

The State of Academic Administration of the National University of Laos

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to study the state of academic administration of the National University of Laos with 5 major aspects: Curriculum and Curriculum Implementation, Management of Teaching - learning, Teaching-learning Medias, Educational Quality Assurance and Measurement and Evaluation. This research is a quantitative research (questionnaire). The target group is 305 people, female 132 people (administrators and teachers) in 13 Faculties in the National University of Laos.

Data analysis method: The study is to use a computer program (SPSS) to complete and separate data analysis according to the questionnaire in each section. Analysis of the general information of the respondents, question is to calculate the frequency value (Frequency) and percentage value (Percentage). The question about the academic administration of the National University of Laos is to calculate the average of Mean, and Standard Deviation. For the open-ended question which about additional opinions for academic administration of the National University of Laos. Those opinions from the respondents are synthesized and bring them to a conclusion.

The results of the study found that: the State of Academic Administration of the National University of Laos including 5 aspects is at a high level ($\bar{X} = 3.94$; S.D = 0.39). When considering each aspect, it is found that teaching and learning media has a higher average value than all other aspects ($\bar{X} = 4.00$; S.D = 0.42). On the other hand, educational quality assurance has the lowest average value ($\bar{X} = 3.88$; S.D = 0.52). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no side with the overall average value up to the best opinion level.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the state of academic administration of the National University of Laos is at a good level. The aspect with the lowest average value of all aspects is the educational quality assurance. However, administrators and teachers should focus on

all aspects of administration, especially in terms of ensuring the quality of education, which must be properly monitored according to the standards and indicators of the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Sports.

Key words: state; academic administration; National University of Laos

Introduction

To implement the resolution of the 11th Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the Ministry of Education and Sports has developed the 9th Five-Year Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (2021-2025), prioritizing higher education through several key initiatives: (1) ensuring that higher education grows in quality and aligns with the economic and social priorities outlined in the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan; (2) promoting technology-related programs, including an Artificial Intelligence (AI) curriculum targeting university students, especially in natural sciences; (3) strengthening centers of excellence in both public and private universities; (4) conducting regular surveys of graduates to better prepare them for the labor market; (5) enhancing the capabilities of teachers, particularly in natural sciences; (6) developing a tool for calculating university scholarships and establishing a framework for prioritizing scholarships for students studying abroad in response to national development needs; and (7) advancing scientific research, technology development, and innovation to serve the nation (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020, p. 166).

The Law on Higher Education (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022) states that the government encourages Lao citizens to pursue higher education based on their knowledge, abilities, and national socio-economic development needs. The state is committed to investing in and developing higher education to enhance both its quantity and quality, including scientific research and societal contributions. This includes providing personnel, budgets, infrastructure, materials, and modern technologies. The government also supports talented individuals, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and encourages both domestic and foreign investment in higher education development.

According to Bateh & Heyliger (2014), academic management in educational institutions involves organizing activities aimed at enhancing teaching and learning effectiveness to maximize student outcomes. It encompasses all facets of an institution's operations and is critical to educational success. Academic performance is an indicator of an institution's quality, as it pertains to curriculum management and the continuous improvement of teaching

methods. As Priyaphone Vonganauloth (2010) notes, academic work is the central function of educational management, while other tasks serve to support academic initiatives.

Berkovich & Grinshtain (2023) further elaborate that academic administration involves planning and organizing operational processes to ensure the effectiveness of academic work within an institution. This includes curriculum implementation, teaching management, production of educational materials, and evaluating learning outcomes. Effective academic administration aims to improve educational quality, which is vital to the institution's mission. The success of academic initiatives primarily relies on the collaboration of administrators and teachers within the school (Sisouk Vongvichit, 2008, p. 21).

Academic management is a primary responsibility of school administrators, essential for achieving educational goals. The academic performance of students serves as an indicator of the effectiveness of a school's academic management (Vipha Thonghung, 2011, p. 26).

As the core of educational institution management, academic management must be prioritized and actively supported by administrators to enhance teaching and learning. This involves organizing activities that improve instructional effectiveness and efficiency, ultimately maximizing benefits for learners. Administrators play a crucial role as leaders in academic matters, collaborating with teachers, motivating them, and ensuring effective teamwork. They are responsible for guiding teachers in developing methods to impart knowledge and skills and coordinating all activities related to learning and teaching within the institution (Visian Sihabutta, 2014, p. 58).

The National University of Laos has consistently recognized academic work as its foremost task, with all other functions supporting this mission. Therefore, administrators and professors must leverage their expertise to manage academic operations effectively and achieve desired outcomes. However, a review of relevant documents and academic office regulations reveals ongoing challenges within academic management, including misalignment between course offerings and societal needs, incomplete educational quality assurance plans, ineffective management of some courses, inconsistent academic evaluations, and limited development of teaching resources (National University of Laos, Academic Office, 2023, p. 8).

In light of these challenges, researchers are conducting a systematic study of the academic administration at the National University, focusing on curriculum implementation, teaching and learning management, educational quality assurance, and assessment metrics.

The goal is to provide valuable insights for enhancing the university's academic administration, aligning it with educational development goals, and focusing on strengthening human resources in response to evolving educational conditions.

Research Objectives: To study the academic administration of the National University

Research Conceptual Framework

This research employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire to assess the academic administration of the National University of Laos across five key areas: curriculum and curriculum implementation, teaching and learning management, teaching and learning media, educational quality assurance, and measurement and evaluation. The collected data will be analyzed to identify response differences based on gender, age, teaching and work experience, administrative position, and educational qualifications across 13 faculties. The findings will inform guidelines for enhancing the university's academic administration in the future.

Research methods

The population for this research consists of administrators and academics (professors) across 13 faculties at the National University of Laos. Sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula (1973). Key factors considered in data collection included gender, age, teaching and work experience, administrative position, and educational qualifications. In the 2021-2022 academic year, there were a total of 1,302 administrators and academics in the 13 faculties, requiring a minimum sample size of 305. Ultimately, we gathered a sample of 305 participants: 160 administrators (including vice deans, department heads, deputy heads, and heads of academic departments) and 145 academics, selected through purposive random sampling based on the number of departments in each faculty.

The research utilized a comprehensive questionnaire, which consisted of three parts: Part 1 gathered general information about the respondents, Part 2 focused on aspects of academic administration at the National University, and Part 3 collected additional suggestions for improving the university's academic administration.

The researcher analyzed the questionnaire data using a computer program, organizing the analysis according to each section's characteristics. General information about the respondents was computed using frequency and percentage. Responses regarding the academic administration of the National University were evaluated using a rating scale, with the mean and standard deviation calculated. For the third section, which included open-

ended questions about additional opinions on the university's academic administration, the responses were summarized.

Research results

The academic management situation at the National University of Laos is analyzed across five aspects: curriculum and curriculum implementation, teaching and learning management, teaching and learning media, educational quality assurance, and measurement and evaluation. The results of the data analysis for each aspect are as follows:

Curriculum and Curriculum Implementation

The analysis presented in the opinions of administrators and academics regarding curriculum and its implementation are generally high ($\bar{X} = 3.91$, S.D = 0.54). Each item was rated at a high level, with Item 14 monitoring and evaluating the curriculum to improve and develop it according to societal needs receiving the highest average score ($\bar{X} = 4.77$, S.D = 0.45). This was followed closely by Item 8, which pertains to creating and developing curricula in line with regional and global standards ($\bar{X} = 4.75$, S.D = 0.43). The items with the lowest average scores were Item 12, which addresses the allocation of environments within the premises to suit curriculum usage ($\bar{X} = 3.60$, S.D = 0.91), and Item 13, which focuses on outdoor environments for curriculum use ($\bar{X} = 3.60$, S.D = 0.92). Overall, it can be concluded that administrators and academics prioritize monitoring and evaluating the curriculum to align it with community needs.

Teaching and Learning Management

the analysis reveals that the opinions of administrators and academics on teaching and learning management components are generally high ($\bar{X} = 3.94$, S.D = 0.49). Each item was rated from highest to lowest. The item with the highest average score was Item 9, which emphasizes supporting high-achieving students while assisting those who are struggling ($\bar{X} = 4.81$, S.D = 0.38). This was followed by Item 1, which involves introducing the curriculum before the first teaching session each semester ($\bar{X} = 4.75$, S.D = 0.43). The item with the lowest average score was Item 5, which relates to providing opportunities for students to engage with enterprises or production facilities relevant to their subjects ($\bar{X} = 3.60$, S.D = 0.94). This indicates that teaching and learning management practices focus on promoting successful students while also supporting those who need additional help.

Teaching and Learning Media

The analysis administrators and academics generally hold high opinions on teaching and learning media ($\bar{X} = 4.00$, S.D = 0.42). Each item was rated at a very high level. The item with the highest average score was Item 9, which involves training in academic management, including the creation of teaching and learning media ($M = 4.78$, SD = 0.43). The next highest was Item 1, which addresses providing technological equipment, including internet access, tailored to each curriculum ($\bar{X} = 4.74$, S.D = 0.45). The item with the lowest average score was Item 7, which pertains to the arrangement of buildings, classrooms, and outdoor areas for learning activities ($\bar{X} = 3.66$, S.D = 0.95). This suggests that effective teaching and learning require adequate media, including technology and internet resources. Currently, the availability of learning media in various fields is limited, and universities should consider expanding these resources to enhance student understanding and engagement.

In Terms of Educational Quality Assurance

The administrators and academics generally hold high opinions regarding the overall quality assurance of education ($\bar{X} = 3.88$, S.D = 0.52). When examining specific items, Item 9 received the highest rating, emphasizing the importance of conducting regular internal assessments to familiarize personnel with quality assurance practices ($\bar{X} = 4.75$, S.D = 0.46). Item 1, which focuses on ensuring the quality of the curriculum in accordance with OBE, QA certification, and AUN standards, also scored high ($\bar{X} = 4.37$, S.D = 0.81). Following closely is Item 4, encouraging faculties to establish centers for quality assurance ($\bar{X} = 4.36$, S.D = 0.90). The item with the lowest score was Item 2, which deals with establishing internal quality assurance regulations in collaboration with relevant parties ($\bar{X} = 3.63$, S.D = 0.97). In conclusion, regular internal quality assurance is necessary for teachers and students to recognize its importance in education.

Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching and Learning

The opinions of administrators and academics on overall measurement and evaluation are high ($\bar{X} = 3.98$, S.D = 0.50). Each item fell within a very high to high range. The items with the highest ratings were Item 9, which states that instructors use diverse methods to assess and evaluate learning outcomes based on student understanding ($\bar{X} = 4.75$, S.D = 0.44), and Item 2, pertaining to the establishment of procedures for measuring outcomes in line with curriculum implementation ($\bar{X} = 4.72$, S.D = 0.46). Item 6, where instructors explain measurement and evaluation principles for each course to learners prior to its start, received

a strong rating as well ($\bar{X} = 4.40$, S.D = 0.86). Conversely, Item 5, which addresses agreements on measurement and evaluation tools among institutions, scored the lowest ($\bar{X} = 3.62$, S.D = 0.91). Overall, there are various effective ways to measure and evaluate student learning outcomes, which can empower students to address their challenges.

Additionally, the analysis of administrators' and academics' opinions on the academic administration of the National University revealed several key areas:

Curriculum and Implementation:

Curricula should be designed to meet the current needs of the market, entrepreneurs, and society. This involves reducing the number of general core courses, increasing elective options, and emphasizing practical applications to develop specialized skills. Curricula should also promote scientific research and academic services, with clear indicators for evaluating teaching and learning outcomes. Furthermore, collaboration with enterprises and the industrial sector is essential to ensure curricula address labor market demands and modern technological challenges.

Teaching and Learning Management:

It is crucial to strictly adhere to academic regulations regarding course delivery, credit hours, schedules, and syllabi. If instructors are unavailable due to other commitments, appropriate substitute teaching must be arranged. Course management should include monitoring and participation in teaching sessions, summarizing lessons learned, and using these insights for teacher development. Theoretical instruction must be complemented by practical lessons and internships to facilitate students' understanding and application of knowledge in professional settings.

Teaching and Learning Resources:

Adequate budgets should be allocated for teaching materials, including textbooks, manuals, visual aids, and classroom equipment. Facilities such as internet access, social media, LCD projectors, videos, testing equipment, and laboratories must be provided to support teaching and learning across all faculties and majors. Additionally, there should be sufficient access to teaching and research databases, including textbooks, theories, documents, and journals relevant to each field.

Educational Quality Assurance:

Clear criteria, standards, and quality indicators should be established for each major to enhance student performance. Regular quality audits each semester should identify gaps and address issues promptly. The goal is to ensure that graduates are equipped to work in

specialized fields across both public and private sectors. Continuous internal and external quality assurance processes should be implemented, encouraging student involvement in quality initiatives and using feedback for improvement. Opportunities and resources must be created to facilitate effective learning and teaching.

Measurement and Evaluation:

A variety of measurement and evaluation methods should be employed for both teachers and students, tailored to the specific contexts of each grade and classroom. Assessments should encompass individual and group assignments, as well as exams, with clear and timely indicators of performance. Regular evaluations of learning outcomes throughout the semester and academic year are essential for monitoring progress and informing ongoing development efforts.

Discuss the research results

The survey on academic management at the National University yielded insights into several key components:

Curriculum and Implementation:

The results indicate that overall, curriculum implementation is rated highly, suggesting effective integration into the teaching and learning processes. Notably, the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum to align with societal needs received the highest marks among indicators, highlighting robust practices in these areas. This finding aligns with previous studies by Sisuk Vongvichit (2008) and Roehrig et al. (2007), which emphasize systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of curricula.

Teaching and Learning Management:

The research revealed that the perspectives of administrators and academics are generally positive, particularly regarding support for strong students and assistance for those who struggle. This emphasis on support reflects the earlier discussion on curriculum implementation. A closer examination of this aspect suggests that learning is fundamentally about fostering, encouraging, and rewarding students. Here, intrinsic motivation is deemed more valuable than extrinsic rewards, a view supported by Wipha Thonghung (2011) and Coates et al. (2005).

Teaching and Learning Resources:

Responses from both teachers and administrators indicate a strong consensus on the importance of training in academic management, including effective strategies for creating

teaching materials. The presence of diverse teaching resources significantly aids students in grasping concepts quickly, corroborating findings from Kates (2010) and Masterman (2003).

Quality Assurance:

The study found that quality assurance practices at the National University are robust. Administrators and academics expressed the highest regard for the regular conduct of internal evaluations, which fosters an understanding of the significance of quality assurance. These practices ensure compliance with AUN standards and promote the National Education Quality Framework at the faculty level, as noted by Reyna et al. (2018).

Measurement and Evaluation:

The findings indicate that the measurement and evaluation component effectively supports quality education. Teachers employ diverse assessment methods, ensuring consistency with curriculum implementation. Additionally, results from open-ended questions highlighted the necessity for curricula to meet market demands and for teaching and learning activities to be varied, consistent with perspectives noted in prior surveys by Kizlik (2012) and Cheong Cheng (2003).

Suggestions:

- Academics (teachers) should actively participate in discussions and planning sessions with administration to foster understanding and effectively address issues.
- Teachers should be given opportunities to enhance their professional skills based on performance evaluation results in specific subjects.
- Regular training programs should be offered on teaching techniques, ICT use, scientific research, foreign languages, and social skills for teachers who need improvement in these areas.

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