear QA policies, procedures and guidelines (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 44 & 76).

There are many criticisms of the performance indicators used in higher education in UK and Australia, but based on a global perspective of quality assurance in higher education, performance indicators play a crucial role in measuring quality performance of a university (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 61 & 69).

Student admission and assessment policy for all degrees at the CU is administered by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. This does not allow the university to have

flexibility and diversity in terms of recruitment of prospective students. In addition, teachers are pressured by powerful people to pass students regardless of their actual abilities. These are the main constraints on student admission and assessment. Assessment is crucial for quality assurance. The university must have a clear policy for admission and assessment with an explicit requirement of the skills or attributes the university wants its students to acquire.

The university needs to set up its internal communication and information dissemination processes, allowing for effective liaison between all departments and faculty members. To do this, the university needs to establish an effective Internet so that all relevant data is made available to all faculty members (refer to Chapter 3, p. 52). Information dissemination can be effected through various means such as e-mails, word of mouth, posters and others, in order to build up a sustained participation from staff.

Higher education institutions in UK, Australia and Thailand are legislatively required to develop a policy for professional and staff development which is included in their quality development plans. Staff development is one aspect of the criteria for quality assessment of teaching and learning. To support these plans, the governments also allocate funding to higher education institutions (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 49 & 73). Although the CU has limited resources to support staff development programs for advanced degrees, programs can be organised in the form of workshops, seminars, and conferences so that teachers have opportunities to share good practices of teaching and research with one another. Teachers are the key players in influencing students' knowledge. The interface between teachers and students has a heavier impact on quality education than any other aspect. So an effective institutional policy for professional and staff development is essential (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 54 & 73).

Teaching and research are core businesses of the CU. To make ends meet, most teachers teach as many hours as they possibly can, so they do not have time for student consultations and time for research. To build up a research culture, and reduce the teaching workload of the teachers, there is need for the university to formulate a policy for teaching and research to ensure that there is a balance between time allocation for teaching and that for research. Without a clear policy, research activities will be neglected and untended.

The existence of quality management tools does not guarantee that an institution can achieve its mission and goals of quality. A mechanism to ensure that these tools are enforced and

implemented effectively is needed. Thus, strategies for quality improvement need to be established. These strategies are discussed below.

A culture of quality is not yet embedded in the Thai university system and their experience of the internal quality audit process or self-assessment is relatively new. This has led to the establishment of multi-level committees for quality assurance in higher education institutions in Thailand, with a view to making it easier for them to implement quality arrangement effectively (refer to Chapter 3, p.92). This experience should also be introduced into the Cambodian university system. In the first place, each department must take responsibility for the development of its own quality management framework, as they have an explicit idea of what they want to do and how to achieve it. When each individual department's framework is in place, there is a need for incorporation of the collected frameworks into an institutional framework which can be used in the university as a whole. Three levels of committees need to be established, at institutional, faculty and department level, with clear roles and responsibilities at each level. The central institutional committee must then perform a coordinating role in liaising with all departments and divisions of the university to develop a quality management system with a close scrutiny from the top management. This committee needs to be given authority to do the work in an effective manner.

Prior to implementation, the QA committee will need to train all staff to understand the concept of quality assurance and its importance, and explain to them clearly about what is required. Staff involvement and participation in the development of the quality management system through inclusion of their inputs in decision-making processes, and discussion with them of issues as they arise, are most important. The reform of the quality agenda should be incremental rather than radical, so as to ensure that all staff fully understand the aims and purpose of the introduction of new policies and practices. It is also important to integrate a quality culture into each academic's mindset, thus quality management policies and practices should be non-punitive so that they are less likely to have an adverse impact on teachers' feelings and morale.

Generally, not only academic institutions, but also other organisations need to set out clear roles and responsibilities for their leaders and staff. When staff and leaders carry out the set roles and responsibilities as a norm, their routine participation and involvement will increase, and the management processes will be effective and efficient.

Higher education institutions in Australia and UK involve professional bodies and associations in providing advice about their program and curriculum developments to ensure that course or program provisions of the university are relevant to the needs of society and community. It is important to involve stakeholders in developing curriculum or study programs, especially prospective employers (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 49 & 74).

A whole-of-institution approach to quality audit is criticised as lacking rigour. Higher education in the UK also focuses on subject level assessment. Thailand focuses on program level, and Australia will soon introduce subject level assessment. So far, subject level assessments have been conducted in UK, Australian and Thai higher education and conducted by professional bodies and associations (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 47 & 71).

Learning from these examples, the university should encourage leaders and staff to conduct a self-assessment with the focus being on subjects and based on traditional academic values – knowledge and curriculum. Academic values are important in quality assessment, but they are increasingly being challenged.

The establishment of a research committee is needed to establish a research culture in the CU, with the role of encouraging and coordinating staff to do research. An additional role is to provide research skills training to staff and review the quality of their research, as well as to seek funding support and build up a network with international publishers. Currently the university does not have enough people with doctoral degrees stand as committee members. The university should thus assist potentially qualified and committed members of staff in seeking scholarships from international funding agencies so that they can pursue study abroad, while establishing a staff retention policy preventing them from leaving the university when they return.

The university also needs to allocate funding for research and for research training for teaching staff, who should be encouraged to start with small-scale research relevant to the local needs. At this stage, developing a research culture within the university is more important than too much emphasis on regional or international recognition.

Each member of the teaching staff in Australian and UK universities is required to develop a subject or course outline to hand out to students at the beginning of each semester. This allows students to have a clear idea what they are going to study and achieve during the course. The study also revealed that almost all lecturers in Cambodia deliver their teaching

without developing a subject or course outline and disclosing it out to students at the beginning of each semester.

The CU needs to prioritise its resources for the development and implementation of quality arrangements by identifying which aspects of quality are believed to be more necessary and put them into daily practices in a way that can be achieved with limited resources.

Higher education institutions in Australia and UK regard students as customers. They employ several types of surveys to gather feedback from students and employers, as part of a continuous quality improvement system in which a quality tracking system is integral.

The study also suggested that a number of surveys should be designed to gather student feedback. A survey on student satisfaction with subjects should be distributed to students, for completion at the end of each semester. However, some concerns about the reliability of the results of such a survey were raised as Cambodian students do not yet fully understand the importance of their feedback.

A survey of student employability should be distributed to students for completion at least six months after their graduation. Such a survey will allow the university to identify student employment in the labour market even though such survey might not be reliable, because student employability also depends on the economic situation of the country (refer to Chapter 3, p.67).

A survey of student satisfaction with individual teachers should be on a voluntary basis at this stage with the results distributed to individual teachers in a confidential manner and used for their self-improvement. The surveys are a relatively new concept for academic staff and should be formative and non-punitive. Any action taken in response to the student feedback needs to be handled with care. Many years ago, universities in Australia aggregated the data from student feedback, by not identifying any individual or individual subject level, but now it is discussed at all levels and is part of the culture in Australian universities. In this first phase therefore it is recommended that the results of the surveys and self-assessment should be discussed at institutional or faculty level, without identifying an individual or individual subjects, with the objective to use the feedback to establish a quality culture in each academic's mindset and as a 'wake-up call' for teachers. The main objectives should be to focus on a formative rather than summative approach, with the aim of entrenching a quality culture in the academic setting.

To make it easier to understand, a quality management framework for a Cambodian university proposed to be developed and implemented in phase 1 is summarised in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2 Summary of a Quality Management Framework for a Cambodian University

Phase 1

(A): Direction and Management

1. Mission
2. Objectives: formative
3. Values: continuous improvement, accountability & compliance
4. Approach to quality management: fitness for purpose
5. Quality management instruments
   - Strategic plan;
   - QA policies, procedures, and guidelines;
   - Performance indicators;
   - Admission and assessment policy;
   - Internal communication and information dissemination process;

(B): Core work

- Professional and staff development to improve research, teaching & learning
- Research;
- Teaching and learning;

(C): Support and Administrative Activities for Staff & Students

- Establish QA committee;
- Elucidate the quality system;
- Develop a quality culture in each academic's mindset;
- Establish roles and responsibilities for staff and leaders;
- Involve stakeholders in the curriculum development;
- Conduct self-assessment at department level;
- Set up a research committee;
- Create a research culture;
- Encourage teachers to develop a subject outline;
- Prioritise scarce resources;

(D): Impact & Tracking Measures

- Survey on teaching programs;
- Survey on subjects;
- Survey on student employability;
- Survey on individual teachers;

Uses & Procedures

- Respond to students and employers
- Use both quantitative and qualitative procedures

When a quality culture is entrenched in every academic's mindset and the quality concept becomes the norm for daily practise at the university, a second phase of the development of the quality management framework could begin. The second phase is designed to develop further aspects of the quality management framework in addition to those developed in the first phase.

The core elements of the quality management framework in the second phase are at a higher and broader level than those in the first phase. They will require concerted effort and are resource and time consuming, as most of the elements need to be discussed at both institutional and national level so that a nationally agreed, consistent and relevant standard can be maintained. For these reasons, they were not included in the first phase. The second phase of the quality management framework is presented and discussed below.

The job market is becoming a more dominant player in determining quality in higher education in Cambodia. As well, many studies of skills provided by HEIs suggested that there is a mismatch between knowledge and skills provided by HEIs and the skills required by the job market. This indicates that HEIs need to ensure that their missions are in harmony with the needs of the job market. In order for this to occur, the university needs to adopt a market-oriented approach. Although time and resource consuming, it is necessary if students are to be able to deal with diverse challenges in the job market.

The core elements of the second phase are as follows.

Benchmarking has been used in the higher education sector in UK, and Australia. Its advantages and disadvantages have been referred to elsewhere (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 45 & 70). Despite being a new instrument for Cambodian higher education, it allows a university to know where it stands in comparison to other similar universities. Acquiring benchmarking data from other higher education institutions can be expensive but it can be done more simply at first by having regular institutional visits to different universities.

Graduate attributes are used in the higher education in the UK, Australia and Thailand. They provide a set of integrated abilities (generic, general and professional) that all graduates should have upon completion of their study programs, regardless of what degree they have received. Integrating the attributes into a course curriculum is not easy and many questions have been raised as to their use in Australia, UK and Thailand (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 45, 66 & 86).

In order to ensure consistency and coherence of qualifications provided by higher education institutions across the country, there is a need to establish a *national qualifications framework*. This allows higher education providers throughout Cambodia to use it as a guideline for developing policy for curriculum development and as a reference point for other external quality assurance agencies. Such a framework has been used in higher education in Australia, UK and Thailand. However, many universities argue that it prevents their promoting diversity and flexibility (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 46, 65& 86).

The current system in Cambodia not only de-motivates the teachers, but also passive. They lack motivation and commitment to participating in institutional activities because there is no differentiation between good and poor performance. The *introduction of an incentive structure* can possibly lead to some disadvantages rather than positive impacts since the concept is not fully understood by many Cambodian academic staff despite being well accepted in developed countries. There will need to be clear criteria for assessment to avoid biases.

The purpose of the *institutional self-assessment* is to focus on managerial values, with a concern about policies, procedures and structures of the university. The results of both departmental and institutional levels are incorporated into a single report for the purpose of continuous improvement of the university. Self-assessments are conducted at both departmental and institutional levels because they are mutually complementary. Departmental self-assessments focus on academic matters, while institutional self-assessments have little direct focus on academic matters with more direct focus on policies and procedures. A comparison of the results of self-assessments with external reference points allows an institution to know where it stands and how well it is performing in relation to the quality of educational provisions. Based on this, an institution can identify its weak and strong areas and make informed judgments about which aspects need further development. The institution should compare the results of its internal self-assessment with that of other institutions which are at a similar stage of development.

Study materials and documents in Khmer are inadequate. Almost all documents are written in either English or French. Students with limited English and French find it hard to undertake research. Most of the students rely heavily on the Khmer-translated materials from their teachers. In addition, materials in English and French are too expensive. These limit students' capacity to broaden their knowledge as well as their motivation to read.

The *quality management tools* such as student attributes and a national qualifications framework need to be used as a guide for the redevelopment of curricula and to ensure that there is consistency and coherence between course and/or program contents and the quality management tools. Although universities in the UK and Australia have the autonomy to develop their own study programs based on their mission and objectives, they try to fit in with the national protocols and other standards with a view to ensuring consistency between qualifications awarded by different universities at the same level across the higher education sector (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 46, 61 & 65).

Research outputs in UK and Australia were categorised into different types with the main purpose being to identify the quality rankings for budget allocation decisions (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 44 & 69). In Thailand, the quality of research is measured against its relevance and its contribution to the local needs, recognising the need for regional and international recognition in the future (refer to Chapter 3, p.94). The quality of research in Cambodian higher education should be also reviewed based on its relevance and contribution to local needs.

In the Australian and UK higher education sector, *academic promotion* is partly based on teaching, research and community service (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 53 & 76). In Thailand promotion is based on civil service policies (refer to Chapter 3, p.95). Although the establishment of an academic promotion and remuneration system is beyond the jurisdiction of the university, as it requires endorsement and recognition by many parent ministries such as MoEYS, Ministry of Public Functions and the central government, most academic staff express strong support for developing a promotion system taking into account academic performance, research, seniority and moral behaviour. A promotion system will not be implemented successfully if the remuneration system is not similarly reformed removing the practice of 'moonlighting'.

Good governance, including transparency, accountability and efficiency, is the key to the successful implementation of a quality system. Currently not only the university system but also the national system lacks good governance, lacking transparency and accountability. Notably, information on financial management is considered confidential and budgetary plans of the university are not discussed openly. Most leaders have inadequate leadership skills. This causes people to be sceptical about the system, triggering a lack of motivation and active participation.

In implementing a *quality tracking system*, employer feedback is one of the most important aspects contributing to quality improvement. With this information, a university can determine its own quality and develop its curriculum and study programs in response to the needs of the labour market as well as society at large. Notably, this type of survey is used in higher education in Australia and UK where employer feedback is regarded as important for improving quality of the institutions (refer to Chapter 3, pp. 52 & 67).

Australian higher education providers conduct an annual survey of *research students' experience*, examining their satisfaction with supervision, skills development, intellectual climate, infrastructure, thesis examination and goals (refer to Chapter 3, p.68).

In this phase, the results of self-assessment and student feedback must be translated into action rather than just remain a fact-finding process. The data of the surveys should be aggregated, identifying any individual or individual subject. The results should be discussed at all levels. A university should highlight where it needs resources to fix up a particular problem and needs to discuss how it can improve that problem. This culture is in every academic's mindset in the UK and Australian higher education sector because it is visible. The results are aggregated and discussed in academic boards and senates and within each faculty. The results of the surveys and self-assessments should be published and made accessible to all staff members.

This second phase needs to place emphasis on both a formative and summative approach and focus on both the educational process and educational outcomes. Although the external regulatory body with responsibility for QA focuses on the institutional audit only, the CU needs to extend its values in seeking recognition from regional and international higher education communities. In order to support these values, regional and international benchmarking is important, as quality in higher education becomes more and more part of a global agenda. Schmele (1996) noted 'quality management and excellence in service are no longer being judged solely on a regional or even a national level; but it is becoming increasingly important for organisations to compete in these areas on an international level, as well' (p. 190).

Table 6.3 Summary of Quality Management Framework for a Cambodian University

Phase 2

(A): Direction & Management

1. Mission (redirected its focus from 'fitness for purpose' to 'market-oriented')
2. Objectives: both formative and summative
3. Values: continuous improvement, accountability, compliance & recognition
4. Approach to quality management: market-oriented approach
5. Quality management instruments
   - Benchmarking
   - Graduate attributes
   - A National Qualifications Framework

(B): Core work

- The same as in Phase 1

(C): Support & Administrative Activities for Staff & Students

- Establish incentive structures
- Conduct self-assessment at institutional level
- Compare the results of self-assessments with external reference points
- Develop materials in Khmer
- Conduct research assessment
- Redesign curriculum in line with the quality management tools
- Establish promotion and remuneration system
- Improve governance at both institutional and system level

(D): Impact & Tracking Measures

- Survey employers
- Survey on research

Uses & Procedures

- Discuss and publish the results of the surveys and self-assessment reports
- Use both quantitative and qualitative procedures

6.5 Recommendations

The findings summarised above have answered the questions of what constitutes a relevant and suitable approach to a quality management system for a Cambodian university, how it can be implemented effectively in daily practice in the Cambodian setting, and who should take the lead in the development of the quality management system and its implementation. A number of related recommendations can be made to support the development and implementation of the proposed quality management framework in a sustainable manner.

Recommendations at the institutional level

Recommendation 1: the proposed quality management system should be introduced gradually in two phases. The purpose of the first phase is to develop a quality culture in every academic's mindset by introducing simple and basic elements of quality which can be achieved with little effort by academic and other staff, and with little consumption of time and other resources. As this quality culture becomes embedded in the academic's mindset, the higher and broader elements of a quality management system may be introduced as a second phase. Many constraints (as mentioned earlier) limit the rapid introduction of a standard in Western system into Cambodian higher education institutions.

Recommendation 2: Based on the evidence from this study including the literature review, some aspects of subject and course program surveys could be introduced (see Appendix 3). These surveys could include items similar to those being used in higher education in Australia and the UK and which are not directed at individual teachers. As such they would be seen as being non-punitive and not career threatening and therefore more acceptable to many members of staff.

Recommendation 3: Professional bodies and associations play an important role in quality assurance systems in higher education in Australia and the UK. They provide important advice on curriculum development and program designs, and ensure the suitability of graduates' abilities to the requirements of businesses and industries. Obtaining accreditation from professional bodies and associations is important, because the market is a powerful driver in determining quality in higher education. If students – the customers of higher education - want to enrol in a university in one country, they may want to see the quality assurance system of the country, to ensure that it has good quality management. Prospective students might also want to see global indexes of the university, including professional association ratings or graduate membership.

Recommendation 4: Funding from external agencies is needed to implement a quality management system. Development aid for quality assurance in higher education is not just about educational infrastructure but also includes support for a quality assurance system. This support might be used to employ international professional quality assurance organisations. Higher education is a globalised industry and Cambodia can't afford to fall further behind. Development funds should also be used to support attendance at conferences relevant to higher education and quality issues.

Recommendation 5: Participation and involvement from all levels of the university is the key to the implementation of a university-wide quality management system. In Cambodia, a leader is seen as a role model and a top-down approach to management is profoundly embedded within the culture. People always look to a leader to provide an example; if their leader is passive then so are they. A leader would play a powerful role in taking the initiative in the development and implementation of the quality system. Nonetheless, there should be a compromise between a top-down and a bottom-up approach to quality management. A bottom-up approach is more workable than a top-down approach if participation in the university is to be encouraged. Listening to the voices and opinions of staff on issues which need improvement is critical if pan-university participation is to be encouraged.

Within higher education institutions, academics prefer to use a collegial method to encourage internal participation and involvement rather than intrusiveness by external bodies. Although external quality assurance agencies can play a critical role in influencing internal quality management, the successful day-to-day operation of a university is achieved by strong commitment and participation of its own staff.

Recommendations at the system level

Recommendation 6: A national qualifications framework based on graduate attributes should be established in order to ensure consistency between the knowledge and abilities of students who graduate from different universities across the country with the same level of qualification.

Recommendation 7: A national database should be established based on standard surveys of student experiences of course and/or program provisions and graduate employability. This information could be used to better inform government funding allocations.

Recommendation 8: A 'carrot and stick' policy should be adopted by government, where financial support given to higher education institutions by government rewards institutions

that demonstrate good performance in quality assessment and accreditation. In Australia and the UK, governments have used funding incentives distributed to higher education institutions, linking competitive quality performance with the allocation of funding incentives. The funding allocations to universities are based on how well a university is able to demonstrate its performance in a quality assessment. The Thai government is also moving towards implementing a policy for allocating funding to higher education institutions based on how well each university performs in the quality assessment audit undertaken by the central government agency.

Recommendations for further research

Recommendation 9: This study provides a broad picture of a quality management system covering many dimensions of quality in higher education. It will helpful to undertake further research on the impact that external quality assurance might have on internal quality assurance within higher education institutions in Cambodia. Such research would provide higher education decision-makers and policy-planners with advice supported by reliable data for the further development of a quality assurance system for Cambodia.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Percentages for Likert Scale Items (N=104)

Table 5.5. Quality management instruments

Note: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA)

A university should have	**Count (N=104) and percentage (%)**						
	SD	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Total**	**Missing**
1. QA policies, procedures	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	6 5.9%	45 44.1%	50 49.0%	102 100%	2
2. Link with external QA	2 1.9%	5 4.9%	11 10.7%	41 39.8%	44 42.7%	103 100%	1
3. A national standard	1 1.0%	3 2.9%	20 19.2%	45 43.3%	35 33.7%	104 100%	0
4. Performance indicators	0 0.0%	2 2.0%	24 24.5%	41 41.8%	31 31.6%	98 100%	6
5. Strategic plan	1 1.0%	0 0.0%	3 2.9%	24 23.5%	74 72.5%	102 100%	2

Table 5.6. Strategy for quality improvement

A university should	**Count (N=104) and percentage (%)**						
	SD	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Total**	**Missing**
6. Train staff to understand QA	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	38 36.5%	64 61.5%	104 100%	0
7. Encourage staff to carry out self-assessment	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4 3.8%	46 44.2%	54 51.9%	104 100%	0
8. Disseminate the results of self-assessment (SA)	0 0.0%	4 3.9%	16 15.5%	44 42.7%	39 37.9%	103 100%	1
9. Compare the results of SA with external QA	0 0.0%	2 1.9%	17 16.5%	49 47.6%	35 34.0%	103 100%	1
10. Evaluate knowledge of students, not institution	5 4.9%	11 10.8%	26 25.5%	34 33.3%	26 25.5%	102 100%	2
11. Create incentive structure for teaching	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 2.9%	37 35.6%	64 61.5%	104 100%	0

12. Establish staff development program	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	2 1.9%	30 28.8%	71 68.3%	104 100%	0
13. Encourage staff to pursue advanced degrees	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	22 21.4%	81 78.6%	103 100%	1
14. Establish QA Unit at three levels, institutional..	0 0.0%	6 5.8%	13 12.5%	46 44.2%	39 37.5%	104 100%	0
15. Involve stakeholders in the curriculum design	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	10 9.6%	50 48.1%	43 41.3%	104 100%	0
16. Ensure good governance, transparency..	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	9 8.7%	36 34.6%	59 56.7%	104 100%	0
17. Encourage staff to be involved in QM	0 0.0%	2 2.0%	5 4.9%	53 52.0%	42 41.2%	102 100%	2
18. Consider quality culture as an integral part..	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	50 48.1%	53 51.0%	104 100%	0
19. Encourage teachers to develop a subject outline..	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	6 5.8%	41 39.8%	56 54.4%	103 100%	1
20. Promote the value of team work among teachers	1 1.0%	5 4.8%	15 14.4%	46 44.2%	37 35.6%	104 100%	0
21. Clarify roles for staff and leaders	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 2.9%	43 41.3%	58 55.8%	104 100%	0

Table 5.7. Quality of learning and teaching

University programs that engage students in productive learning:	**Count (N=104) and percentage (%)**						
	SD	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Total**	**Missing**
22. Are relevant to the background, abilities,..	5 4.8%	7 6.7%	8 7.7%	55 52.9%	29 27.9%	104 100%	0
23. Are delivered by staff with appropriate…	0 0.0%	3 2.9%	15 14.4%	37 35.6%	49 47.1%	104 100%	0
24. Provide opportunities for students to work with..	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	8 7.8%	44 42.7%	51 49.5%	103 100%	1
25. Link theory with practice….	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	6 5.8%	45 43.7%	52 50.5%	103 100%	1
26. Manage students' expatiations right from…	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	21 20.4%	55 53.4%	25 24.3%	103 100%	1
27. Encourage teachers to plan their lessons…	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	5 4.9%	47 45.6%	50 48.5%	103 100%	1
28. Encourage students to memorize what was taught	4 3.8%	12 11.5%	30 28.8%	45 43.3%	13 12.5%	104 100%	0
29. Provide students with opportunities to pursue…	0 0.0%	3 2.9%	18 17.5%	56 54.4%	25 24.3%	103 100%	1
30. Encourage students to express divergent….	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	9 8.7%	46 44.2%	48 46.2%	104 100%	0
31. Ensure that feedback on assessment tasks…	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 2.9%	51 49.0%	50 48.1%	104 100%	0
32. Not only include opportunities for self…	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	4 3.8%	52 50.0%	46 44.2%	104 100%	0
33. Provide support & administrative services…	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	12 11.5%	50 48.1%	42 40.4%	104 100%	0
34. Make both program delivery and assessment…	0 0.0%	3 2.9%	9 8.8%	61 59.8%	29 28.4%	102 100%	2
35. Provide students with time for consultations;	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	14 13.7%	56 54.9%	32 31.4%	102 100%	2

36. Encourage teachers to use IT in their teaching.	2 2.0%	3 3.0%	15 15.0%	48 48.0%	32 32.0%	100 100%	4

Table 5.8. Quality tracking system

In order to ascertain its performance a university should conduct:	**Count (N=104) and percentage (%)**						
	SD	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Total**	**Missing**
37. A survey on student satisfaction…(teaching)…	2 2.0%	0 0.0%	7 6.9%	53 52.0%	40 39.2%	102 100%	2
38. A survey on student satisfaction... (research)…	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	13 12.9%	55 54.5%	31 30.7%	101 100%	3
39. A survey on student satisfaction...(subjects)…	1 1.0%	4 3.9%	15 14.7%	46 45.1%	36 35.3%	102 100%	2
40. A survey on student satisfaction…(teachers)…	2 2.0%	6 5.9%	18 17.6%	36 35.3%	40 39.2%	102 100%	2
41. A survey on employers' satisfaction…	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	27 26.7%	43 41.3%	28 27.7%	101 100%	3
42. A survey on student employability.	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	9 8.8%	49 48.0%	43 42.2%	102 100%	2

Table 5.9. Implementation

Who is responsible for quality management for the university?	**Count (N=104) and percentage (%)**						
	SD	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Total**	**Missing**
43. Everyone in an institution;	6 6.1%	9 9.2%	23 23.5%	29 29.6%	31 31.6%	98 100%	6
44. Top managers, e.g. rector, president;	3 3.0%	14 13.9%	22 21.8%	23 22.8%	39 38.6%	101 100%	3
45. A QA coordinator;	3 3.0%	10 9.9%	18 17.8%	40 39.6%	30 29.7%	101 100%	3
46. Middle-level managers, e.g. deans, department…	4 4.0%	6 5.9%	12 11.9%	49 48.5%	30 29.7%	101 100%	3
47. External QA agents, e.g. department of HE…	9 9.0%	17 17.0%	36 36.0%	28 28.0%	10 10.0%	100 100%	4

Table 5.10. Cross-tabulation of respondents by level of employment and top managers

(Item 44) (N=104)

Level of employment	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Total**
Lecturer	**0** **(0%)**	**9** **(9.2%)**	**10** **(10.2%)**	**14** **(14.3%)**	**16** **(16.3%)**	**49 (50%)**
Administrator	**0** **(0%)**	**1** **(1%)**	**3 (3.1%)**	**1** **(1%)**	**4** **(4.1%)**	**9** **(9.2%)**
Management	**1** **(1%)**	**3** **(3.1%)**	**7 (7.1%)**	**6** **(6.1%)**	**19** **(19.4%)**	**36** **(36.7%)**
Others	**0** **(0%)**	**1** **(1%)**	**2** **(2%)**	**1** **(1%)**	**0** **(0%)**	**4** **(4.1%)**
Total	**1** **(1%)**	**14** **(14.3%)**	**22** **(22.4%)**	**22** **(22.4%)**	**39** **(39.8%)**	**98** **(100%)**

Source: Analysis of survey data (2008)

Appendix 2: Items and statements of surveys on student satisfactions

1.1. A survey on student satisfactions with a study program and subject should cover the following items or statements:

A study program at the university:

1. Provides opportunity for students to work with each other (student-centered).
2. Links theory with practice, especially through problem-based learning opportunity, real-life, and work-placements.
3. Has relevant and up-to-date subject content.
4. Meets students' expectations in terms of service and support.
5. Provides students with morality and virtue.
6. Improves students' cultural knowledge.
7. Provides students with analytical and critical thinking ability.
8. Provides students with skills necessary to undertake on-going independent learning.
9. Promotes cultural heritage and preservation.
10. Provides support & administrative services which are responsive to student needs.
11. Make both program delivery and assessment suitable for students.
12. Provides students with time for consultation.
13. Has fair and transparent criteria for student admission.
14. Promotes the development of competence in using IT.
15. Requires students to undertake research projects relevant to their courses.
16. Has enough books and reading materials in the library.

1.2. A survey on student satisfactions with individual teacher should cover the following items:

How do you rate your teacher? He/she:

1. Encourages students to express divergent thinking.
2. Actively assists students in how to undertake self-managed learning.
3. Provides feedback on assessment task in a timely and focused manner
4. Uses IT to support his/her teaching activities.
5. Is knowledgeable about his/her subject matter.
6. Uses fair assessment criteria.
7. Motivates students to work hard.
8. Encourages students to work in groups.

9. Provides students enough reading materials.
10. Provides students with updated content reading materials

However, there are three statements emerged from the survey and interviews with respect to a survey on student satisfactions with research and on student employability.

A research program of the faculty in the university:

1. Develop students' ability for research and innovation.
2. Provide students with enough time for supervising students' research.
3. Is relevant to students' work skills.

There should be a discussion with academics and staff in the university on further statements or items for the research and student employability surveys.

Appendix 3: Interview questions for participants in Cambodia

FOCUS GROUP AND ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

The purpose of this interview is to ascertain the perceptions of staff, faculty, and administrators of the City University (CU), and key policy makers and planners of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, and the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia in relation to what constitutes a locally relevant, efficient and effective approach to quality management system suitable for the CU.

General perceptions of quality

1. What does quality mean to you?
2. What things would you expect to see in a good quality university?

Effective approach to quality management

3. Some higher education institutions in different countries use different kind of measurement of quality. Some evaluate against the purpose of the institution; some evaluate against the market and employability; some evaluate against student satisfaction. When you think about those evaluations, what is most suitable for CU?
4. A lot of higher education institutions have clear quality management instruments, such as QA policies, manuals, procedures, guidelines, key performance indicators, etc. Do you think CU has these instruments? Do you think we would use these if we have them at CU?

Quality management instruments

5. What quality instruments do you think important for CU (e.g. key performance indicators for teaching, and learning outcomes, as well as strategic planning for teaching, learning and research, etc)?
6. Should CU's internal quality management system be linked to external accreditation standards (e.g. the ACC standards, etc)?
7. Who do you think should be responsible for establishing these instruments?

Strategies for quality improvement

8. Can you describe your experience of your teaching?
9. What would make teaching better at CU? In some higher education institutions they have teaching awards or incentives for good teaching.

   Please comment on the possibility of introducing these systems to CU.

10. What is quality learning? What kind of processes and organizational support do we use to ensure the quality of learning?
11. What engages students in productive learning?
12. Research is one of the core businesses of a university. What do you understand by quality research programs? How do we ensure quality of research in the university?
13. In the UK and Australia, teachers' promotions are based in part on teaching and research performance (merit), not on years of service. Please comment on the advantages and disadvantages of introducing that system at CU.

14. In the UK, and US, academic staff who teach at a university are required to hold PhDs, while in Australia some professional people from industries and businesses, who hold Masters' degrees, are also allowed to teach in some disciplines at a university, such as business, management, engineering and so on, in order to link university courses with the needs of the labour markets. In our case, what percent of staff should have PhD at CU?
15. In the UK, Australia, and Thailand, staff development is perceived as an important activity for improving teaching and student learning. Do you know any departments at CU have staff development? What do you think if we introduce it in CU?
16. Based on a literature review of quality management systems, the success of quality assurance in a university appears to depend on the involvement of all levels of staff, not from the imposition of externally regulatory bodies. What do you think? How can we encourage involvement from all levels of staff?
17. Some institutions introduce incentive structures such as recognition, promotion, further training, or attending conferences abroad, etc. What kind of incentive structures should be established in order to encourage the involvement of staff in quality management in CU?
18. Strategic planning is an important component for achieving the mission or objectives of the institution. When should the establishment of strategic planning begin? Who should lead its development? Who do you think should be involved?

Quality tracking system

19. How do we know when a university is improving?
20. In Australia and the UK, there are surveys of teaching, and learning quality. Please comment on the issues relating to the implementation of such a system at CU. How should the data be used? Who should have access to the data?
21. What indicators and evidence might show that the would-be quality management framework is working beneficially in practice?

Miscellaneous

22. Is there anything else that you wish to say about quality management?

Appendix 4: Survey questionnaire for participants in Cambodia

QUESTIONNAIRES

The purpose of this survey is to examine stakeholders' perceptions in relation to an effective quality management framework for CU. Your responses to this survey will be most helpful in trying to find out how to develop quality management for Cambodian Higher Education in the future. What you share in this survey will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. You will not be identified in any way in the report of this research. Thank you for your cooperation.

SECTION 1: QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1.1. Quality management instruments

The following instruments are used for providing guidance for quality management in higher education institutions in countries like the UK, Australia, Thailand and so on. Based on what you think is important for quality management for CU , Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements by ticking the boxes below.

Note: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

A university should have:

1.	Quality assurance policies, manuals, and procedures;	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Quality management framework linked to external accreditation standards. E.g. the ACC standards;	1	2	3	4	5
3.	A set of national agreed minimum criteria for assuring specific professional programs (such as sciences, engineering, and so on) by professional bodies;	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Key performance indicators for teaching, and learning outcomes	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Strategic planning for teaching, learning and research	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide further comments on quality management instruments suitable for the university.

_____

_____

_____

1.2. Strategy for quality improvement

To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of quality management for universities in the UK, Australia, and Thailand, the following activities may be conducted. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements by ticking the boxes below.

Notice: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

A university should:

6.	Train academics and administrative staff to understand the concept of quality assurance;	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Encourage staff members to carry out self-assessment at the discretion of their department;	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Disseminate the results of self-assessment of each department through publications;	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Compare the results of self-assessments with external reference points;	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Evaluate knowledge of students rather than institutional processes;	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Create incentive structure for good teaching;	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Establish staff development programs;	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Encourage academic staff to pursue advanced degrees (Masters, PhDs, etc.);	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Establish QA Unit/Committee at three levels, including institutional, faculty and department;	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Involve stakeholders in the curriculum design;	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Ensure good governance, transparency, and accountability to stakeholders;	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Encourage staff to be involved in quality management;	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Consider quality culture as an integral part of each academic's mindset;	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Encourage teaching staff to develop a subject outline for their students at the beginning of each semester;	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Promote the value of teamwork among academic staff;	1	2	3	4	5

21.	Clarify roles/responsibilities for staff and leaders	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide further comments on strategies for quality improvement for the university

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.3. Quality of teaching and learning

Based on a literature review of quality management, the following statements are regarded as good practices for engaging students in productive learning. Please indicate your level of agreement for each statement by ticking boxes below.

Note: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

University programs that engage students in productive learning:

22.	Are relevant to the background, abilities, needs and experiences of the students;	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Are delivered by staff with appropriate qualifications, e.g. PhDs	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Provide opportunities for students to work with each other (student-centred);	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Link theory with practice, especially through problem-based learning opportunities, real-life, and work-placements;	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Manage students' expectations right from the beginning about the level of service, and support;	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Encourage teachers to plan their lessons with up-to-date contents;	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Encourage students to memorise what was taught (rote-learning);	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Provide students with opportunities to pursue flexible learning pathways;	1	2	3	4	5
30.	Encourage students to express divergent thinking;	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Ensure that feedback on assessment tasks is both timely and focused;	1	2	3	4	5

32.	Not only include opportunities for self-managed learning but actively assist students in how to undertake it;	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Provide support & administrative services which are responsive to students needs;	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Make both program delivery and assessment suitable to students' knowledge;	1	2	3	4	5
35.	Provide students with time for consultations;	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Encourage teachers to use IT in their teaching.	1	2	3	4	5

Adapted from Scott 2004

Please provide further comments on quality of teaching and learning:

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.4. Quality tracking system

This section of the questionnaire asks you about how the university tracks its performance. The internal approach to quality assurance in the UK, and Australia is based on a wide range of information collected from many stakeholders.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements by ticking boxes below.

Note: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

In order to ascertain its performance a university should conduct:

37.	A survey on student satisfaction with its teaching programs;	1	2	3	4	5
38.	A survey on student satisfaction with its research degree programs;	1	2	3	4	5
39.	A survey on student satisfaction with subjects;	1	2	3	4	5
40.	A survey on student satisfaction with the teaching of individual teachers;	1	2	3	4	5

41.	A survey on employers' satisfaction with graduates;	1	2	3	4	5
42.	A survey on students' employability.	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide further comments concerning tracking and improving systems for quality of a program

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.5. Implementation

This section of the survey asks you in relation to who should lead the development of quality management framework and its implementation. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements by ticking boxes below.

Note: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Who is responsible for quality management for the university?

43.	Everyone in an institution	1	2	3	4	5
44.	Top managers, e.g. rector, president	1	2	3	4	5
45.	A QA coordinator	1	2	3	4	5
46.	Middle-level managers, e.g. deans, department heads	1	2	3	4	5
47.	External quality assurance agents, e.g. department of higher education	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 2: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please add any further comments you may wish to make with respect to quality issues and/or a quality management framework suitable for CU.

_____

SECTION 3: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

3.1. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

3.2. Number of years working in the university: ( )

3.3. Are you working in the university:

Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐

3.4. Are you a:

Lecturer ☐ Administrator ☐

Senior lecturer ☐ Management ☐

Other ☐

Please provide further comments in relation to your work experience.

_____

_____

_____

_____

3.5. What is the highest level of academic qualification you have gained?

☐ Associate degree ☐ Bachelor degree ☐ Diploma

☐ Master degree ☐ PhD degree ☐ EdD degree

3.6. In what area of study (e.g. education, sociology, psychology) did you complete your highest academic qualification? _____

(Thank you for your participation)

Appendix 5: Interview questions for participants in Thailand

Interview questions for

Thai universities

1. Could you tell me your experience in quality management for your university?
2. How do you determine a university as quality?
3. What approach to quality management does your university employ?
4. What are the key features of quality management system in your university?
5. How is quality management system established?
6. How is quality management implemented at your university?
7. What are major processes for quality management at your university?
8. What policies and principles of quality management inform your work?
9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance in your university?
10. What is considered good teaching?
11. What are the major criteria of quality in teaching and learning at your university?
12. What the main methods you use to measure quality in teaching and learning?
13. In your opinion, what aspects of teaching should be measured by a quality assurance system?
14. What are supporting systems for teaching, learning, and research?
15. What measures do we need to use in improving the quality of our teaching?
16. What is quality learning? What kind of processes and organizational support do you use to ensure the quality of learning?
17. How do we ensure quality of research in your university?
18. How do you organise staff development (training, empowerment, incentive)?
19. What are the key issues in quality management?
20. What are your views or opinions on quality management in general?

Appendix 6: Consent form for participants in Thailand

Faculty of Education

PO Box 123

Broadway, NSW 2007

Mobile: (61) 4 2394 8416 (Australia)

(855) 12854259 (Cambodia)

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY
CONSENT FORM - STUDENT RESEARCH

I, _____, agree on participating in the research project "Developing a locally relevant and effective quality management framework for Cambodian Higher Education", being conducted by Chhang Rath, who is currently studying at the University of Technology, Sydney, for his Professional Doctorate Degree.

The University understands that the purpose of this study is to explore senior managers, and staff's experiences in quality management in the higher education sector in Thailand.

We understand that participation in this research is voluntary and will involve senior managers being invited to interview. We understand that the interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes at their respective offices.

The University is aware that we can contact Chhang Rath, or his supervisor, Mark Tennant (phone: (61) 408433721), if we have any concerns about the research. We also understand that our senior staff members are under no obligation to participate in interviews, and they are free to withdraw their participation from this research project at any time they wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

The University understands that the research data collected from this project will be published in a form that does not identify participants in any way.

_____ ____/____/____

Signature (participant)

_____ ____/____/____

Signature (researcher)

NOTE:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: 02 9514 9615, Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 7: Ethics clearance

20 August 2008

Professor Mark Tennant
CB01.07.18
University Graduate School
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

Dear Mark,

UTS HREC 2008-211 – TENNANT, Professor Mark, MOON, Professor Tony (for RATH, Chhang EdD Student) – "Developing a locally relevant and effective quality management framework for a Cambodian University"

Thank you for your response to my email dated 24 July 2008. Your response satisfactorily addresses the concerns and questions raised by the Committee, and I am pleased to inform you that ethics clearance is now granted.

Your clearance number is UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-211A

Please note that the ethical conduct of research is an on-going process. The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires us to obtain a report about the progress of the research, and in particular about any changes to the research which may have ethical implications. This report form must be completed at least annually, and at the end of the project (if it takes more than a year). The Ethics Secretariat will contact you when it is time to complete your first report.

I also refer you to the AVCC guidelines relating to the storage of data, which require that data be kept for a minimum of 5 years after publication of research. However, in NSW, longer retention requirements are required for research on human subjects with potential long-term effects, research with long-term environmental effects, or research considered of national or international significance, importance, or controversy. If the data from this research project falls into one of these categories, contact University Records for advice on long-term retention.

If you have any queries about your ethics clearance, or require any amendments to your research in the future, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the Research and Innovation Office, on 02 9514 9772.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Chris Zaslawski
Acting Chairperson
UTS Human Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix 8: Information sheet for participants in Cambodia

Faculty of Education
PO Box 123
Broadway, NSW 2007
Mobile: (61) 4 25688857 (Australia)

INFORMATION SHEET

I am currently conducting a research project entitled "Developing a locally relevant and suitable quality management system for a Cambodian University."

The purpose of this study is to explore academics and staff's experience in quality management in the higher education sector with a view to developing a locally relevant and suitable quality management system for a Cambodian university, and then scaling up for other higher education institutions in the Cambodian context. The perceptions of academics and staff in relation to quality issues are significant in this study since they enable the researcher to determine a relevant and suitable quality framework which is practical in day to day operation.

The study will be conducted from August to November 2008. The methods of investigation consist of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The data will be collected through survey questionnaires, focus group interviews, and one-on-one interviews. The data collection process will involve a 70-90 minute interview, and 20-minute survey completion. Participants' conversations will be digitally recorded (MP3); however, those who are uncomfortable with voice recording will not be recorded. I will listen to the discussions and summarise the views expressed.

The participation in this research is voluntary. Participants are under no obligation to complete this survey, or participate in interviews, and they are free to withdraw their participation from this research project at any time they wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

The research data collected from this project with published in a form that does not identify participants in any way, but may identify gender, years of working experience, status of employment, level of qualifications, and area of study for the purposes of indicating the broad demographics of the cohort.

This study is conducted under the supervision of professor Mark Tennant. Should you have any concerns about the research, please contact professor Mark Tennant at 61-408433721, or the UTS Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: 61-2 9514 9615, Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au.

You will be required to sign a "Consent Form" to formalise your willingness to participate in this research.

Yours truly,

Chhang Rath

Appendix 9: Pseudonyms of participants in Cambodia

No	**Names**		
1	Sona	30	Menghong
2	Martine	31	Krimeng
3	Heang	32	Phalvirun
4	Lihak	33	Keosarin
5	Monak	34	Ravy
6	Theng	35	Keovin
7	Bona	36	Maley
8	Khoeurn	37	Cydeth
9	Trophy	38	Lihong
10	Charley	39	Rathana
11	Boeurn	40	Sodany
12	Mary		
13	Samreth		
14	Praksokhon		
15	Huiy		
16	Mony		
17	Hady		
18	Darath		
19	Dyna		
20	Bunleng		
21	Kolphanha		
22	Tynarak		
23	Theara		

Appendix 10: Pseudonyms of participants in Thai universities

Names	Positions	Genders	Qualifications
Yuthya	Dean	M	PhD
Khorn	Professor	M	PhD
Sumatra	Professor	M	PhD
Pan	Professor	M	PhD
Pechthoeurn	President	M	PhD
Thinaroth	Vice President	M	PhD
Linavy	Director	F	PhD
Amy	Vice President	F	PhD
Paula	President	M	PhD
Phallayadeth	Director	F	PhD
Martinara	Dean	M	Master
Phanaya	Director	F	Master