

“Construction of Advanced Higher Learning Institutions for Regional Development”

Chheang Sangvath, M.Ed.
Associate Dean for College of Education and
Director for Office of Student Academic Affair (OSAA)
University of Cambodia, Cambodia

The Greater Mekong Sub-region is marked by a potential and promising future representing richness in natural, social, economic and cultural diversity. Given that the region is a young and well preserved place with greatest eager for development, the impetus of development has been high in the last few decades. With this regard, higher learning institutions have been actively engaged.

Skill gap has been one the major concern for almost all countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. Specifically, it is one of the obstacles irritating and spoiling the investment environment. In an investment climate survey (WB 2009), in some countries like Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Cambodia skills are considered by 40% of private companies as the moderate obstacles and 20% regard as the major obstacles for their business. This means that these countries are unable to supply sufficient skilled workers for economic activities, both in terms of quantity and quality, even though the wage can be appropriate. As far as the teaching and training at the higher education institutions are concerned, the more number of enrollment and the technical skills, generic skills and academic skills are the entire load to be born (WB 2009).

Apparently, the human development in the Greater Mekong Sub-region is still lagged behind many countries in the world. According to the data from the United Nations Development Program (2013), the general aspect shows that the Human Development Index (HDI) in the region is medium and low, compared to other countries. Among 187 countries, although the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Thailand are ranked higher than the others in the region they are still at 101th and 103th. Vietnam is the third with the rank at 127th while Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and Cambodia is at 138th. Myanmar is the last one with the rank of human development at 149th. The level of human development is challenging for fulfilling the demand of the specialized workforce both in each country and in the region. There is a great requirement for higher learning institutions to provide more training for those people who will enter the labor market and will be the foundation for region prosperity.

Universities and other higher education institutions are the centers of knowledge creation, technology transfer, and innovation offering and flexibility, creativity and analytical skill. It is argued that the well-educated people are apparently the productive workforce engaging in applying modern technology and skills as the basis for national competitiveness and growth.

Cambodia is one of six countries along the Mekong River. Cambodian higher education system has undergone a profound structural transformation and has been improving significantly in the last decades. Higher education is critical to build the human capital that in turn builds the very institutions that are regarded as an indispensable factor of development. The Royal Government of Cambodia has designated some sectors as priority including economic, health, agriculture, rural development, especially education in the national policies. In 2008, the Royal Government of the fourth legislature of the National Assembly fine-tuned the Rectangular Strategy to its Phase II and kept "Strengthening the quality of education" in the first angle of the fourth rectangle of "Capacity Building and Human Resource Development". The long-term vision of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) is to "establish and develop human resources of the very highest quality and ethics in order to develop a knowledge-based society within Cambodia".

As we all know, the Millennium Development Goals represent a collective, global vision for a better world – a world where extreme poverty will be eradicated by the year 2015. The task of achieving these goals in Cambodia is ambitious, but achievable. Cambodia has shown strong commitment to the Millennium Declaration by tailoring specific MDG indicators to match local priorities. Cambodia has also added its own, ninth MDG for Landmines and Victim Assistance. This ninth goal reflects the significant challenges posed by landmines and unexploded ordinance to poverty reduction and human development in this country.

Even in the wake of its tumultuous past, Cambodia has managed to initiate a gradual but steady process of economic and social development. Building on this foundation, it is possible to make the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals a reality. The resources, the capacity, the technical skills, and the goodwill already exist.

I believe that Cambodia can reach its MDG targets, but it will require collective and long-term efforts by the government, development partners and civil society. We now face additional challenges, such as the current global economic downturn, making the task ahead more difficult.

Some Actions that must be taken to achieve these goals include:

1. Implementing and monitoring on Educational Strategic Plan (ESP 2009-2013) that is gives greater emphasis to expanding early childhood education, expanding non-formal education, technical and vocational training and expanding opportunities to access secondary education and post-secondary education through the continued and improved partnership among royal government of cambodia, development partners, private sector, non-governmental organizations, communities and parents.

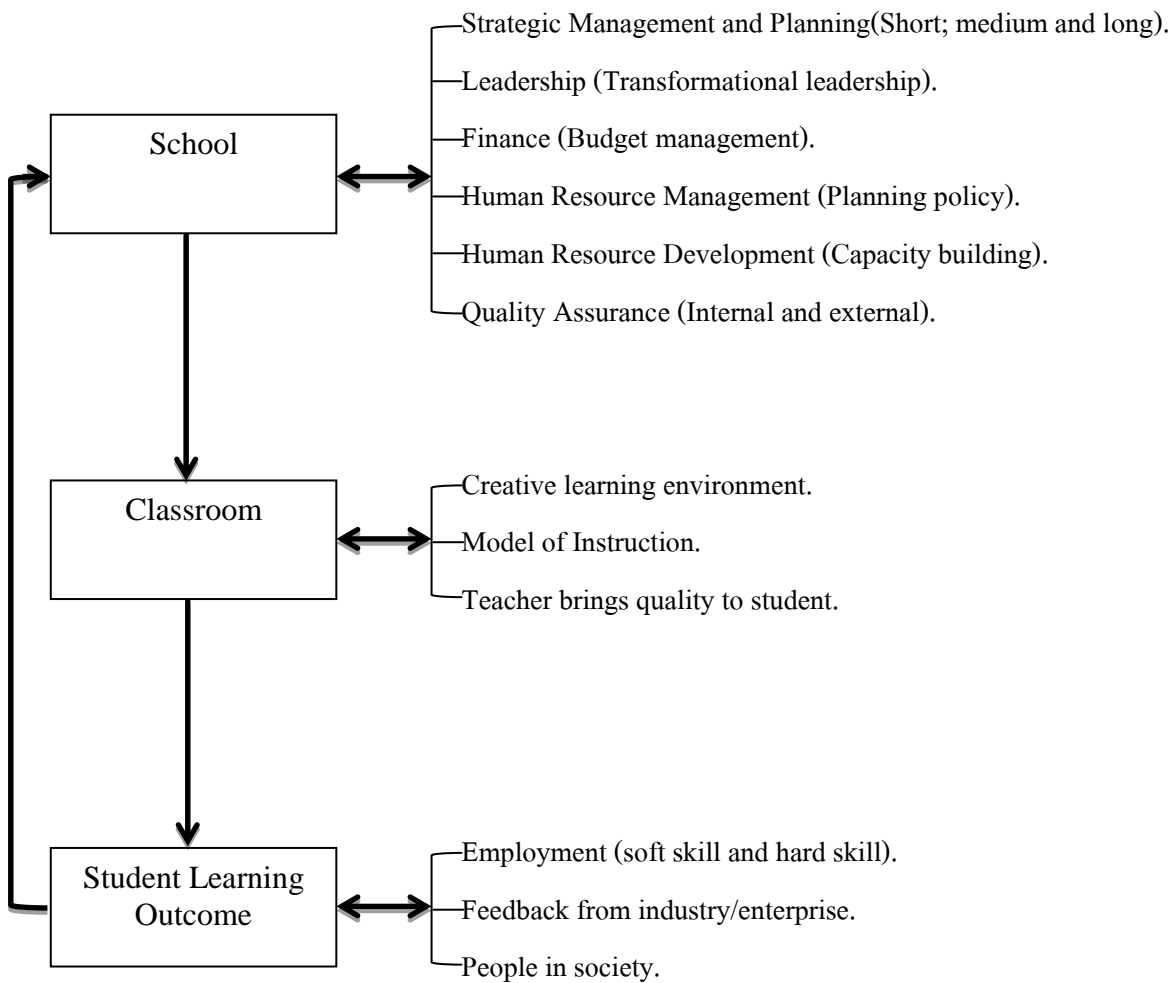
2. Improving the gender focus of all sectoral interventions to allow women: improved economic and educational opportunities; enhanced access to health services; more opportunities for participation in decision-making; and protection from violence, exploitation and other risks;
3. Improving **governance** at all levels, including: the participation of people in decisions affecting their lives; the rationalization of planning and budgeting systems, linking national and sub-national systems of government administration; improving civil service capacity and performance in delivering services to address the needs of the population; fighting corruption; and improving the rule of law and respect for human rights;
4. Develop a curriculum with technical approaches: the school curriculum is to develop fully the talents and capacities of all students in order that they become able people, with parallel and balanced intellectual, spiritual, mental and physical growth and development.
5. Set up and organized a local database following the policy of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in education fields: Using this Management information System (MIS) localized and regularly collected information would enable us to track progress toward many of the MDGs at the local level.

Panel discussion:

A model of university in Cambodia looks like for construction of advanced higher education institutions for regional development with quality assurance.

“What will a model university in Cambodia look like in order to strengthening human resource for serving labor in job market with quality?”

Model of Educational Management



School: Decentralisation of educational management in which is transferring different functions to lower levels of state administration, the quality frame work from management side for both Top-Down approaches and Bottom-Up approaches has to applied in school management. A school culture may be defined as the guiding beliefs and expectations evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007). To change a school culture and create a more inclusive school, educators must question their beliefs about teaching and learning for students who struggle to learn and engage in a collaborative change process that results in new values, beliefs, norms, and preferred behaviors.

Classroom: Pedagogy is a powerful lever for change the classroom context and creates a good learning environment. Effective teachers use an array of teaching strategies because there is no single, universal approach that suits all situations. Different strategies used in different combinations with different groupings of students will improve learning outcomes. Some strategies are better suited to teaching certain skills and fields of knowledge than are others. Some strategies are better suited to certain student backgrounds, learning styles and abilities.

Effective pedagogy, incorporating an array of teaching strategies that support intellectual engagement, connectedness to the wider world, supportive classroom environments, and recognition of difference, should be implemented across all key learning and subject areas. Effective pedagogical practice promotes the wellbeing of students, teachers and the school community - it improves students' and teachers' confidence and contributes to their sense of purpose for being at school; it builds community confidence in the quality of learning and teaching in the school.

Student Learning Outcome: are the specific observable or measurable results that are expected subsequent to a learning experience. These outcomes may involve knowledge (cognitive), skills (behavioral), or attitudes (affective) that provide evidence that learning has occurred as a result of a specified course, program activity, or process.

Student learning outcomes are the expectations of what students should demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to life-long education and informed citizenship after completing a defined set of learning opportunities.

In sum, the instructional in classroom only is not exclusively theoretical, but involves a certain amount of practical work is the best practice for providing the comprehensive Knowledge to student as a next generation of human resources in society. Through open context in school environment and decentralization: Bottom-up approached: the implementer will feedback on barriers and/or obstacle they have meet to the top management for their re-consideration and find solution on the problem encounter and impact to the schooling in order to serve the quality assurance with efficiency and effectiveness in school management.

Conclusions

In conclusion, higher learning institutions play an important role in social development in the region. Since the countries along the Mekong River have faced many challenges in recent history and are newly emerging, the needs for human resource development, improving health care, promoting gender equality and reducing disparity among people are prompting higher education institutions to speed up their pace of training and increase volume of their work. The roles of those higher learning institutions have been vital from the grass root.

The needs for producing a flexible, productive and knowledgeable workforce who can adapt to the new environment of modern technology really need a great effort. This is not the only aspect of their roles in human resources development. Having said that the issue is even bigger in terms of nurturing and standardization of workforce to meet the demand of the fast-growing free trade in the region, the requirement for strengthening the dynamic teaching and training by ensuring the appropriate quality is a great work for those institutions.

With a change of globalization, quality of human resource in educational institution is needed. In order to served the quality of human resource for strengthening the need of labor in job market, educational institutions must do many things for building a quality culture with specific on quality framework from the boards of director as a top level of institutions reach into quality of teaching in classroom as a bottom line for kept the moving of institution with quality assurance and quality control by providing a high quality of student learning achievement and outcome into society.

We may be confident in education's ability to produce the quantity of human resources Asia needs. The greatest challenge and the highest priority in responding to Asia's demand for human resources is to insist on and provide the financial resources for more innovative and collaborative educational programs that will produce leaders with a passion for their own cultures while not neglecting to foster global knowledge and opportunities for more international engagement among our students.

References:

- Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (2012). Nine Standards for Whole Institution Assessment . Accessed on 22nd November 2012 via <http://www.acc.gov.kh>
- Asian Development Bank (2009). The Economics of Climate Change in Southeast Asia: A Regional Review. Manila.
- Bushnell, D. S. (March, 1990). Input, Process, Output: A Model for Evaluating Training. Training and Development Journal, 44(3), 41-43.
- Fullan Michael (2007). The NEW Meaning of Educational Change. Fourth edition. Published by Teachers College Press.
- Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (2012). Education Strategic Plan 2009-2013. Accessed on 23rd November 2012 via <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/en/policies-and-strategies/73-policies/89-2012-08-22-08-22-12.html>
- Open Institute (2012). Open Schools Program - Activities (past and planned). Retrieved September 20th, 2012 From <http://www.open.org.kh/en/node/45>
- Partridge Lesley (2007). Managing Change. First edition. Publication by Elsevier.
- University of York (2012). Key Performances Indicator for Human Resource Policies. Accessed on 23rd November 2012 via <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/resources/policy/>
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2013, Human Development Index 2011, retrieved 21 November 2013 from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/download/>
- United Nations Development Programme (2012). The Millennium Development Goals Eight Goals for 2015. Accessed on 18th October 2012 via <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview.html>