



Lincang Teachers College

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November 8, 2012

Letter of Invitation for participation in the **"Drinking from the Same River "**
Lancang-Mekong College/University Presidents' Forum on Education for Regional
Development at Lincang Teachers College, China
November 25-28, 2012

Dear Associate Dean Chheang Sangvath,

It is a great pleasure for us to invite you to Lincang, a city of southwest China adjacent to the Lancang river, the upper reaches of the Mekong, for a forum -- **"Drinking from the Same River" Lancang-Mekong College/University Presidents' Forum on Education for Regional Development.**

The forum will be hosted by Lincang Teachers College on 25-28 November 2012 in Lincang city, Yunnan province, China. Lincang is known for its mild climate, forest coverage, water resources, tea plantation, ethnic diversity, and China's southwest "bridgehead" neighboring southeast and south Asia.

Through academic exchange and series of cultural activities, the forum is aimed at joint exploration, classification, and enrichment of advanced higher learning institution specific theories and practices to foster institutional growth as well as overall social, economic, cultural and educational development thus making due contribution to construction of a harmonious community in the region.

In admiration for your academic accomplishments and lofty prestige in the domain, we hereby invite you as a distinguished guest to this forum to explore into and carry forth together the higher learning institutional spirit promoting international education exchange and cooperation.

I. Forum topics

The theme of this forum is "cooperation and development". So we expect to share with you any of the following topics, optional or relevant:

1. Construction of advanced higher learning institutions for regional development;
2. The higher learning institution's roles in development of the region, social, economic, cultural and/or educational;
3. International cooperation among higher learning institutions;
4. Concerted development of cross-border ethnic education.

II. Contribution of forum papers and requirements

Please contribute your papers or topics for the forum before 20 November 2012,

for the convenience of our compilation of *The Anthology of the “Drinking from the Same River” Lancang-Mekong River Valley College Presidents' Forum on Regional Education & Development* to be published in English and Chinese bilingual versions. The papers shall be written in WORD format. The service for the internal publication will be free of charge, on our account.

III. List of participants in the forum

Please send a name list of participants from your college/university to Division of International Communication & Cooperation, Lincang Teachers College at the email address or fax number above at your earliest convenience.

IV. Relevant expenditure

For college/university presidents or scholars we have invited, your Kunming-Lincang domestic transit air flights (round trips) as well as accommodation and meals during your stay here in Lincang will be on our account; for the accompanying visitors, only the accommodation and meals will also be covered by us.

Looking forward to your presence at the forum in Lincang, China.

Respectively yours,

NA Jinhua
President/Professor/PhD
Lincang Teachers College

Attachment 1. Detailed Information of the Invitee(s)

1. Organization/ Institution	
2. Salutation (Dr/Mr/Mrs/ Ms)	
3. Full Name (as shown in passport)	
4. Preferred Name (to appear on forum tag)	
5. Passport Number	
6. Tel /Fax /Email	
7. Administrative/Professional Title (president, dean, professor, lecturer, staff etc)	
8. Mailing Address (Office/Home)	
9. Dietary (Meal) Requirement	

Attachment 2. A draft agenda for the forum

November 25, 2012 Sunday	
Time	Agenda
16:30	Meeting at Kunming International airport and then Lincang transit airport
17:10 – 17:40	Check-in at Lintong Grand Hotel
18:30 – 20:00	Welcoming banquet at Manting restaurant
November 26, 2012 Monday	
7:30 – 8:10	Buffet breakfast at the hotel restaurant
8:30 – 10:00	Opening speech by President/Prof./Dr. Na Jinhua; Presentation by two leaders, provincial and municipal; Watching Wa, Dai and other ethnic minorities' performances of songs and dances; Group Photos.
10:00 – 10:30	Tea/coffee break
10:30 – 12:00	Themed presentations by presidents/scholars from the Mekong river valley and China
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch at Wende Yutang restaurant
14:30 – 16:00	Themed presentations by presidents/scholars from the Mekong river valley and China
16:00 – 16:30	Tea/coffee break
16:30 – 18:00	Group discussion and view exchanges; Group representative presentation
18:30 – 20:00	Dinner at Huachengyuan restaurant
November 27, 2012 Tuesday	
7:30 – 8:10	Buffet breakfast at the hotel restaurant
8:30 – 10:00	Themed presentations by presidents/scholars from the Mekong river valley and China
10:00 – 10:30	Tea/coffee break
10:30 – 12:00	Themed presentations by presidents/scholars from the Mekong river valley and China
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch at the hotel restaurant
14:30 – 16:00	Group discussion and view exchanges; Group representative presentation
16:00 – 16:30	Tea/coffee break
16:30 – 17:50	Closing speech; Presentations by the municipal leaders; Closing ceremony: theoretical performance.
18:30 – 20:00	Jiangshan Muluo dinner
November 28, 2012 Wednesday	
7:00 – 7:30	Buffet breakfast at the hotel restaurant
7:30 – 11:30	Visit of the college historical museum, art gallery, and tea art & ceremony hall

13:00 – 14:00	Farewell Lunch at the hotel restaurant
14:30 – 15:40	Participants' self introduction, opinions and suggestions for the forum. Free talk among participants
16:00	Departure for Lincang airport

Notes:

1. Two staff/interpreters of Lincang Teachers College will meet and see off the participants at Kunming and Lincang airports.
2. English-Chinese interpreters available for all occasions.
3. Some interpreters in the Thai-, Myanmar- and Laotian language pairs are available, others are subject to availability.

Journal of Lincang Teachers' College
“1st Drinking from the Same River Lancang-Mekong College Rectors' Forum on
Education for Regional Development”
Lincang Teachers College, China
November 25-28, 2012
Topic: Higher Education in Cambodia: From Nationalization to Globalization

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Abstract

Cambodia has developed its higher education system to build human capital with high knowledge to serve the country over a period of time. Although having experienced decades of colonization, war, and different political ideologies, Cambodia manages to adapt itself to the challenges currently facing and will be facing when integrating itself into ASEAN Community. This paper is going to highlight some historical development in higher education in Cambodia and the constraints it is facing. The education system during French colonization (1863-1953), Princ Sihanouk period (1953-1970), coalition government (1991-1997), and the current government (1997-present) have been discussed. Finally, the current constraints related to lacking of finance in education, lacking of qualified teacher, irrelevancy of academic subjects are threatening Cambodia when entering in labor market. It is also concluded that many efforts have been put into expanding the education system while the system of monitoring has not been weighed on.

Key Word: *Cambodian Higher education, reform, constraint, historical development*

Introduction

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. Many considered education to be a powerful agent in their efforts towards social engineering (Tivea Koam & Colin Meyn, 2011). The political process created a vision of society that they would like to build and then tried to plan education to suit that vision. Integration to the ASEAN community sets many challenges for Cambodia to improve its education system in order that it can compete with the globalization era.

The aim of this contribution is to first sketch higher education development background in Cambodia in order to explore how well it prepares itself to enter into the global challenges. Second, an overview is provided of key current reform in its higher education. Third, special attention will be focused on the key challenges that higher education in Cambodia is facing and how it will cope in order to globalize itself into the ASEAN community.

Higher Education Development Background

Higher Education development in Cambodia has been divided into stages. These development stages are the result of the many ideologies and politic that Cambodia experienced. Those ideologies and politic comprised traditionalism, colonialism, Buddhist socialism, monarchy, republicanism, Maoist communism, Vietnamese communism, United Nations transactional authority, and a hybrid democracy respectively. Each regime reforms its education system to its own liking. The following will highlight higher education development in some of the regimes that Cambodia has experienced.

Under French Protectorate (1863-1953)

From 1863 to 1954, Cambodian education system based on French model was inaugurated alongside with traditional system, where education happened mostly in Pagoda. Monks are the only key teachers who teach student culture, history, and literature. Most Cambodian learnt their rich cultural heritage through the country's popular proverbs and sayings, traditional law (didactic poems), epics such as the Reamker (Khmer version of the Ramayana Indian story), and folk tales via word of mouth (Ayres, 2000). As a result, the main purpose of education during this period was to educate young men with the general knowledge about life and society such as social ethics, life skills, as well as to attain a certain degree of basic literacy (Dy, 2004). It is a fact that the first Cambodian higher learning institution, namely the National Institute of Juridical, Political and Economic Sciences (NIJPES), was established for Cambodian scholars who intended to be civil servants in the colonial government in 1949 (Ayres, 2000; Howard, 1967; Tully, 2002). A study by Clayton (1998) pointed out that the French government used higher education as a "sorting machine to recruit the best students from basic education for advanced education in order to equip the country with a large number of modern and competent civil servants" (Clayton, 1998). However, as put by Clayton (1995), scholars argue on that the French purposefully restricted education for Cambodians in order first to achieve and then to maintain power in the colony. Educational development in Cambodia during the French colonial period is concluded that the lack of Cambodian educational participation stemmed from Cambodian resistance, rather than French planning. French educational reforms sought to understand Cambodian resistance, to overcome it, and to draw Cambodians into schools dedicated to the training of colonial civil servants (Clayton, 1995).

Under Prince Sihanouk (1953-1970)

After independent from French, Prince Sihanouk took his power from 1953 to 1970. As part of his mission to modernize Cambodia through economic development, Sihanouk invested heavily particularly in education. With educational expansion as a dominant policy priority, schools were built across the country (Ayres, 2000). The government of King Sihanouk allocated more than 20 % of its annual national expenditure for a massive educational expansion program to consolidate his ideology of "Buddhist socialism" to educate Cambodian students and youth to

adopt loyalty to the monarchy and Marxist egalitarianism,” (Ayres, 2000, p. 449). With this policy reform a number of higher institutions were established as shown in the table below. It is concluded that there was a significant period of development of Cambodian modern education system during that time.

Table 1: The list of Universities and Institute under the Prince Sihanouk

No.	Universities/Faculties/Institutes/Schools	Date of Establishment
1	The National Institute for Law, Politics, and Economics	1953
2	The Royal Medical School (RMS)	1953
3	The Buddhist University (BU)	1954
4	The Royal School for Public Administration (RSPA)	1956
5	The National Institute of Pedagogy (NIP)	1958
6	The National School of Commerce (NSC)	1959
7	The Faculty of Letter and Humanities (FLH) The Faculty of Science and Technology (FLH)	1959
8	The Royal Khmer University (RKU)	1960
9	The Royal Technical University (RTC)	1965
10	The Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA)	1965
11	The Royal University of Kompong Cham (RUKC),	1965
12	The Royal University of Takeo-Kampot (RUTK)	1965
13	The Royal University of Agricultural Science (RUAS)	1965
14	The People University (PU)	1965
15	The Royal University of Battambang (RUBB)	1967

Under Coalition Government (1991-1997)

After Paris Peace Agreement 23 October 1991, a new coalition government was established. This period was a new beginning of reform, restructuring and development of Cambodian higher educational institutions. After a decade of civil war and two years of negotiations, the Cambodian conflicting parties, which were the Cambodian’s People Party (CPP), the Democratic Kampuchea (DK), the National United Front for Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCEPEC), and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), signed the Paris Peace Accord initiated by the United Nations in order to end the longstanding war in Cambodia (UNESCO, 2011). The new government claimed its commitment to develop human resources and capacity building by increasing to at least 15 percent of public expenditure of the whole national budget on education although it fell from 11.8 percent in 1996-97 to 8.3 percent in 1998-99 (Ayres, 2000). A project of the United National Development Program (UNDP), “the Capacity Building for Education and Human Resources Sector Management”, a support to the government, was eventually converted into the “Program to Rebuild Quality Education and Training in Cambodia” through the government’s ratification at the National Education Seminar in January 1994. Two review projects of the Asian Development Bank, Basic Education Investment Plan (1995-2000) and Education Investment Plan were adopted by the Government

in December 1994 and were incorporated into the Cambodia's First Socio-economic Development Plan, 1996-2000. Furthermore, the government changed two major policies to expand higher educational institutions in 1997.

First, the government permitted public HEIs to provide classes based on private tuition fees for non-scholarship students in a limited number of institutions. In addition, top government-supported scholarship students were recruited by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports. Second, the government allowed private sectors to be involved in Higher Educational investment (Pit, 2004). Unfortunately, this coalition government broke up following a bloody coup on July 5-6, 1997. In brief, the development of Cambodian higher education in this period was faced many problems in providing educational services because of political instability and civil war.

Current Government Education Reform (1997-Present)

Prime Minister Hun Sen announced a new government in 1998 after the civil war was over. Hun Sen has been ruling the country for three mandates of government in 1998-2003, 2003-2008, and 2008-2013 respectively. A number of problems were identified especially in higher education. As forwarding by Ford (2006), higher learning institutions (HEIs) are centrally supervised by the government ministries; they operate with limited financial resources and are fraught with political interference without transparency of academic recruitment, university leader appointment, and program approval (Ford, 2006). Presently, there are 91 Cambodian HEIs, which comprise 34 public and 57 private universities, in 19 provinces and in Phnom Penh, the capital. Not surprisingly, the expansion of higher education institutions is reflected in the growth in the number of enrollments. According to a report of the Ministry of Education, the total annual registration rate has increased dramatically to more than four times from 41,000 to 173, 000 between 2003 and 2010, with approximately 91 percent of fee-paying students in the public and private HEIs. In particular, in the academic year 2010-2011, there were 981 doctorates students, 12,887 master students, 173,264 undergraduate students, and 20,719 associate students (MoEYS, 2011). Due to the growth in number of HEIs and enrolments, scholars describe the Cambodian higher education landscape as undergoing a "silent revolution" (Rockefeller Foundation Supported Project, 2006). Many private universities have mushroomed to provide educational services throughout the country. Several factors have been observed during the rapid growth of private higher education institutions in this short period of time. First, low salaries in the public sector have led to the loss of more and more government university lecturers to private institutions that offer well-paid salaries. Second, conflicting educational and political ideologies between young and old Cambodian scholars have caused young scholars to switch to the private sector. Third, private higher education institutions have striven to develop competitive marketing strategies in producing human capital for the labor market after Cambodia became a member of ASEAN in 1999 and the WTO in 2004 (Leng, 2010). In short, although there are attempts to reform its education system, there are many challenges awaiting Cambodia to be solved before integrating itself to globalization period.

Current Constraints Facing to Globalization

In order to survive in the competitive market resulted from ASEAN integration; HEIs are facing a number of constraints which may impede the educational quality that ensure academic success and gain employment for Cambodian. The limited quality of higher education is one of biggest problems and greatest challenges facing Cambodia's higher education system today. A World Bank document identified four key challenges in improving and sustaining quality and efficiency: the need to improve the quality of the accreditation process; the shortage of skilled, well qualified, and experienced professors at a time of rapidly increasing enrolments; the questionable quality and relevance of many courses; and the need to strengthen the research capacity at many HEIs (WB, 2009). The same document also highlights some key challenges in building strong institutional capacity: the shortage of skilled local professionals to offer leadership in critical fields, such as the sciences, mathematics, technology-based disciplines, agriculture, and education; inadequate financing of higher education; the need to strengthen the higher education financial mechanism to enhance efficiency and transparency; and underdeveloped governance arrangements in higher education. The following will describe the key challenges to build educational quality in higher education.

Financial Constraint

Financing higher education is virtually limited by the government's annual budget. Overall, educational expenditure amounts to 1.60% of the GDP while public higher education expenditure receives only 0.05 % of the GDP (WB, 2012). For example, government has been financing public higher education institutions in the amount of 3, 0243.8 million Riels (approximately US\$ 8 million) in 2011, and it will be dramatically increased to 5, 4620.0 million Riels (approximately US\$ 13 million) in 2012. A large portion of the budget of Higher Education is spent on staff remuneration with a smaller portion on development of other subsectors. Due to financial constraints and lack of support, the government allows public HEIs to run private classes to generate tuition fees to support their institutional operation. There are two components of the government budget to HEIs: the Recurrent Budget, which covers salaries, utilities, water, and non salary expenditure, and the Program Budget, which covers three subcomponents namely teachers, students and institutional development.

Human resources, teaching quality, and research capacity problems

The lack of human resources, teaching quality and research capacity is also a major problem. There are very few full time academicians who have high qualification, for example, holding a doctoral degree teaching in public universities. This also resulted from the insufficient salaries and incentive. The monthly salary together with basic salary, functional, and subsidiary allowances (risk allowance, regional allowance, health risk allowance, pedagogic allowance, and family allowance) for a fulltime university lecturer can be as low as Riel 55, 0000 (approximately USD \$130), which is insufficient to meet the daily expenses of a family (RGC, 2010), whereas overall academic average monthly salaries of some Asian countries are much higher: they range from USD 1,182 in China, USD 1,547 in India, USD 2,568 in Australia, USD 3,107 in Malaysia, to USD 4,112 in Japan (Rumbley, 2008). Thus, public university lecturers prefer to take up part-time teaching at a number of academic institutions. The lecturers need to teach more hours in order to earn more; as a result, they lack time to do research. Research undertaken by Cambodian HEIs is very limited. The government budget allocated for research activities in

public HEIs is virtually non-existent. Research activities in some leading public universities, such as the Royal University of Phnom Penh and Royal University of Agriculture, are possible only through assistance from foreign donors and partners; research is virtually absent in private HEIs. A recent study of five top HEIs in Cambodia found that “only 6% of lecturers hold PhD degree and about 85% never published any papers” (Chen, et. al 2007). The table below shows teaching staff for bachelor degrees in public and private HEIs.

Table 3. Teaching Staff for Bachelor Degree in Public and Private HEIs

Type	National Teachers			Foreign Teachers			Total	% of Female Teachers
	Bachelor	Master	PhD	Bachelor	Master	PhD		
Public Institutions	1,385	1,465	205	51	137	42	3,285	12
Private Institutions	1,712	2,502	313	147	160	50	4,884	8
Total	3,097	967	518	198	297	92	8,169	20

Source: Compiled from Department of Higher Education: Statistics of Students in Academic Year 2008-2009

Academic Relevance

According to a report of the Economic Institute of Cambodia (EIC), only 10 percent of the university graduates found jobs in 2007(EIC, 2007). The unemployment is due to the fact that the graduate’s lack of skills needed in the labor market. Public and Private HEIs are competing to providing the same subjects in business studies, economics and IT. Currently, employment in these areas is already fully saturated, while science, mathematics, agriculture and health are areas with national needs yet to be filled by skilled workers (Noch, 2009). Cambodia HEIs need to expand their curricula in order to meet the market demand nationally and internationally.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Cambodia has been reforming and restructuring its HEIs for decades although it has gone through many terrible situations. With the rapid growth over the past years it is concluded that many efforts have been put into expanding the system while the system of monitoring has not been weighed on. Recruiting high quality teacher is a challenge since HEIs cannot offer competitive salary. Capacity of the teacher is also mater in improving quality of education. In order to compete with the labor markets when integrated itself into the region, a number of suggestion below should be taken into consideration:

1. The government should not focus solely in expanding education system by increasing the number of enrollment but improve the system by ensuring its quality and employability.
2. There is a need to increase funding so that HEIs can spend on laboratory and expand its subject skills relevant to job market.

3. Government should look for way to encourage HEIs to update their curricula and teaching methodologies in order to ensure the quality of graduates who can meet the job market demand.
4. Both public and private HEIs should find more partnership outside the region, exchange scholar, and conduct more workshop so that there will be more dialogues which enable development in education.

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