

Developing the Internal Education Quality Assurance System for the Faculty of Education, the National University of Laos

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Abstract: This study aimed to develop the internal quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos. The study was conducted using the mixed-methods process by the uses of survey research and research and development. Data were collected from documents and the Department of Education personnel comprising the Faculty dean, academic affairs division head and assistant head, student activities division head, 4 department assistant heads, agency heads and 10 instructors. Documents and related literature were studied for constructing a questionnaire for 13 experts to provide opinions. Delphi technique was employed for summarizing experts opinions, which were in congruence with one another to construct a manual of the internal quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos. The manual was discussed in the seminar by referencing 9 experts. The instruments used were an interview form, an open-ended questionnaire and a 5-rating-scale questionnaire. The statistics used for analyzing the collected data were mean, standard deviation, median and interquartile range. The results of the study were as follows: For the condition before development, the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos had not yet had a clear education quality assurance system. The developed education quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos consisted of these 3 aspects: input, process and product. Input had 10 factors: philosophy, vision, purposes, operational plan, administrator, finance and budget, instructors, students, curricula and buildings and spaces and instructional media, with 44 indicators. Process had these 7 factors: administering process, learning and teaching process, measuring and evaluating process, student development process, human resource administration and development process, quality assurance process and relationship with product user process, with 34 indicators. And product had 5 factors: university graduates characteristics, research works and academic works, academic services to society, art and culture maintenance works and faculty reputation, with 8 indicators. Operational mechanisms for internal quality assurance included: determination of the national-level policy, determination of agencies and responsible personnel consisting of academic affairs section with the responsible committee and determination of quality assurance activities every 5 years.

Key words: Internal quality assurance, quality assurance system, developing quality assurance system

INTRODUCTION

Economic development and rapid social, educational and cultural changes in this new age of information technology can cause different countries throughout the world to review and consider visions and purposes of education of their own countries to be in accordance with growths and developments of each country. Development of education in the Asian Pacific region

during the past few years can show clearly that education reform has become an important strategy for promoting economic, political and cultural development of society, also having roles, which can cause them to achieve the visions and purposes of their countries (National Education Commission, 2000). The Lao People's Democratic Republic has had more economic, social, educational and cultural changes, causing education to be very important and necessary to country development.

Therefore, upgrading knowledge and ability of people in the nation to progress in congruence with science and technology extension is essential. Thus, the Lao government has laid educational strategies to 2010 for improving and extending Lao education to have uniqueness, quality and standards close to foreign countries (Lao Ministry of Education, 2004). The government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic passed a resolution on establishment of a university in Vientiane, called The National University of Laos, consisting of 10 faculties and Basic Science College (Lao Ministry of Education, 1997). The Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos is the faculty, which can be said to have the foundation of the origin at the same time as the origin of The National University of Laos on 5 November, 1997 (National University of Laos, 2006).

Internal quality assurance is the construction of the system and mechanisms to control, inspect and assess operation of the educational institution to be in conformity with the policy, goals and levels of quality according to the established standards. The attached agency and the educational institution assign to have the internal educational institution quality assurance system. And internal quality assurance is regarded as a part of the educational administration system, which must operate continuously. There must be annual reports on assessment of internal quality to the attached agency, involved agencies and disclose the results to the public for leading to development of education quality and standards and for accreditation from external quality assurance.

In terms of developing, the education quality assurance system, The National University of Laos is proposing the establishment of the council for education quality and qualification assurance at the national level of the national university, reviewing advanced education curricula of different departments and improving undergraduate programs in the special system in some faculties, which do not meet the Lao national education standards (Lao Ministry of Education, 2006). For operation of education quality assurance of The National University of Laos according to the policy on quality assurance and quality standard accredited action in the past, it has been found that there have not yet been an education quality assurance system.

Therefore, in order for education provision and teacher graduate production to operate with quality and to create confidence in readiness and quality of education provision of the faculty of education to be the faith and trust of people, external agencies and product users, it is necessary to conduct a study to have an education quality assurance system, which is appropriate to the Faculty of Education of The National University of Laos.

To develop an internal education quality assurance system for the faculty of education, the national university of Laos.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The process of mixed research methods using survey research and research and development was used.

Sample: The sample used consisted of:

- Ten persons of the personnel in the faculty of education
- Thirteen experts obtained using 3 rounds of Delphi technique
- Nine referenced experts from the seminar

Instruments for data collection: The 3 instruments used for data collection were an interview form, a questionnaire and an expert-referenced seminar note-taking form.

Procedure: The research procedure comprised these 3 stages.

Stage 1: Studied documents, concepts, theories and research studies involving the development of the internal education assurance system. The data were then used for constructing the research conceptual framework.

Stage 2: Developed the internal education quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education. The National University of Laos.

Studied and analyzed the condition of internal education quality assurance of the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos.

Interviewed with personnel of the Faculty of Education comprising Dean of the Faculty of Education, division heads, department assistant heads and instructors with a total of 10 persons.

Developed the internal education quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education. The National University of Laos.

A 5-rating-seale questionnaire on appropriateness and feasibility was used by applying 3 rounds of Delphi technique.

Stage 3 held an expert-referenced seminar: The expert-referenced seminar was to investigate the feasibility of the implementation of the internal education quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos.

Data analysis:

- The data collected from interviews and note-taking were analyzed and developed according to the research purposes
- The data obtained from the questionnaire on the appropriateness and feasibility of the internal education quality assurance system were analyzed to find out scores according to the established criteria

Statistics for data analysis: The statistics used for analyzing the collected data were mean, standard deviation, median and interquartile ranges.

RESULTS

For the results of examining the condition of internal education quality assurance for the Faculty of Education. The National University of Laos before developing the internal education quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education, the researcher examined the condition of internal education quality assurance for that Faculty using these 2 methods: studying documents and interviewing with 10 informants comprising the dean of Faculty of Education, academic affairs division head, academic affairs division assistant head, student activities division head, department heads, department assistant heads, agency heads and instructors.

The results of examining documents involving education quality assurance.

It was found that there were no documents involving this matter and that there was not any clear education quality assurance system.

In examining and analyzing, the conditions of internal education quality assurance of the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos

For the results of interviewing with the personnel involved before developing the internal education quality assurance system, it was found that there was not any clear education quality assurance system and that there was not an appointment of a committee for education quality assurance. However, there were only activities, which might be regarded as instruction quality assurance. There were evaluations of class instruction times, mid-term tests, final tests and report writing. There was not any academic who had knowledge of quality assurance.

For opinions concerning internal education quality assurance for the Faculty of Education. The National University of Laos, the interviewees recommended the following. A committee and an agency responsible for assessment should be appointed. Those responsible for assessment should have knowledge of education quality.

The interviewees recommended establishing the education quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education. The personnel needed knowledge of quality assurance or knowledge in other fields, which could support quality assurance.

All the interviewees agreed congruently that the Faculty of Education. The National University of Laos should have a clear quality assurance system, standards and indicators definitely for the Faculty of Education. There should be an assessment agency. The committee responsible for quality assessment must have knowledge involving quality assurance. There must be a continuous system, which could help internal quality assurance operation for the Faculty of Education. The National University of Laos.

The outcomes of developing the internal quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education. The National University of Laos

It was found that the outcomes consisted of these 3 aspects: input, process and product as:

The input comprised the following 10 factors: philosophy, vision, purposes, operational plan, administrator, finance and budget, instructors, students, curricula and buildings and spaces and instructional media, with 44 indicators as follows.

Philosophy: Is in accordance with societal needs or graduate users needs and can cover all the 4 major missions of The National University of Laos.

Vision: Creates excellence in teaching methods with clear performance.

Purposes: Can respond to learners needs and are accepted by those interested and involved.

Operational plan: Can lead to appropriate practices. All plans are in accordance with the university's philosophy and purposes. There are systematic follow-ups and assessment.

Administrator: There are regulations for obtaining, the administrator, an evaluation of the administrator's performance outcomes and the use of evaluation results for developing administering skills. The faculty administrative policy must be clear and congruent with the university. The administrative structure is fluent and efficient with provision of opportunities for the personnel to participate in administration. There are a personnel care-taking system, workplace environment keeping, systematization of welfare in health and other aspects for the personnel, personnel evaluation; clear principles of performance on retirement, reassignment, early retirement and other issues and personnel maintenance.

Finance and budget: Plans for seeking different financial sources are determined. The determined plans are operated. Financial operation is evaluated. The operational evaluation outcomes are reviewed and the operational plans are improved. There are follow-ups and evaluation of budget expenses.

Instructors: There are regulations for applying for the instructor positions and educational qualifications. Each instructor must hold a bachelor's degree and higher with a grade point average not below 2.5 and with no <2 years of teaching experiences. Instructors must be continuously developed.

Students: Students qualifications are determined. There is orientation for new students. Selections of students are evaluated. Students learning outcomes are followed up.

Curricula: The curricula have been approved by the university council. The purposes and contents of the curricula can reflect the needs of learners and society. There are clarity and congruence with the philosophy and purposes of the curricula. Each curriculum has a structure. There are evaluations and/or curricular adjustments. Also, there must be course instructor (s).

Buildings, spaces and instructional media: There are adequate classrooms, laboratories and instructional media.

The process consisted of these factors: administering/managing process, learning-teaching process, measuring and evaluating process, student development process, human resource development and administering process, education quality assurance process and relationships with product users in this aspect have 34 indicators as follows.

Administering and managing process: The administrative structure and system are determined. The principle of having everyone participate in administration is upheld. Administration is operated in the form of the committee.

Learning-teaching process: Course syllables and lesson plans are made. Research for learning-teaching development is conducted. Learner-centered teaching activities are organized. Learners participate in operating learning activities. Instructors start and stop teaching in punctuality. The results of evaluation are used for improving/developing learning and teaching.

Measuring and evaluating process: Reports on learning outcomes in all courses/all semesters/all learners are made. Evaluations are assessed.

Student development process: There are an agency and personnel responsible for student development affairs. There are follow-ups of learning outcomes and assessment of student development and support. The results of assessment are used for improving and developing students.

Human resource development and management process: There are plans for developing human resources, evaluation of personnel performance and using the results of assessment for improving and developing the personnel to have knowledge, abilities and skills.

Education quality assurance process: There are determinations of policy and scopes of missions, authorities and responsibilities of the personnel in the agencies or the committee, which operates quality assurance of the Faculty of Education to be in congruence with the university's framework. A working-staff with efficiency in work performance according to the framework responsible for is appointed. The internal quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education with efficiency in work performance is determined. There are facilities in examining and assessing quality, quality assessment, determination of a model of self-assessment of the faculty, planning for quality assurance operation, determination of methods of controlling quality of work performance of each agency. Also, there are examination and assessment of work performance of each agency in regularity.

Relationships with product users: All instructors are promoted to be members of the University Alumni Association. There are positive and continuous relationships with other agencies, which are sources of apprenticeship for students, cooperation in organizing activities useful to society and good relationships between the university and students parents.

Products consist of these 5 factors: characteristics of graduates, research works and academic works, works of academic services to society, works of maintenance of art and culture and reputation of the faculty. This aspect has 8 indicators.

Characteristics of graduates: There are follow-ups of studying further, having jobs and nature of work to perform as well as success in their lives.

Research works and academic works: There are researches and documents in supplement to teaching.

Works of academic services to society: Activities for providing services in terms of education are organized for benefits to people, society and communities.

Works of maintenance of art and culture: Instructors and personnel have positive behaviors, morality and code of conduct of profession. They devote themselves to maintenance of art and culture and keeping national customs and traditions.

Reputation of the faculty: The faculty of education is admired in different aspects at a high level. The name of the faculty is widely recognized in society both in and outside the country.

In summary, the developed internal education quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos has these 3 aspects: input, process and product with totally 22 factors and 86 indicators.

For the results of expert-referenced seminar and results of assessing feasibility to implement the internal education quality assurance system for the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos as assessed by 9 experts, it has been found that the feasibility to implement in practice is at a high level.

DISCUSSION

From the results of this study of the internal education quality assurance system for Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos.

For input, important factors of internal quality assurance include philosophy, vision, purposes, operational plan, administrator, finance and budget, instructors, students, curricula and buildings, spaces and instructional media. This finding is in congruence with the research conducted by Achawabamroong (1991), who says that the philosophy and purposes are criteria for assessing Thai higher educational institutions. It is in accordance with the research of Maniseang (2000), who states that indicators of education quality of administration and management include philosophy, resolution, vision, mission, purposes and work plans. This is in congruence with the concept of Chanthawanit (1999), who says that the factors causing education provision to have good quality consist of curricula, learning-teaching process, instructors and educational personnel and administration and management. It is accordant with the concept of The Ministry of Education (1995), which states that education quality development must rely on the factors of readiness including readiness conditions of learners, instructors, administrator, curricula, instructional media, buildings and spaces, parents, community, regulations and related guidelines for task performance. Also, there must be making and utilizing information involving the educational institution for educational

institution administration. It is accordant with the concept of Kangpheng (2001), who says that the educational institution should make the administrative structure helpful to work operation. Everyone involved has participation. There is coordination in relationship with all sides and all sections. The educational institutions should operate together systematically in terms of organization of administrative system and information. It is in accordance with the research conducted by Phankhrueabut (2005), who has found that philosophy and planning, structure and administration, budget and resources; curricula, instructors and students are important inputs, which can cause organization of learning and teaching to go on with quality. This is also in accordance with the research conducted by Ashworth and Harvey (1994), who have found that quality education provision is necessary to rely on the factors of input, process of quality organization of learning and teaching and product. These factors include: teaching staff, facilities, materials and supplies, teaching, achievement, management and control of quality and students.

For process, it has been found that important factors of internal education quality assurance consist of administrative and management process, learning-teaching process, measuring and evaluating process, student development process, human resource development and management process, education quality assurance process and relationship with product users. This is in congruence with the concept of Kangpheng (2001), who says that quality of an educational institution can be seen from arrangement of learning environment, strategies and methods of teaching, learning process and responses to learning, measuring and evaluating systems, learning support, participation and cooperation of personnel and community organizations. It is in accordance with the research conducted by Baumgart (1987), who says that the criteria for the learning-teaching process and learning-teaching improvement consist of quality and instructors workloads, instructor development, instructors academic positions, student learning activities and fair and appropriate learning evaluation. It is in congruence with the research by Wongkhomthong (2000), who states that the factors of education quality assurance consist of these 9 aspects: philosophy/resolution, vision, purposes and work plans of the institution in terms of learning and teaching, administration and management, education quality assurance system and mechanisms, finance and budget and operation involving student development activities. It is in congruence with the theory of Tenner and Detoro (1992), who state that the factors, which are indicators of quality of education provision comprise human

resource development and administration and process administration. This is in congruence with the theory of system of Owens (1987), who says that the factors of the system comprise management and learning and teaching.

For product, it has been found that the important factors of internal education quality assurance include characteristics of graduates, research works and academic works, works of academic services to the society, works of maintenance of art and culture and reputation of the faculty. It is in congruence with the concept of Phromchui (2001), who says that education quality assurance is operation of activities for creating confidence to education service receivers, direct service receivers: students and parents and indirect service receivers: entrepreneurial places, people and society. All these are for learners to have desirable characteristics, which meet the established education standards in order for the people to have confidence in sending their children to study at the educational institution which has quality that meets the established education standards as needed. This is in congruence with the concept of Chamonman (1998), who states that students, instructors and personnel can create reputation for their educational institution and create beneficial things for the society. As a whole, the educational institution has reputation. Work performance in different aspects, which creates benefits to the society is evidence or eyewitnesses who show that the institution has quality. The personnel of the Faculty can receive trust and preference from the public and can be proud of their own agencies. It is in accordance with the concept of Ngaoprasoetwong (2001), who states that popularity is very important to the university because it motivates the officials to be interested in working for the university and receiving other supports from the society. This is in accordance with the research works of Tan (1992), who studied indicators of assessing quality of education provision in the doctoral program in social sciences by analyzing different factors. The research results reveal that the indicators of assessing quality of education provision in the doctoral program in social sciences consist of instructors research. It is congruent with the research works of Joseph and Beatriz (1997), who state that factors which are indicators of quality of education provision include level of reputation and excellence of instructors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for implementing the research results. Recommendations for implementing the internal quality assurance system of the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos are as:

- The Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos should appoint a committee for education quality assurance of the Faculty of Education, which can cover operation of education quality assurance for all the divisions and departments
- Organize the Faculty personnel training to make the personnel understand the internal quality assurance system of the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos
- Organize training for internal quality assurance assessors for the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos
- The Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos should determine that inspection and internal education quality assessment will be made every 5 years to improve the quality continuously, which will make the Faculty have quality in regularity. This can originate reliability in quality and quality assurance for the Faculty

Further research studies:

- There should be a research study in trying out this system for improving the factors, indicators and check-list to be in accordance with characteristics of the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos
- There should be a research study in the factors impacting the Faculty of Education, The National University of Laos when the education quality assurance system is implemented

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