

ANNEXES

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ANNEX 1: Questionnaire MOeS

OPEN – WP 1 THE STATE OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN LAOS: NEED ANALYSIS & MISSION SHARING

The Higher Education System: status, policies and strategies for the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning and the international dimension of Higher Education Institution.

The aim of this desk analysis is gathering data and information about the policy documents concerning the development of the Higher Institutions and the strategic actions foreseen to its internationalization. As the major documents are in Lao we would ask the Ministry of Education to provide an abstract or a brief description of the information relevant for OPEN project.

Key questions

1. Which is the total number of the students enrolled in the higher education institutions?
2. Which is the total number of professors and lecturers with a tenure or a stable appointment?
3. How are Professors and Lecturers recruited and selected? Which academic training and title are required to hold a position in a University?
4. How many international/joint degrees are available at National level?
5. Which private institutions are authorized to issues bachelor and graduated degrees? Among these private institutions are there international universities that have established university branches in Laos? Do they provide courses/degree programmes that are delivered in another language (English, French, Chinese, etc)?
6. Which policies and instruments has the Ministry of Education adopted to boost and spread foreign language competences?
7. Is the study of a foreign language a mandatory requirement in the curriculum of secondary and tertiary education?
8. Is there any national funding scheme to promote international research?
9. Which are the priority fields that Laos has identified at national level for research?
10. Is there any national funding scheme to promote mobility of students and professors?
11. Which are the priority fields that Laos has identified in tertiary education?
12. Which are the main international bodies/agencies that cooperate with the Ministry of Education for the enhancement and the internationalization of Higher education system?

We would like to discuss more in deep the following topics

13. Which actions in the **8th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan** (2016-2020) are relevant for the Higher Education Sector and its internationalization? Please provide them in detail.
14. Can you describe the activities, main objectives of the **Educational Standards and Quality Assurance Center** (ESQAC)? What has been done to develop a National Qualifications Framework? What has been done to develop a National Credit system? Are there guidelines and studies to make the NQF compatible and comparable with International Qualification Frameworks?
15. Is the Ministry of Education planning to a specific strategic plan for the development of Higher Education Sector?

ANNEX 2: Questionnaire for students

OPEN PROJECT: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDENTS FROM LAOS PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

Dear student

We would like to ask you to take part in a needs analysis we are carrying out for a project co-founded by the European Commission, in the frame of Erasmus+ Capacity Building. The project is named OPEN (OPEN-ing Laos Higher Education System to internationalization strategies). OPEN aims at supporting the establishment of suitable international relation offices in Lao University and at setting up services and procedures that can enhance international cooperation and mobility of students and professors. In collaboration with European partners, the Lao Universities will study and work to define policies, strategies, and tools to increase the opportunities for study abroad experiences for Lao students. OPEN consortium comprises the Ministry of Education and Sport, 5 National Universities and 2 European partners.

Open partners are:

- ❖ University of Alicante (Spain) - Coordinator
- ❖ Ministry of Education and Sport
- ❖ Champasack University
- ❖ National University of Laos
- ❖ Savannakhet University
- ❖ Souphanouvong University
- ❖ University of Health Science
- ❖ University of Bologna (Italy)

One of OPEN main goals is to support Asian Universities in **defining national polices for credit transfer and services** that will enable Lao Universities to better promote and manage the students' mobility flows. To accomplish this goal, a fundamental step is gathering information and data on how student exchanges are managed in the Asian Partners Universities. For this reason, we would ask you to fill in the following questionnaire, which will be the basis to plan and develop the activities needed for the development of the students exchange programmes in Lao Universities.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

- 1) Gender: **Male** **Female**
- 2) Age:
- 3) Years of study at your home University
- 4) What is your field of study?
- 5) How many languages can you speak?
Which ones?
- 6) Are you aware of the international opportunities for students at your university such as exchange programmes, international traineeships, summer programmes?

Yes **No**

7) If yes. Can you name and briefly describe the main exchange opportunities that your University offers to its students?

8) How did you learn about the students exchange programmes at your university?

- From my friends/ college mates
- From my professors
- From the University websites
- During meetings or international weeks held at my university
- other

9) Which 5 countries would you like to study in? Please briefly explain your choices

10) Would you prefer a short term (up to 1 month) or long term exchange (1 or 2 semesters):
Short **Long**

Why?

11) Please list the main benefits and main challenges (maximum 5 each) for making a period abroad (real or expected)

Benefits:

Challenges/ difficulties:

12) Have you been on an exchange period abroad? **Yes** **No**

13) If not , can you specify the main reason ?

- I am not aware of any opportunity to go on exchange
 - I do not have the appropriate language competence/ I do not meet the language requirement
 - I do not meet the academic requirements which are necessary to take part in an exchange programme
 - I was not able to find out courses that I could attend at the foreign institution
 - I was not sure that courses taken abroad could be recognized in my academic curriculum through credit transfer
 - I did not have enough funding to go on exchange
 - Others
-
.....

14) If you have been on exchange abroad, can you please describe your experience?

❖ How did you find the information on the exchange programmes?

❖ How long did you stay abroad?

- Less than 1 month
- Between 1 to 6 months
- More than 6 months

❖ Who funded your period abroad?

❖ Where did you go on exchange (Country)?

❖ Which Office/Person deals with the student's mobility at your university and which kind of support they provide?

- ❖ Who helped you in defining your study programme abroad? Who assisted you in selecting the appropriate courses among the academic offering of the hosting institution (i.e the foreign university that welcomed you as an exchange student). Was your course list/study plan approved before your departure? Who approved it? Did you understand the credit and grading system of your hosting institution when you prepared your course list? Please detail

- ❖ Did you feel prepared to face the cultural differences of your hosting country and the academic differences of your hosting university?

Yes No

Please explain why

- ❖ Were the credits that you acquired at the hosting University recognized into your student's curriculum by your university?

Yes, all of them Yes, some of them No

- ❖ Can you please describe the main gains and improvements you have achieved in terms of personal and academic growth thanks to your study abroad experience?

Finally

- 15) How your Institution could improve its students exchange programmes? What services should be set up?

Thank you 😊

ANNEX 3: Questionnaire for professors

OPEN project survey for professors/Senior lecturer/expert in higher institutes of Laos

OPEN is an international project co-funded by the European Union in the frame of Erasmus+ Capacity Building Key Action 2 in the field of higher education. OPEN consortium comprises 2 EU Universities, 5 Universities and the Ministry of Education of Laos as project's associated partner.

- ❖ The University of Alicante (Project Coordinator)
- ❖ The University of Bologna (Italy)
- ❖ National University of Laos, Souphanouvong University, Champasack University, Savanhnakhet University and Health Science University
- ❖ Ministry of Education and Sport (Department of Higher Education and Department of External Cooperation)

OPEN's main goal is to Increase the academic quality and research of universities in Laos through the development of internationalization capacities.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Background Information

- **Gender :** Male Female
- **Age:** _____ years
- **Organization** (Faculty/Institute/Office/Center/Division) _____
- **Position** _____
- **Academic Title:** Professor
Associate professor
Researcher
- **Your education:** BSc
MSc
PhD
- **Working experience** _____ years

1) What's type of student mobility programmes currently offered by your faculty?

Please choose No (0) and yes (1)

- Internship/Training programmes 0 1
- Student exchange programmes 0 1
- Language programmes for inbound students 0 1
- Study abroad programmes 0 1
- Degree programmes 0 1

- Double - degree programmes 0□ 1□
 - Cultural and sport exchange programme 0□ 1□
 - Others (please specify)

2) Importance of going abroad (mobility programmes). Please rank the importance from 1 to 5 with 1 very low and 5 very high.

For students 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□
For Academic staff (Researchers and teachers) 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□
For Administrative Staff 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□

3) Do you have the person or Division/unit in charge of international mobility?

Yes () No () don't know ()

If yes what are the Barriers to operational efficiency of the offices/Division responsible for the mobility programmes?

Inbound students in recruiting international non-degree and degree-seeking students

Outbound students in recruiting students from the institution to participate in exchange mobility

Barriers experienced by faculty/staff members in joining mobility programmes offered by partner universities

4) Do you have your student to study/exchange mobility in partner university ?

Yes () No ()

If yes, what are the difficulties and barriers encountered in credit transfer when your student came back?

**5) What are the significant benefits of internationalization for your institution?
(Choose from a list)**

Please rank the significant benefits from 1 to 5 with 1 very low and 5 very high.

- Enhanced international cooperation 1 2 3 4 5
- Increased international networking by faculty and researchers 1 2 3 4 5
- Strengthened institutional research and knowledge production capacity 1 2 3 4 5
- Improved graduate employability 1 2 3 4 5
- Improved quality of teaching and learning 1 2 3 4 5
- Opportunity to benchmark/compare institutional performance within the context of international good practice 1 2 3 4 5
- Institutional Capacity building 1 2 3 4 5
- Enhanced prestige/profile for the institution 1 2 3 4 5
- Increased international awareness of global issues by students 1 2 3 4 5
- Increased/diversified revenue generation 1 2 3 4 5
- Enhanced internationalization of the curriculum/ internationalization at home 1 2 3 4 5
- Deeper engagement with global issues by students 1 2 3 4 5

6) What could your University do to facilitate international mobility?

Please rank the importance from 1 to 5 with 1 very low and 5 very high.

- Provide information on internationally funded programmes 1 2 3 4 5
- Sign agreements or memorandums of understanding (MoU) with international universities 1 2 3 4 5
- Provide scholarships to students and professors 1 2 3 4 5
- Improve language skills of students and staff 1 2 3 4 5
- Empower the international relations office 1 2 3 4 5
- Assuring credit recognition (for students) 1 2 3 4 5
- Other (Specify): _____ 1 2 3 4 5

7) What are the significant barriers and bottlenecks to further internationalisation?

Please rank the significant barriers and bottlenecks from 1 to 5 with 1 very low and 5 very high

Internal

- Insufficient financial resources 1 2 3 4 5
- Administrative / bureaucratic difficulties
(e.g. no credit transfer; different academic years) 1 2 3 4 5
- Lack of exposure to international opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- Limited faculty involvement / interest 1 2 3 4 5

- Too rigorous/inflexible curriculum to participate in internationally focused programmes, including student mobility. 1 2 3 4 5
- Lack of or poorly resourced organizational structure/ /office responsible for internationalization 1 2 3 4 5
- Limited faculty capacity / expertise 1 2 3 4 5
- Limited student interest / participation 1 2 3 4 5
- No strategy/plan to guide the process 1 2 3 4 5
- Lack of knowledge of foreign languages 1 2 3 4 5
- International engagement is not recognized for promotion or tenure 1 2 3 4 5
- Limited institutional leadership/vision 1 2 3 4 5
- Others (Please specify)

External

- Limited funding to support internationalization efforts/ /to promote our higher education internationally 1 2 3 4 5
- Difficulties of recognition and equivalences of qualifications, study programmes and course credits 1 2 3 4 5
- Visa restrictions imposed by our country on foreign students, researchers and academics 1 2 3 4 5
- Visa restrictions imposed on our students, researchers and academics by other countries 1 2 3 4 5
- Lack of interest in our institution by potential partner institutions 1 2 3 4 5
- Language barrier 1 2 3 4 5
- Perceptions of insecurity of our country 1 2 3 4 5
- Internationalization of higher education is not a national policy priority 1 2 3 4 5
- Others (Please specify)

8) What are your priorities for internationalisation moving forward?

Please rank the priority from 1 to 5 with 1 very low and 5 very high.

- Student Mobility 1
 2 3 4 5
- International research collaboration 1
 2 3 4 5
- Faculty/Staff Mobility 1
 2 3 4 5
- Participation in international conferences/events and 1
 2 3 4 5

- Participation in international associations 1□
2□3□4□5□
- Other (please specify) _____ 1□
2□3□4□5□

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION

9) What are the main sources of funding for international research collaboration at your institution?

10) What are the Barriers to International Research Collaboration?

Thank you

ANNEX 4: Questionnaire for international organizations

OPEN project survey for International Organisations/INGOs/NGOs related to Internationalisation in higher Education of Laos

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- ❖ Ministry of Education and Sport (Department of Higher Education and Department of External Cooperation)

OPEN's main goal is to increase the academic quality and research of universities in Laos through the development of internationalization capacities.

QUESTIONNAIRE

2) Did your organisation work with higher education sector in Laos?

Yes () No ()

If yes what's type of activities currently offered by your organization?

4) Do you have a person or Division/unit in charge of international mobility?

Yes () No ()

If yes what are the barriers to operational efficiency of the offices/Division responsible for the mobility programmes?

7) Do you receive the student internship/volunteer in your organisation?

Yes () No ()

If yes, what are the significant benefits of doing student internship/volunteer from your organisation?

8) What are the difficulties and barriers encountered in your organisation regarding the student internship/ volunteer?

9) What could your organisation do to facilitate international mobility for higher institution in Laos?

10) What are the significant barriers and bottlenecks to help further internationalisation of higher institution in Laos?

11) What risks do you see in internationalization and how can you address them?

12) What are your priorities for helping internationalisation moving forward of the higher institution in Laos?

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION

11) Do you have research/project collaboration with higher institution in Laos?

Yes ()

No ()

If yes can you provide a short description (partner University, source of funding, research topics – research objective?

12) what are the barriers on Research Collaboration with higher institution in Laos?

13) Other comments for improving research collaboration with higher institution in Laos?

Thank you

ANNEX 5: Consultation phase results - National Universities of Laos

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LAOS

Students' Questionnaires

Profile

NUOL distributed the questionnaire to 50 students from different faculties and fields of study. Among the respondents 36.0% are males and 64.0% are females; the 62.0% are between the group of 17 to 20 years old, and only about 38.0% are between 21 to 24 years old. The average age is 20 years old.

Around 62% of the respondents are studying in the final year, followed by 2 year (22.0%), only 16% are students from 3 year. 98% of the students can speak English, followed by Japanese language (14%) and Korean language 10%. The rest can speak Chinese, French, Vietnamese, and Swedish respectively.

Students' Awareness

Regarding the awareness of the international opportunities for student mobilities, 66% of the students are aware of the available opportunities. Most of the exchange programmes offered in NUOL are promoted by partner universities and international foundations both short-term and long term. Students learn the information about students exchange programmes from friends/college mates 48.0%, from the University websites 60.0%, from professor/lecturer 44.0%, from meetings held at university 26.0%, the rest 4% from Facebook and radio 2.0%.

The top 5 countries where students expect to study are Japan (54.0%), England (36.0%), Korea and USA giving the same number (32.0%), the 24.0% of students would like to study in Singapore and Australia or European countries such as Sweden, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Finland, Belgium and Spain. Students believe that these countries have good management and high-quality education systems, and are developed and advanced countries, in which students can improve their English-speaking skills, be exposed to high technology development and industrial investment; they also mention the opportunity to gain life experiences on different societies and cultures. Some students wish to study where there are similar cultures and lifestyles such as China, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. These neighbouring countries are attractive for the quality of their education system, embody beautiful cultural attraction and have similar lifestyles.

Around 66% of the students preferred long term exchange justifying their choice with the need to have time to live and learn as much as possible about different lifestyle and culture, to have an opportunity to learn the language and get academic experience. Only the 34% of students would prefer a short-term exchange, since without a credit transfer system, the experience abroad is often not recognized in their academic career and sometimes when they came back to their home university, they have to drop out of studies.

Benefits

Out of 50 students, the 44% (20 students) have been on an exchange period abroad. Among the benefits, they highlight that their knowledge has been increased both from the academic point of view and in the command of the English language. They also mention the opportunity to develop

personal capacities. Moreover, they state that the experience abroad gave them the opportunity to learn about different cultures and lifestyles, increase confidence and get a chance to know about world's development. Those who have joined internship in Israel said that besides gaining an advantage with technology experiences, these internships can generate revenue from working in farms.

Challenges and Difficulties

During the period of the exchange 28% of students faced difficulties in adjusting to the new environment, while 19% had difficulties in finding an accommodation and with transportation (time management). 11% of them struggled with the differences in the education system and with not sufficient command of the country language. The rest 4% highlighted lacking budget due to high cost of living in the hosting country.

Main Reasons for not Joining Exchange Programmes

Around 28 students (56%) had no chance to join the exchange abroad, among the main reasons listed, the 24% is not aware of any opportunity to go on exchange, the 18% does not have an appropriate language competence/does not meet the language requirement, while 16% does not have enough funding to go on exchange. 12% is not able to find out courses that could be included in their study plan at the foreign institution and 10% is not sure that courses taken abroad could be recognized in their academic curriculum through credit transfer. Three students had received scholarships, but the exchange was cancelled due to COVID-19 and 4% do not meet the academic requirements which are necessary to take part in an exchange programme and do not pass university's selection process (NUOL's nomination). The last 2% could not join the exchange because they did not meet the application deadline. (late awareness).

NUOL's IRO Support to Students Mobility

There are 3 employees under International Mobility Division under International Relations Office (IRO) working as coordinators who are responsible for students' mobility both inbound and outbound students. The main task are as follows:

- ❖ Advise students and give an orientation
- ❖ Promote, announce, update information of exchange programmes to students
- ❖ Assist and guide students in completing application documents
- ❖ Nominate student candidate for programmes
- ❖ Coordinate and follow exchanged students

Measures and Recommendations To Improve Mobility Programmes

- ❖ Encourage faculties to develop a short-term and long-term international programme
- ❖ Promote information on an exchange programme on time through many channels such as NUOL's website and social medias
- ❖ Develop IRO website as well as improve the NUOL website
- ❖ Orientation for new inbound students as well as outbound students before they leave.
- ❖ Set up the budget plan to offer students who have limited budget the opportunity to join an exchange programme in a partner university.
- ❖ Help the student who received the scholarship to have a clear plan to study abroad.
- ❖ Administrative improvement
- ❖ Create more activities to develop students soft skills
- ❖ Develop an international student guide
- ❖ Improve selection process

Professors' Questionnaires

Profile of the Respondents

A total of 44 senior staff lecturers and professors answered the questionnaire distributed by NUOL. Among the respondents 81.8% are males and 18.2% are females. The results exhibit that 52.3% are above 55 years old, 13.6% of the respondents are between the age group of 41 to 45, and 46 to 60, 11.4% are between the group of 51 to 55 and only about 2.3% are between 26 to 30 and 31 to 35 years. The average age of 52.5 indicates that the respondents are quite capable to judge and give answer more effectively.

Around 50% of the respondents are associate professors, followed by senior lecturers 22.7%, only 4.5% are professors and 15.9% are senior staffs. The majority of respondents hold a Master of Science (61.4%), followed by PhD holders (36.4%). Only the 2.3% hold BSc. More than 80% of the respondents are working for the NUOL since more than 20 years.

Type of Student mobility Programmes Currently Offered

In terms of student mobility programmes currently offered by NUOL, 100% of respondents answered that NUOL provides degree programmes for the international students, however, students need to study Lao language in the first year, before entering the BSc programme. Only one international programme is offered by the faculty of economics and business administration. More than half of the respondents mentioned that NUOL currently offers internship/training programmes and student exchange programmes (65.9%).

Furthermore, 15 (34.1%) of the respondents said that a cultural and sport exchange programme is offered by NUOL. The same number of the respondents also highlighted that NUOL offers double –degree programmes and study abroad programmes (11.4%), and lastly 4.5% indicates a 3+1 degree programme.

Importance of Going Abroad

Ranking from 1 (less important) to 5 (more important) the importance of taking part in a mobility programme for academic staff, students and administrative staff; the majority of respondents evaluate mobility programmes as very important for academic staff (researchers and teachers ranked 4.75), followed by outgoing mobility opportunities for students (ranked 4.29), which include sending them to study abroad and participate in international internships. It is perceived as less important the experience abroad for the administrative staff (ranked 3.84)

Barriers to Operational Efficiency of the IRO

Inbound Students

The perceived barriers for receiving inbound students at National University of Laos are:

- ❖ Lack of short-term and long-term international programmes (now only one international programme at the Faculty of Economics and Administration Management),
- ❖ Lack of lecturers who can teach to international students.
- ❖ lack of dormitories for international students who study at NUOL and no tools/guidelines for mobility as well as administrative support for students, volunteers and internship;
- ❖ Time consuming procedures to obtain Visa
- ❖ lack of financial support

Outbound Students

The main barrier in recruiting local students to participate in mobility programmes in partner universities are similar to those highlighted for inbound students. The main one is represented by the linguistic barrier, specifically referred to the English language. Special attention is needed by students when selecting the courses to attend; there is often no correspondence between the courses offered in the home university and those offered in the host university.

NUOL does not have the budget to support outbound students, most of the scholarships rely on partner universities/external funding, some mobility programmes do not offer economic support for flight tickets. There are no embassies of some EU countries in Lao, so VISA application is still complicated for students who want to take part in an exchange programme.

Barriers Experienced by Faculty/Staff Members in Joining Mobility Programmes

A major issue experienced by faculty members from NUOL in joining mobility programmes is represented by language barriers while some faculties have limited staff capacity. Half of the respondents stated as barrier, the limited exposure to international opportunities. There is lack of motivation among the faculty members in gaining international experience. Another barrier is lack of financial support.

Academic staff has many responsibilities so that they do not have enough time to cooperate external partners.

Difficulties and barriers encountered by academic and administrative staff in credit transfer

NUOL faces several difficulties in credit transfer due to the difference of grading systems. The lack of course descriptions and syllabi from international institutions also acts as a barrier. Another issue is lack of internal and external policy to guide decision makers in crediting courses taken abroad. The difference in the starting period of the semesters represents an obstacle for the students selected for long-term exchanges (1 semester). They highlight that if they leave for the exchange when the semester at their home university has already started, they have to drop out of studies for the first academic year, even the students who come back before or after the 1st semester ends, cannot start studying on the 2nd semester, then they have to wait until the next academic year starts and repeat the year.

For this reason, the only benefit of taking part in an exchange abroad is perceived as the opportunity to get an experience abroad since, from the academic point of view, they feel they waste one year given the fact that it is not possible to transfer the credits acquired abroad.

Significant Benefits of Internationalization

Respondents have different perceptions on the benefits of internationalization. In the survey, the respondents were asked to rank the significant benefits of internationalization from 1 to 5 with 1 very low and 5 very high. Considering a score of 3 as the mid-point, the mean for the total benefit (4.07) elucidates the very positive attitude of the respondents towards internationalization. The most common benefit among the respondents is strengthened institutional research and knowledge production capacity (ranked 4.45). The next two most common benefits are enhanced international cooperation (4.38) and increased international networking by faculty and researchers (4.36).

Most of the respondents said that internationalization helps NUOL strengthen its research collaborations. Some respondents added that developing research outputs of their institution will in turn also help NUOL to be globally recognized. Aside from research, equally important benefit of internationalization for NUOL are institutional capacity building (4.34) and increased international awareness of global issues by students (4.22) and improving the quality of teaching (4.20).

While there are benefits on internationalization, respondents pointed out some obstacles on seeking international opportunities, the most common response is the limited capability of researchers in applying for international scholarships. Another barrier is represented by the lack of financial resources: international opportunities are quite costly especially for students and faculty staff who are earning just enough to support their needs.

University Support to International Mobility

Respondents ranked the possible actions as indicated below:

1. Sign agreements or memorandums of understanding (MoU) with international universities (4.00)
2. Provide information on internationally funded programmes (3.77)
3. Provide information on internationally funded programmes (3.70)
4. Empower the international relations office (3.50)
5. Improve language skills of students and staff (3.50)
6. Assuring credit recognition (for students) (3.09)
7. Provide scholarships to students and professors (3.04)

Significant Barriers and Bottlenecks To Further Internationalization

Internal Barriers

Pursuing internationalization is not an easy task. There are obstacles that prevent institutions from advancing internationalization. In the survey, the respondents were asked about what they think are the barriers that hinder internationalization. The most common response, as expected, is insufficient financial resources (4.45). NUOL does not have sufficient funds to push through its internationalization plan. The second ranked response is indicated as lack of knowledge of foreign languages (3.84). Some of the respondents said that administrative or bureaucratic difficulties prevent them from advancing internationalization (3.63). This includes the absence of credit transfer and different academic calendar.

Furthermore, the respondents said that the lack of or poorly resourced organizational structure/office responsible for internationalization is considered as an important barrier (3.54). Among the other mentioned barriers limited faculty involvement / interest has been highlighted (3.52). Many faculty members said that they do not have much exposure to international

opportunities and too rigorous/inflexible curriculum prevents students from participating in internationally focused programmes.

External Barriers

Aside from internal obstacles, there are also external obstacles that prevent NUOL from advancing internationalization. A large majority of the respondents said that one of the biggest external obstacles they face in their pursuit to internationalization is limited funding (4.29). Followed by language barrier (3.79), furthermore, the respondents said that one of the obstacles that prevent NUOL from advancing internationalization is the difficulties of recognition and equivalences of qualifications, study programmes and course credits. Moreover, around half of the respondents said that visa restriction is one of their biggest obstacles in pushing through with their internationalization efforts.

Priorities for Internationalization Moving Forward

The survey also asked respondents to rank the priority actions for internationalization. The top priorities for the enhancement of the internationalization of the institution are the following:

1. International research collaboration (4.61)
2. Faculty/Staff Mobility (4.43)
3. Participation in international conferences/events (4.27)
4. Student Mobility (4.15)
5. Participation in international associations (4.09)

International Research Collaboration

Main sources of Funding for International Research Collaboration

The main sources of funding for international research collaboration at NUOL come from government budget and international organizations such as ADB, ACIAR (Australian Center for International Agricultural Research), IRD (International Research and Development), ISP (International Science Programme, Sweden), EPF (Environmental Protection Fund), KFAS (Korea Foundation for Advance Study), SHEP (Strengthening Higher Education Project), JICA KOICA, UNEF/UN. There are some small grants from the Government of Luxembourg and the Government of China through Chinese Embassy in Laos and co-funding between partners under signing agreement.

Barriers to International Research Collaboration

The top five barriers to international research collaboration are:

- ❖ Limited research funding/budget and lack of facilities.
- ❖ limited expertise of the faculty or research staff, moreover, the majority of the capable researchers have many responsibilities in dealing with administrative work and limited time to do research.
- ❖ Linguistic barrier is also described as an obstacle to international research collaboration.

The respondents were asked to give recommendations for the development and improvement of international research collaboration. The top four responses collected are:

- ❖ provide additional funding,
- ❖ need of research training,
- ❖ strengthening international research partnerships/linkages
- ❖ creating research groups to develop research projects proposals

These top responses are consistent with the top barriers above mentioned.

ANNEX 6: Consultation phase results – Champasak University

CHAMPASAK UNIVERSITY

Students' Questionnaires

Profile

55 students answered the questionnaire, 53% of them were male and 47% were female. The percentage of students with an average age of 17-20 years old was 16%, 82% from the group of 21-24 years old and 2% over 24 years old. These students are enrolled at Champasak University from the second to the fourth year: 7% of them are attending the second year, 20% the third year and 73% the fourth year. The students attend courses of 6 faculties and study different undergraduate programmes: 16% are judicial law students, 15% electrical engineering students and 11% forest resource and environment students. Students of math, Lao language and literature, general chemistry, tourism, management and economics answered the questionnaires with the same percentage of 5%. Students of physics (teaching and general), English language (general and teaching), agronomy, livestock, hotel management also answered the questionnaire with the same percentage of 4%. Apart from their mother tongue, respondents can speak Thai with 69%, English with 56%, Vietnamese with 7%, French with 2% and Chinese with 2%. Among them, there were 12 students who have been studying abroad, joining student exchange programmes.

Students' Awareness

38% of students are aware of the international opportunities at their home institution since they were able to indicate the following international programmes: Erasmus Plus, SHARE Project, Chicken Egg Raising Project, Project of Cleaning to Refresh the World, Learning Promotion Programme, Academic and Cultural Promotion Project, Short-term exchange programme "Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa", CLE MOCK, CLE project, SPACE programme, Electronic technology research and experiment project, Trade Collaboration Project, ASEAN Learning Programme, JENESYS programme, the sister holds the child Grant programme and students exchange programmes undertaken under the MOUs. Students gained information about exchange programmes from their professors (78%), from friends (16%), from the University website (15%) and from meetings held at university (15%).

Some students would like to study in Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, Australia, Norway, Poland, USA, England, Russia, and Finland. Students believe that these countries have a good management and high quality education. Moreover an exchange experience would encourage them to practice their English. They are also interested in these countries for their high technology, industrial investment and different culture. On the contrary, some students wish to study in countries characterized by similar culture and lifestyle such as Japan, Singapore, Malasya, India, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and Philippine. These countries are interesting for Lao students for the quality of their education system, beautiful cultural attractions, and similar lifestyles.

Some students would prefer studying in neighbouring countries such as Vietnam, China, Cambodia and Thailand. China and Vietnam have a long history of friendship with Laos and collaboration with Lao higher education institutions. Furthermore, this interest lies in the fact that these countries are rapidly developing. Cambodia and Thailand have similar cultures, languages

and lifestyle to Laos which is also linked to these countries through trade and import of a lot of products.

Benefits

15% of students, who joined an exchange programme, highlighted that they gained more experience and self-development, made foreign friends and developed international collaboration. 13% of students learnt new languages, acquired knowledge, new skills and experienced new teaching methodologies . They also reported to have received budget for tuition, travel, allowance and study materials. 13% of them stated they had the opportunity to share cultures, languages, opinion and visions. 5% of the students identify as the main benefits of taking part in an exchange programme those related to the experience of different lifestyles, cultures and social interaction.

Challenges and Difficulties

During the exchange period, 27.% of students faced difficulties in using modern technology and felt unconfident about credit transfer after their returning from an exchange experience. 18% of them met problems with travelling, time management, travel distance, accommodation, living expenses, different food habits and culture, health issues, English proficiency and social adaptability. 16% of them experienced financial constraints, cultural shock and homesickness due to different habits and behaviours; they felt lack of self confidence and cross cultural competences. 11% encountered difficulties in adapting to the differences regarding education, languages, cultures, traditions, climate, living space and lifestyle.

Measures and Solutions

In order to implement students' mobility schemes, home university is the main actor to support and provide services for students before and after the mobility period. Among the suggestions emerged from the questionnaires:

- ❖ Home university should strongly facilitate the spreading of information regarding scholarships for exchange programmes. The promotion should be advertised on the university website or social networks (e.g Facebook page), it makes information spread more quickly and widely in order to help students access the mobility's information easily. The announcement should highlight the criteria of application, deadlines, documents required to apply for an exchange programme.
- ❖ University leaders should appoint staff members, at each level within the university, to work on processing document for students, for example IR office/division staff, faculty members and lecturers.
- ❖ The University should support students who have been selected to join an exchange programme, helping them with the submission of documents, visa procedures, travel information, host country's culture/lifestyle and study plan. Before the mobility, the university should provide preparatory training.
- ❖ OPEN plays an important role on training and coaching the universities to set their internationalisation strategic plan, or specific action plan for IR office/divison especially for those universities which do not have it yet. Universities should then implement services to assist students dealing with issues they face when joining the students mobility.
- ❖ MoES should focus on improving educational policies to meet international standards therefore, the universities could enhance the quality of their curricula so that the credits can be automatically recognized.

Professors' Questionnaires

Profile of the Respondents

53 professors/lecturers answered the questionnaires: 57% was male and 43% was female. The average age of respondents was from 26 up to over 55 years old. The biggest percentages of professors/lecturers who responded were between 31 and 35 years old (38%) and from 36 to 40 years old (30%). These lecturers/professors were mostly from 6 faculties (45%) in particular Faculty of Education, Economic and Management, Law and Public Administration, Engineering, Natural Sciences, Agriculture and Forestry, and from 3 offices (23%) namely Planning and International Cooperation Office, Research and Academic Service Office, Academic Affairs Office.

The majority of respondents was represented by the Dean/Vice Deans and Heads of division/department with the same percentage of 34%. Director/vice directors and senior staff lecturers answered in the same percentage (6%) and only 2% of the respondents was top level of the university. The qualification of professor/lecturers who answered the questionnaire indicated that 9% holds PhD, but the majority of respondents holds Master's Degrees (60%) and 28% holds Bachelor Degrees. Only 2% of the respondents holds academic title as associate professor. The percentage of lectures/professors who have working experience between 6 and 10 years was of 33%, followed respectively by 30% with 16 to 20 years of working experience and by 26% with 11-15 years of working experience.

Significant Benefits of Internationalization

Respondents have been asked to rank from 1 to 5 (being 1 less important 5 more important) the importance of taking part in a mobility programme for staff and students. From the answers collected the importance of taking part in a mobility programme for staff has been ranked 4.25 while for students 3.74.

The three top ranked benefits regarding internationalization for Champasack University are:

- (1) internationalisation can improve the quality of the university teaching and learning (4.26/5);
- (2) internationalisation can enhance the prestige of the university and
- (3) Internationalization can help to increase students awareness regarding global issues (4.25/5).

Moreover, most of the respondents agreed that facilitating international mobility is important for improving the language skills of students and staff (ranked 3.85/5), signing agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with international universities (3.72/5) and providing information on international funded programmes (3.49/5).

Significant Barriers and Bottlenecks to Further Internationalization

Internal Barriers

The results show that the barriers and bottlenecks to further internationalisation are due to administrative/bureaucratic difficulties (e.g no credit transfer, different academic years), as indicated by the professors' responses (ranked 3.94/5 points). As a second barrier they indicated too rigorous or inflexible curriculum discouraging students to participate in internationally focused programmes (3.83/5). It seems that lack of or poorly resourced structure/office responsible for internationalisation is considered as the third barrier (3.77/5) and other barriers are related to the insufficiency of financial resources and limited university leadership/vision (3.75/5).

External Barriers

The data collected highlight that the main barrier is related to limited funding opportunities to support internationalization efforts and to promote CU internationally (3.79/5). The respondents also believe that lack of interest by potential partner institutions is one of the most significant external barrier (3.70/5). Other barriers are related to difficulties in the recognition and equivalences of qualifications, study programmes and course credits (3.60/5) and barrier regarding language proficiency (3.55/5).

Priorities for Internationalisation Moving forward

According to the professors/lecturers' points of view, the first priority for the development of internationalization is to increase international research collaborations (4.04/5). The second priority is related to the enhancement of faculty/staff's mobility (3.87/5); attendance to international conferences/events is identified as the third priority (3.72/5). Participation in international associations and students mobility are also considered as the fourth and fifth priority (3.70/5 and 3.66/5 respectively).

Barriers to Operational Efficiency of the IRO

Inbound Students

Regarding the barriers for receiving inbound students, Champasack University currently does not offer any international course programme that international students can attend in order to gain credit recognition when they return back to their home country. Furthermore, students do not have adequate English proficiency, and also there are only few professors able to teach to international students. Moreover, the university still has limited facilities to support international exchanges.

Outbound Students

The difficulties for outbound students are similar to those encountered by inbound students: the main one is poor English command. Additionally, outbound students are worried about credit transfer when they return to their home university. This is due to the fact that some courses are completely different from the courses at their home university and students have to be careful during the phase of course selection. Moreover, some courses are not offered in the host university, therefore students have to make up for missed courses when they return to their home university. Outbound students also find difficult the application process. For this reason, it often happens that they lose the opportunity to be selected. Additionally, outbound students also encounter barriers in applying for their visa because there are many steps to comply with, which start at the provincial level up to national level. The difficulties encountered in this phase are

crucial since if outbound students do not succeed in visa application process they lose the opportunity to carry out the mobility.

Barriers Experienced by Faculty/Staff Members in Joining Mobility Programmes

The main barriers experienced by professors/staff members in joining the mobility programmes are represented by their language proficiency and their professional background (they feel they are not enough qualified). The results prove that professors remarked the same difficulties highlighted by students: language barriers and unconfident feelings in their background knowledge and skills, complexity of the visa procedures.

At the same time they complain that host institutions do not provide enough time to complete the application procedures and they had not enough, detailed information about mobility grants. Moreover, the home university does not always grants the opportunity to participate in international exchanges.

As known, Lao Higher Education system does not have a specific credit transfer regulation for those students who join international mobility and courses syllabi between host and home universities may not completely match. When students return back to their home country they have to register for the subjects they missed during the mobility programme in order to complete all the credits of their curriculum. Sometimes, the transcripts from the host institution need to be adapted in order to get the approval from the home university and have the credit transferred: not all the course units can be recognised as they appear in the transcript from the host institution.

Finally, it can be said that if the MoES develops the regulation for credit transfer, it will boost internationalization of Lao Higher Education.

International Research Collaboration

The main sources of funding for international collaboration at Champasack University come from partners universities through MoUs and from donors and international organizations such as SIDA MEKARN project, ADB Grant and TICA.

However, although professors are aware of the funding schemes for international research, they still encounter some barriers to apply for international research opportunities. Most of them feel they have a poor experience for joining international research. Furthermore, in some cases international research is co-financed and researchers cannot be financially supported by their university due to budget constraints. If international research programmes do not provide full funding scheme, there are only few professors interested in applying. Some of them experience low motivation to apply for international research because there is not training or sharing of good practices in international research at their university. In some cases, researchers have difficulties in finding experts for coaching and accessing the reference documents. Although IRO works hard on distributing information to the faculty members about international research funding as soon as they get the call from international partners, only a few professors or lecturers meet the requirements and criteria of the call for applications.

ANNEX 7: Consultation phase results - Souphanouvong University

SOUPHANOUVONG UNIVERSITY

Students' Questionnaires

Profile

The total number of the students who answered the questionnaire were 60; 32 students were males, which equalled 53% and 28 were females, which equalled 47%. Besides, there were 13 students (22%) in the ages between 17-20 years, 47 students (78%) were in the ages between 21-24 years. The majority (N=25) of the students were studying in year 2, which represented 42%. The second largest group (N=12) were studying in year 1 and year 3, which represented 40%. The smallest group (N=11) were studying in year 2, which represented 18%. Regarding to fields of study, 9 students (15%) were studying architecture, 3 students (5%) were studying computer engineering, 5 students (8%) were studying material science engineering, 4 students (7%) were studying finance and banking, 4 students (7%) were studying general business management, 5 students (8%) were studying hospitalities, 4 students (7%) were studying civil engineering, 4 students (7%) were studying logistics, 6 students (10%) were studying IT business, 8 students (13%) were studying economic, 5 students (8%) were studying international business management, 3 students (43%) were studying eco-tourism. For language proficiency, the data showed that all of the students can speak Thai language, 18 students (30%) can speak Chinese, 56 students (93%) can speak English, 1 student (2%) can speak Vietnamese, 4 students (7%) can speak Korean, and 1 student (2%) can speak Japanese.

Students' Awareness

Based on the data collected, 28% of students stated that they are aware of the international opportunities for student mobility. The main exchange opportunities that university offers to students are YSEALI scholarship, Agro-study in Israel, Lao- Korea exchange students' programme, and GKS for Asian Countries. In contrast, there were 43 students (72%) who are not aware of international opportunities for student mobility.

13 students, covering 21.66%, stated that they are not aware of any opportunity to go on an exchange, while 10 students, covering 16.66%, expressed that they are not sure whether the course they attended abroad will be accepted at Shouphanouvong University, they do not have adequate funds to go on an exchange and they cannot find the right course to study abroad. 7 of them, covering 11.66%, said that they are not able meet the language and academic requirements.

According to the responses from 60 students, Italy and Australia are the educational destinations for most students. 41 students, which stood for 68%, want to study in Italy while 38 students, which counted for 63.33%, chose Australia as their educational destination. After Australia and Italy, China and the USA are two very favoured for them to study. 50% of the respondents stated that they chose to study in China, while 36.66% of them chose to study in the USA. Interestingly, 20 students, which counted for 33.33%, chose to pursue their degree in Japan, Singapore and Spain. According to the data collected, there were 9 students (15%) preferring a short term course, while 51 students, which equalled 85%, would like to study in long term.

Benefits

48 of them, counting for 80%, stated that they will get more experience, while 38 of them, which equalled 63.33%, said that they will get more knowledge. 29 of them, which equalled 48.88%, expressed that their language capacity will be improved. 26 out of 60 students, standing for 43.33%, said that they will benefit from cultural learning.

Challenges and Difficulties

8 students out of 60 students, equal 13.33% stated that language is the main challenge, while 6 students, standing for 10%, claim that cultural diversity, and environment and weather are the challenges for them. 7 students, which equalled 11.66%, expressed that budget is the main challenge for them. There were 4 students, which equalled 6.66%, stated that they may experience difficulties to pass the entrance test.

Measures and Solutions

Student mobility is one of the most important activities of a higher education institution. It plays an important role in improving the institution's education, research and management as it requires the institution to allocate budget, infrastructure and human resources and to make plans and policies for the exchanges. In addition, student mobility brings income, equipment, connections and fame to both host and home universities. For the reasons, there is a need from all parties concerned to tackle any obstacle hindering the smoothness of an implementation of student mobility schemes.

Souphanouvong University

Based on the survey, Souphanouvong University needs to disseminate information on exchange programmes/scholarships more actively and in an effective way. Beside from an official notice on a piece of paper, the information should also be disseminated through the university website and other social media channels like the Facebook, Instagram, the university radio broadcast...etc.

Each faculty, office, centre and institute within the university should allocate one staff to be in charge of their international collaboration, who will be closely working with the staff of the university IRO. This will help information to be conveyed to students faster.

Before departure, Souphanouvong University (IRO) has to ensure that the students have all the documents for their travel and information about the places the students will be mobilized to. These include an invitation letter, an approval letter from the Lao government, visa, courses to be taken at the host university, information about culture and other necessary information of the country of the host university.

The Ministry of Education and Sports

The Ministry of Education and Sports should produce a guideline for universities in requesting for and submitting documents concerned as well as defining time frame for an approval and visa processes from the Lao government. This may help shorten the process so that students can leave for the mobility on schedule.

The Ministry of Education and Sports, in conjunction with universities in Lao PDR, should introduce a credit transfer system and improve curricula that meet international standards.

Professors' Questionnaires

Profile

The data was collected from 50 senior staff working in different faculties departments and offices with different positions, education qualifications and years of working experiences. In that, there were 35 males, which covered 70%; and 15 females, which equalled 30%. Most of the participants were in the ages between 31 years and 40 years covering 60%, while there was only 1 staff with an age between 51 years to 55 making it 2%. There were 9 of those with ages between 41 years to 45 years making up 18%. Interestingly, there were 4 of those with ages between 26 years to 30 year, and 3 of those whose age were over 55 years. These covered 8% and 6% respectively. The average age of the staff was 37.5 years.

The majority of the respondents were from faculties and offices, which covered 52% and 32% respectively. The rest were from a center and the institute, which made 26%. Many of them were senior staff and lecturers. This group made up 48%. Heads of divisions and departments were the second largest participants, which covered 20%. Directors and vice directors covered 14%. President and vice presidents covered 10% while deans and vice deans were 8%. There were 25 respondents who were regular staff and lecturers, which covered 50%. There were 24 researchers. That was 48% of the total participants. There was one associate professor, which equalled 2%, while there are no professors. Master's degree holders were the largest among the respondents. They made up 58%. Bachelor degree holders covered 22%, and Ph.D holders were 20%. Among the participants, those who had working experience between 6-10 years and 11-15 years were the majority covering 30% and 38% respectively. Those with working experience between 16-20 years covered 14%. Those with working experience between 1-5 years made up 10%, and those with working experience over 20 years covered 8%. On average, the respondents had 11.14 years of working experience.

Significant Benefits of Internationalisation

Based on the information provided by the respondents, internationalisation is very important and beneficial for students, academic staff and administration staff with mean values of 4.66, 4.26 and 4.46 respectively.

Participants gave significant benefits of internationalisation to increased international networking by faculty and researchers with a mean value of 4.64, strengthened institutional research and knowledge production capacity with a mean value of 4.56, institutional capacity building with a mean value of 4.56, enhanced international cooperation with a mean value of 4.54, improved quality of teaching and learning with a mean value of 4.54 and enhanced prestige/profile for the institution with a mean value of 4.42.

The majority of the staff recognised the significance of international mobility facilitation of the university mainly in the areas of signing agreements or memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with international universities with a mean value of 4.22, empowering the international relations office with a mean value of 3.90, improving language skills of students and staff with a mean value of 3.74, providing information on internationally funded programmes with a mean value of 3.68, and assuring credit recognition (for students) with a mean value of 3.57.

Significant Barriers and Bottlenecks to Further Internationalisation

Internal Barriers and Bottlenecks

Based on the results from the respondents, there are many barriers and bottlenecks to further internationalisation at Souphanouvong University. These include insufficient financial resources

with a mean value of 4.08, a lack of knowledge of foreign languages with a mean value of 3.86, limited faculty involvement / interest with a mean value of 3.66, administrative / bureaucratic difficulties(e.g. no credit transfer; different academic years) with a mean value of 3.66, limited faculty capacity / expertise with mean value of 3.64, a lack of or poorly resourced organizational structure/office responsible for internationalization with a mean value of 3.61, and lack of exposure to international opportunities with a mean value of 3.60.

External Barriers and Bottlenecks

Most of the staff indicated that Souphanouvong University has limited funding to support internationalisation efforts/to promote our higher education internationally with a mean value of 4.20, followed by the language barrier with a mean value of 4.08. Another interesting data result shows the difficulties of recognition and equivalences of qualifications, study programmes and course credits with a mean value of 3.96, and visa restrictions imposed by our country on foreign students, researchers and academics with a mean value of 3.56. Many participants said that internationalisation of higher education is not a national policy priority with a mean value of 3.54.

Priorities for Moving Internationalisation forward

Regarding to the priorities for internationalisation moving forward, the respondents defined international research collaboration as the first priority with a mean value of 4.53, faculty/staff mobility as the second priority with a mean value of 4.33, student mobility as the third priority with a mean value of 4.24, participation in international associations as the forth priority with a mean value of 4.20, and participation in international conferences/events as the last priority with a mean value of 4.10.

Barriers to Operational Efficiency of the IRO

Currently, Souphanouvong University is still facing many difficulties in recruiting outbound and inbound students. According to the data collected, there are 24 of the staff saying that their faculties, offices and departments do not have a person/unit in charge of international mobility; which covers 48 percent. There are 19 (equals 38 percent) of those whose faculties, offices and departments have a person/unit in charge of international mobility. There are 7 (equals 14 percent) respondents who do not know whether their faculties, offices and departments have a person in charge of international mobility.

Inbound Students

There are many barriers for offices/divisions responsible for mobility programmes in recruiting international non-degree and degree-seeking students. Staff and lecturers at Souphanouvong University are low in foreign languages (mainly English) proficiency, which has made it problematic for the university to establish international courses. Until now, the university does not have an international course. The university does not have international dormitories and facilities for research are limited. Visa and approval processes are time consuming. In addition, credit transfer is also problematic as there are differences in grading systems, and education systems between Souphanouvong University and other higher education institutions.

Outbound Students

According to the information from the respondents, the most impacting barriers for Souphanouvong University in recruiting students to participate in exchange mobility are language proficiency, funding and credit transfer. There are also some other issues like most of the students do not have passports, are afraid of culture shock, cannot afford travel costs They do not have a solid background in relevant fields of study.

Barriers Experienced by Faculty/Staff Members in Joining Mobility Programmes

For barriers experienced by faculty/staff members in joining mobility programmes, the most common ones are low English language proficiency and limited sources of funding. Most of the staff and lecturers working for Souphanouvong University are those who graduated from the National University of Laos and our neighbouring countries like Thailand, where local languages are used for teaching and learning. In addition, Souphanouvong University relies mainly on external sources of funding. Other barriers are different working systems, and limited skills of staff, lecturers and researchers. More than half of staff and lecturers working for Souphanouvong are under the age of 40 and have limited international experience and research. These hinder them from applying for and joining mobility programmes.

International Research Collaboration

Similar to other public in Lao PDR, Souphanouvong University relies heavily on funding from international organisations and its partner universities under agreements and memorandums of understanding. Based on the information collected, beside from the Lao government, Souphanouvong University have gained support for international activities, including international research collaboration, from ADB, KOICA, EU, its partner institutions, TICA, the UNDP, and NGOs.

Even though there are some sources of funding available for staff and lecturers to apply for and join international research, there are many barriers that hamper them from accessing the information. Often when there are calls for international research, the IRO issue notices to faculties and offices of the university so that all staff and lecturers within the university are aware of the calls and apply for them. However, most of the time, not many apply for them. This is because they have a limitation in a foreign language proficiency and research skills and experience. Furthermore, Souphanouvong University has limited staff. At the university, one staff has many different responsibilities like administration, teaching as well as research. This limits time for staff and lecturers at the university to dedicate to one specific responsibility, which has made them not able to perform any of their responsibilities, including research. These are critical barriers that have been impeding staff and lecturers at the university to apply for and join international research.

Measures at University Level

- ❖ Souphanouvong University should encourage and provide incentive to its staff, lecturers and researchers to improve their language proficiency and research skills;
- ❖ Souphanouvong University should allocate its budget to improve the university's infrastructure and facilities including international student dormitories, international courses and research facilities;
- ❖ Each faculty, office, centre and institute within the university should allocate one staff to be in charge their international collaboration.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Sports

- ❖ The Ministry of Education and Sports, in conjunction with universities in Lao PDR, should create a credit transfer system that can be used for all universities in Lao PDR;
- ❖ The Ministry of Education and Sports should make internationalisation of higher education a national policy priority;

- ❖ The ministry of Education and Sports should produce a guideline for universities in requesting for and submitting documents concerned as well as defining timeframe for an international students/staff/researchers approval and visa processes from the Lao government. This may help shorten the process and help international students/staff/researchers who want to go to universities in Lao PDR understand the processes and be more prepared for it.

ANNEX 8: Consultation phase results - Savannakhet University

SAVANNAKHET UNIVERSITY

Students' Questionnaires

Questionnaires were answered by 50 students: 64 % female and 54 % male with the average age of 17 – 20 years old (42%), 21 – 24 years old (38%) and 20 % for over 24 years old. The sample is composed of students attending from the second to the fourth year of degree programmes at Savannakhet University from 8 faculties In particular, these students are enrolled in the international course of Economics for Rural and Business Extension (20%), the departments of English (8%), Electrical Engineering (6%), Multimedia (8%), Tourism (4%), Rural Development and Business Promotion (6%), Commerce (4%), Logistics (4%), Watershed (4%), Crop Science (6%). The students speak Lao as a mother tongue, English, Thai, French and Vietnamese. Only 4 of them have been on student mobility aboard.

Students' Awareness

42% of students are aware of the international opportunities shown as they were able to suggest the international programmes as such as Erasmus plus programme of EU, US and WFP school meals support programme in Laos, OPEN Project and SHARE project. They remarked that these projects should provide opportunities for students to exchange knowledge, ability, talents and culture across the country.

50% of students know about the international opportunities from their professors and 34% from friends or classmates. Only 10% gets the information from the university website and 6% from meetings or workshops held at the university.

Students wish to study in the countries in which they consider there is high quality education such as France, Singapore, Japan, USA, England, Russia, India, Israel, Australia, Germany, Canada, Dubai, Italy, Malaysia, Hungary, Brazil, Switzerland, Finland, Netherlands, and Korea. These countries have a positive image for the students who are attracted to study there for different cultural and historical interests.

Some of the students would like to study in the neighbouring countries like China, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, because of the similarity of the culture and low cost of living.

Besides overseas experience, making new friends and practicing their English, students would choose these countries as their exchange destinations because of their highly technological environment, advance teaching methodologies and qualified education system.

On the one hand, most students (84%) prefer long term exchange because this provides adequate time for self-adjustment and to learn about new culture, lifestyles and to build relationships. Students think long term mobility will provide them enough time to improve their communication skills and approach new learning styles. On the other hand, some students (16%) would prefer a short term exchange because they don't want to drop out from the current semester and want to finish their current course in their home country. In addition, they want to save time and money.

Benefits

The primary goals for studying aboard are to improve personal capacity specifically by engaging with a new language and culture in both social and academic settings. Academically, students are interested in exploring different teaching methodologies, technology and educational

systems. They feel that they have achieved their maximum capabilities within Laos and are eager to study under professors with a broader worldview. They want the opportunity to study a modern curriculum with advanced research methodologies in the chosen field of study. Finally, for Lao students, studying abroad always means studying in a second language which increases their linguistic ability. Socially, studying aboard brings many new opportunities and experiences regarding new friendships, food culture, and travel.

Challenges and Difficulties

The biggest challenge faced in both personal and academic settings is the students' ability to adjust to the demands of studying aboard. Lao students find themselves at a disadvantage because of lack of experiences and language barriers. The differences in climate and culture are a backdrop to the differences in teaching materials, technology and resources. Finally, some students who are not given grants struggle with the high cost of living.

Measures and Solutions

- ❖ Students would like their home university to advertise scholarships and help them discover mobility options. This could involve promoting a wider range of options, highlighting deadlines and advertising more broadly across campus.
- ❖ The university should also provide centralized services on visa procedures with dedicated staff members who can undertake paperwork on the students' behalf.
- ❖ Finally, for those who have been accepted into the international programme, the university should provide preparatory courses in the language of the host country.

To sum up, to find the balance between university assistance and students' ownership of their own academic future, the university should arrange training in leadership and career planning.

At the national level, greater attention needs to be given to international standards so that the university curriculum can be updated accordingly and the results or credits can be transferred more easily to other international partners.

Professors' Questionnaires

53 professors/lecturers answered questionnaires from six faculties (71%): IT, Natural Science Faculty, Business Administration Faculty, Linguistics and Humanities, Agriculture and Environment Faculty, Food Science Faculty. Three offices (22.6%): Academic Office, Research and Post Graduate Studies Office and General Affairs and Cooperation Office and three divisions (5.7%). The respondents' positions include lecturer (90%) and vice-head of department and head of division, acting-head of department (9.4%).

The answers demonstrate that professors give a highly positive feedback on the international exposure for researchers and teachers with the average meaningful level of 4.66 on a maximum of 5 points and international mobility is regarded as important for students at the average meaningful level of 4.34/5. The responses were evenly divided across the range of benefits for the institution. Respondents ranked two of the following benefits for the university equally: improved quality of teaching and learning and opportunities to benchmark/compare institutional performance (4.38 points on 5). The lecturers believe that increasing international networking by faculty and researchers is also important for the institution (4.25/5) and similarly the enhancement of international cooperation (4.28/5). Most of the staff surveyed believed that signing more agreements or memorandums of understanding (MoU) will help facilitate international mobility (4.14/5). Since the language of the host university is identified as a barrier, improvement in this area is considered necessary (3.98/5). They also recommend that the home university should

provide information on internationally funded programmes to the students and professors (3.96/5).

Regarding the significant barriers and bottlenecks to further internationalisation, the respondents identified the following:

Internal

The collected data illustrate that teachers consider as the most significant barrier and a bottleneck for further internationalization the lack of financial resources (4.06/5) and lack of exposure to international opportunities (4.00/5). It has been understood from the given answers that other barriers are limited faculty capacity/expertise (3.94/5) and administrative/bureaucratic difficulties (no credit transfer, different amount of credit, different academic year) with the average meaningful level at 3.83 over maximum 5 points.

External

Based on the response from participants, the most significant barrier to further internationalisation is that the internationalization of higher education is not a national policy priority (3.96/5). Also, the difficulties of recognition and equivalences of qualifications, study programmes and course credits slow down the improvement of HEIs internationalisation (3.94/5). The lecturers think language barrier and limited funding to support internationalization efforts/to promote the higher education internationally are challenges at the same level (3.91/5). Another barrier is visa restrictions imposed on the students, researchers and academics by other countries (3.74/5) and Visa restrictions imposed by Lao on foreign students, researchers and academics (3.57/5).

Priorities for Internationalisation Moving forward

Based on the professors' perspectives the first priority for the internationalisation to move forward is the faculty/staff mobility (4.70/5). The lectures also think that students mobility should be given priority at the average meaningful level of 4.53 over 5 points. The results reveal that the lectures rank international research collaboration as the third level (4.23/5). Finally, participation in international conferences/events and participation in international associations are equally important from the professors' point of view (4.17/5).

International Research Collaboration

The main barrier for teachers/researchers is the language proficiency level and their professional background. Therefore, teachers feel they do not have experience in recruiting/receiving international students.

Teachers would like to be better equipped to guide students, however, the application process takes time and it is not always available. Accommodation and transportation are other affecting obstacles. International staff find it difficult to provide information in these areas to mobility students.

The difficulties for outbound students are similar to those experienced by inbound students. Outbound students encounter a great difficulty in handling with visa procedures because there are many steps, which begin at the local level and go up to national level. As part of the process students have to make multiple trips from their hometown to the capital and multiple ministries and they need time for the approval.

Finally, the students do not understand the timeframe necessary to complete each step and as result they begin the process too close to the deadline and are unable to complete all the necessary steps for the visa approval.

Academic staff highlighted challenges similar to those of the students namely language barrier and differences in skill level compared to the international community. They also noted time

limitations in terms of the ability to complete the process within the deadline. Online visa application poses problems for those who are not adequately trained. The staff feel that there are disadvantages firstly because the host institution does not provide adequate information and secondly the home institution does not always make the opportunity widely available. In general, for undergraduate students, the Lao education system still does not accept the credit transfer for courses taken abroad and when they come back to study they have to take one more year or semester to complete undergraduate credits. Moreover, the content, name of the subject and number of credits might not be a perfect match with the course at the home institution so that the transcript needs to be translated in detail and adapted so that credits can be approved for transfer. This is due to the fact that there is no standardized criteria to be applied for the credit recognition process, only the regulations from MOES are used as a reference.

The main sources of funding for international research collaboration are Asian Development Bank (ADB), government funding, partner institutions or university funding, partner institutions (India), SEARCA and Erasmus Plus (OPEN fund).

Lao university researchers continue to struggle with language skills and proficiency as well as general foundational knowledge when compared with international partners. This results in lack of confidence and Lao faculty members hesitate to join international research collaborations because they feel unqualified. Finally, finance remains a significant barrier for all parties involved in collaborating with international research projects.

ANNEX 9: Consultation phase results – University Of Health Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Students' Questionnaires

Profile

The questionnaires were dispatched to students among 6 faculties which means at least 50 questionnaires. However, we cannot count the expected number because the questionnaires have been sent also via electronic files. 60% of the students were female and 40% were male, the age from 21-24 years old was 60%, over 24 years old was 40%. These students were 32% from year 2, 26% from year 3, 22% from year 5, 14% from year 3, 4% from year 6 and 2% from year 1. These students were from different undergraduate programmes among 6 faculties such as: 36% from Medicine, 28% from Pharmacy, 12% from Dentistry, 8% from Medical Technology and 6% from Nursing Sciences Faculty. Apart from mother language, students can speak Thai with 50%, English 66%, Vietnamese 8%, Chinese and French were 2%.

Students' Awareness

54% of students are aware of the international opportunities as they were able to present international programmes: Erasmus, Temasek scholarship, Embassy scholarship, Seoul Project, etc. Students learn the information regarding international programmes from their professors (48%), from friends (30%), from University (20%), from meetings or international events at university (14%) and others (6%).

Some students expect to go to study in Australia, USA, France, Singapore, England, Germany and Switzerland. Students believe that they could acquire new knowledge and also technologies as well as English competence in these countries, some want to improve their clinical skills in different environment.

Some students wish to study where there are similar cultures and lifestyles such as Thailand, Japan, China and Vietnam. These countries are attractive because of quality of their educational system, their beautiful cultural attractions.

Benefits

40% of the students who have benefitted from exchange programmes gained more experience, self development, increased their academic knowledge and English competence, had opportunity to development personal capacity, cultural learning experiences and has the chance to know about world's development.

Challenges and Difficulties

The challenges to go abroad for UHS students are as following:

- ❖ Language proficiency
- ❖ Limited funding
- ❖ learning and recognition
- ❖ understanding exchange studies
- ❖ basic knowledge.
- ❖ environment and weather

Measures and Solutions

To implement students' mobility schemes, home university is the main support in providing service for students before and after their mobility period:

- ❖ Home university should strongly promote the announcement of scholarships for students exchange and set up a free place for students to give them an opportunity to share ideas and suggestions.
- ❖ University leaders should appoint staff members to work on processing document for students.

Professors' Questionnaires

Profile

The questionnaires have been sent in hardcopy and electronic file, and finally we have received 50 answers from staff/lecturers. 32% was male and 68% was female. The average age of the respondents was from 26 up to over 55 years old, but the most of the professors/lecturers who responded were between 31 to 35 years old (28%) and 26 to 30 years old (26%). These staff/lecturers were from 6 faculties (84%), from 2 offices (12%) and an Institute 4%. Most of the respondents were lecturers 38% and administrative staffs 26%, Dean/Vice Dean 8% and Director/vice director 8% and only 20% was other level of the university. The qualification of professor/lecturers who answered the questionnaire indicated that 22% hold PhD, but the most of responses hold Master's Degrees (44%), 26% hold Bachelor Degrees. Most of responses have been working between 6-10 years (30%), under 6 years (20%), between 11-15 years (28%) and 16-20 years (6%) respectively. There were 16% of staff/lecturers who have working over 20 years.

Significant Benefits of Internationalization

Among the options, respondents indicated that mobility is important for academic staff (researchers and teachers) with the average mean of 4.24; going abroad is also important for students with mean of 4.54.

Respondents regard internationalization for the University of Health Sciences as highly significant and rank three following benefits respectively: 1. Enhanced international cooperation with mean=4.44 Increased international awareness of global issues by students, 2. Strengthened institutional research and knowledge production capacity with mean=4.32. Increased international networking by faculty and researchers, 3. Institutional Capacity building with mean= 4.28.

Most of the respondents agreed that mobility can be enhanced: by providing information on internationally funded programmes with the average meaningful level 3.96, signing agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with international universities by mean 3.94 and empower the international relations office by mean=3.38.

Significant Barriers and Bottlenecks to Further Internationalisation

Internal barriers

The result shows that the main barrier to further internationalisation is insufficient financial resources by mean=4.4. The fact that international engagement is not recognized for promotion or tenure is considered as second barrier by mean=3.72. Limited student interest / participation is ranked as the third barrier by mean=3.46 and other barriers are administrative / bureaucratic difficulties (e.g. no credit transfer; different academic years) by mean=3.75.

External barriers

From the data collected, participants demonstrate that the university has limited funding to support internationalization efforts/to promote our higher education internationally by mean=3.66. The respondents also believe that Visa restrictions imposed by Lao country on foreign students, researchers and academics is a significant external barrier by mean=3.18 and other barriers are language proficiency by mean=2.96 and lack of interest in our institution by potential partner institutions by mean = 2.62.

Priorities for Internationalisation Moving forward

According to the staffs/lecturers' points of view, the priorities for the internationalization moving forward are ranked almost at the same level of importance. However Faculty/Staff mobility and participation in international associations come with mean = 4.22. The second priority is participation in international conferences/events and student mobility with the average mean value of 4.20 and International research collaboration is identified as the third priority by mean=3.98.

Barriers to Operational Efficiency of the IRO

Inbound students

The main barrier for receiving inbound students is the offering of international courses. Currently the only international programme (joint programme) is PharmaMekong which is a collaboration between Vietnam, Cambodia and France in a Master's degree of Pharmacy. In this case international students can have their credits recognized when they return to their home country. Unfortunately, it is not easy to implement international programmes since there are few professors who are able to teach in a foreign language. The university still has limited facilities to support students exchanges.

Outbound students

The difficulties for outbound students are similar to inbound students ones especially with regard to English proficiency. The outbound students are worried about credit transfer when they return back to their home university. Students have to be careful in selecting courses; the course offering at the host institution does not match with that of the home university.

Barriers experienced by Faculty/Staff Members in Joining Mobility programmes

The main difficulty for staffs/lecturers members when joining the mobility programmes was low English proficiency and their professional background

Lecturers think that the host institution provide very short timeframe for call for applications and they do not have enough, detailed information about the mobility programme. Moreover, home university does not always provide the opportunity to all as much as possible.

As known, Lao Higher Education system does not have specific regulation for credit transfer. When students return back to their home country they have to register or study the subjects they missed during the mobility programme in order to get all credits. Moreover their transcripts need to be adapted for getting approval from home university for transferring credit.

International Research Collaboration

The main sources of funding for international collaboration at the University of Health Sciences are from external funds and co-funding between partners under signing agreement (MoU). Although the professors are aware of the funding schemes of international research, most of them do not have good English language proficiency and they also feel that they have not enough experience and knowledge for joining international research. Furthermore, some international research programmes are based on co-financing schemes and the researchers are concerned about the possibility that their home university can cover this co-funding due to its limited budget. Some suggest about external funding like: Pieere Fabre found ation, Intitute of Research and Developemnt (France), Dr. Lee Jong Wook – Seoul Project, UN fund, etc.