

Research Article

The Role of Stakeholders in Supporting Student Services in Higher Education in Cambodia

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Abstract

A major policy change was made in 1997 when the Royal Government of Cambodia began to privatize higher education institutions (HEIs). As a result of this reform, there were 189 HEIs in 2024, up significantly from just 8 in the late 1990s. To uphold and ensure the quality of higher education, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia was established in 2003 as a formal legal mechanism for accreditation. Student Service is essential for improving higher education quality and students' learning outcomes. Student Services was the fifth of nine standard criteria used to assess the quality of higher education in Cambodia. However, researchers and relevant higher education sectors have not yet shown interest in the student service area in the higher education system in Cambodia. This qualitative research study aims to explore stakeholders involved in supporting student services in higher education in Cambodia. The semi-structured interview was deployed with a purposive sampling of ten key informants from relevant institutions. This interview was in a face-to-face format. The key finding of this research revealed that seven stakeholders support student service in Cambodia's higher education. They are parent ministry, industry and community, development partner, higher education institutions, parent and guardians, religion, and student and alumni. Based on the findings, enhancing and maintaining student service quality requires the involvement of all stakeholders, high commitment, cohesive cooperation, and the upholding of student interests. Particularly, higher education institutions (HEIs) should prioritize creating a supportive environment that facilitates seamless student service processes.

Keywords

Stakeholder, Student Services, Higher Education Institution, Extra-curriculum, Responsive

1. Introduction

Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport emphasized that the sub-sector of higher education plays an important role in establishing the capital of active capital as a source of wealth and prosperity to fully contribute to economic and social development both now and in the future [66]. Higher educa-

tion is essential in influencing the quality and accessibility of the workforce required to stimulate socioeconomic development [44]. The higher education sector in Cambodia was reconstructed in early 1979 after the fall of the Kampuchea Democratic (DK), also known as the Khmer Rouge regime.

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The government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) started to rebuild the educational system and human resources due to the lack of educated people. In the DK period, the educational system was completely closed [81]. Sadly, there was about 75% of higher education lecturers, and approximately 96 university students were killed [63]. A study stated that higher education institutions were re-established following the Soviet model, which mainly concentrated on specialized and technical institutions [81]. The new higher education (HE) Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy was established in 1997 [105]. Another study showed that the establishment of the college was in response to the urgent need for health care for victims [55]. In the 1990s, the availability of human resources failed to meet the needs of society, particularly in the higher education sector [106].

In addition, Cambodia's education gained international attention in 1991 during the National Conference on Education for All [9]. The privatization policy of the higher education sector was adopted [105]. This policy allowed the private sector to take part in the higher education sector and public higher education to offer private classes. As a result, public higher education provided better salaries for the staff and thus attracted them. Norton University was the first recognized private higher education. Then, the number of HEIs rose to 8 in 1997 [68]. Later, the number of public and private higher education increased dramatically. To ensure the quality of high education, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia was established in 2003 as a legal mechanism to support and evaluate HE's quality [3].

In 2013, MoEYS formed the Higher Education Technical Working Group (HETWG) to engage various participants,

including government representatives, rectors from several public higher education institutions, representatives from private HEIs, donor organizations, NGOs, and the private sector. This working group serves as an essential platform for stakeholders to discuss higher education matters and promote progress in the sector [90]. The government has raised the budget for higher education [23]. The higher education sector has achieved significant and commendable advancements [47].

Furthermore, to build human resources with superior knowledge, skills, and values, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport unveiled the Higher Education Vision 2030 in 2014. Moreover, HEI reform plays a key role among the eight reform priorities that have been acting immediately [70]. The importance of higher education in the global knowledge-based economy cannot be overstated. A study finding asserts that the role of universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) has drawn a lot of attention due to the global trend toward creating world-class universities and a knowledge-based society, especially in terms of creating, disseminating, and utilizing knowledge to spur innovation and development [45].

In the academic year 2022-2023, the number of HEIs has risen sharply to 189 higher education institutions under 17 parent ministries, of which 90 HEIs are supervised by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS, 2024a). Higher education enrollment has increased; from 257,470 students in the 2012-2013 academic year to 284,599 in 2022-2023 [70], there has been a 10% increase in student enrollment.

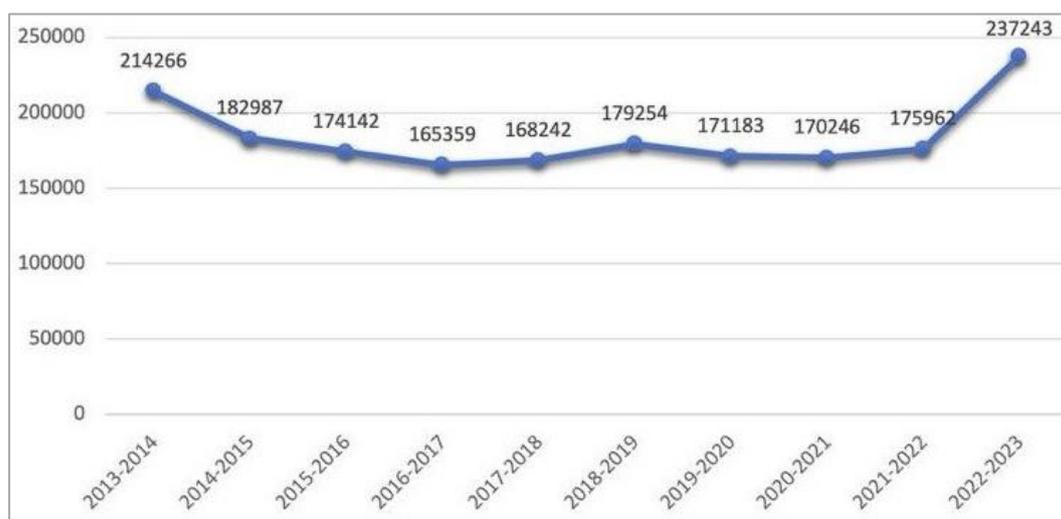


Figure 1. Statistic of bachelor's degree students [70].

The seventh mandate of RGC has placed building human capital as the top priority of the development agenda. Delaney (2001) claimed that colleges are essential to the global modernization movement that started in Europe and America and

then expanded to the rest of the world. Recently, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport introduced the new higher education reforms, which vision "Building a quality higher education system that develops human resource with excellent

knowledge, skills, and moral values to work and live within the era of globalization and knowledge-based society." (cover page) [71]. Currently, MoEYS is implementing the Higher Education Improvement Project for the second phase (HEIP-2). [62] illustrated that higher education fulfills several vital societal roles, chief among them being the generation of intelligent people who will benefit society. A similar study emphasized that the university plays a crucial role in spearheading innovation projects in a knowledge-based society [36].

Student Services (SS) became an interesting topic in higher education institutions, particularly at international higher education conferences [108]. More importantly, student service plays an important role in enhancing higher education quality and student learning outcomes [29]. Similarly, another study states that the important role of student services is to encourage students to become more active in social work [107]. Moreover, ACC illustrated that student services refer to a better environment for students to develop culturally, socially, morally, intellectually, and physically in response to student needs [2]. Student services are recognized as having the functions and responsibilities of student development, psychological support, facilitation, and retention of students at university [15]. Likewise, the positive impact of student services such as counseling, career development programs, and stress management [31]. In addition, promoting student service will help motivate students to achieve successful learning and ensure that no student is excluded from higher education [108]. Furthermore, UNESCO stated that academic HEIs must reconsider how they interact with stakeholders and redesign their internal governance [63].

In global trends, higher education alone is not able to strengthen its quality and to be recognized on both local and international stage. Stakeholder involvement plays a vital role in higher education toward building a knowledge-based society-based knowledge and developing world-class institutions [46]. There have been numerous research studies concentrated on stakeholders in higher education. For instance, a study found that employers, who are the primary external stakeholders and users of educational services, naturally integrate with the university due to the demand for highly skilled and proactive staff [10]. The transition to a knowledge-based economy in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is reflected in the evolving triple helix model of innovation, which offers patterns for an advanced university–industry–government interaction [36].

Furthermore, with the university serving as the primary institution, this kind of cooperation opens the door for the three stakeholder groups to assist one another in enhancing their performance [37]. A similar study found that the government, development partners, higher education institutions, and industries are the four groups of stakeholders in the higher education sector in Cambodia [90]. There is not much study in Cambodia that focuses on stakeholders' support for student service in higher education. This study aims to address this

research gap by investigating the stakeholders involved in promoting student service in higher education. In addition, it also seeks to address the following question: Which stakeholders encourage student service in HEIs in Cambodia?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Higher Education Stakeholders

There exist various opinions regarding who qualifies as a "stakeholder" in higher education, depending on how narrowly or widely we define the term [11]. In the past, [39] defined that a stakeholder can be a group or individual who can affect the achievement of the organization's vision. In a similar vein, [78] stated that stakeholders are any individuals who have a direct or indirect connection to the students and higher education's well-being. Furthermore, [50] illustrated that people who are particularly concerned and genuinely interested in the growth and sustainability of the higher education sector are typically referred to as higher education stakeholders.

There are numerous stakeholders were found and noted by many research findings. Namely, government students, alumni, retired academic staff, parents, academic/support staff, national student union, the scientific community, investors, donors, lenders, industry, development partners, higher education, research foundation, the local residential community, and so on [5, 37, 50, 90]. In sum, research studies found that there are two main kinds of higher educational stakeholders, including internal and external stakeholders [7, 51]. In addition, three characteristics define the influence of stakeholders: power, legitimacy, and urgency. However, the impact of each stakeholder on higher education depends on its institution. For instance, [40] showed that every stakeholder uses a different approach to sway decisions, either by influencing the resources themselves or the results that these resources produce.

Returning to the subject, many stakeholders are playing an important role in supporting student services in higher education institutions. The triple helix of [37]) stated three main groups of stakeholders in higher education, while Sam and [90] include development partners as the four groups of higher education stakeholders. Nonetheless, the three obvious aspects of stakeholder involvement in student service in the HE sectors in Cambodia are the significant presence of religious, parent and guardian, and student and alumni. Thus, there are seven stakeholders in supporting student services, including parent ministries, industry and community, development partners, higher education institutions, religious, parent and guardian, and student and alumni.

2.2. Parent Ministries

The state plays a key role in determining policies and

strategies. It plans through the issuance of various legal documents as a roadmap and mechanism for implementing higher education to the goals and ambitions. For instance, [8] highlighted the government's influence on the education system. Likewise, a research study stated that the government is in charge of creating laws and regulations and providing venture capital to start-up businesses [90]. They also found that the government serves as a regulator, professional service provider, policy maker, facilitator, and navigator for the country's progress. Furthermore, another study also noted that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has the authority to ensure that all higher education institutions provide the necessary educational resources and adequate infrastructure [45]. He also stated that the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports plays a very important role in improving the quality of higher education. In Cambodia, there are 189 higher education institutions under the supervision of the 17 parent ministries [70].

In addition, in 2003, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia was created as a legislative framework to support and assess the caliber of HEI. Significantly, the Kingdom of Cambodia in 2003 stated that all higher education institutions in Cambodia must be accredited by the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia. As a consequence, the minimum standards for accreditation of higher education were introduced, which comprised nine standards, in which student services were placed in the fifth standard [1]. Regarding the decision, the fifth standard is needed to help students who enroll, study, and finally receive their degrees increase their knowledge, competence, and abilities. Most importantly, student services must be provided by national laws without breaking or abandoning them.

One-window service mechanism has been recognized as the main mechanism to improve the quality of public service. For instance, a study stated that this mechanism offers many relevant services at only face [14]. Likewise, another research finding addressed that one-window services are chosen and widely used by governments worldwide to maximize service delivery, preserve flexibility, and decentralize management [103]. In addition, these important services help enhance work efficiency. As the mission of higher education institutions, there are many services offered to the student, the community, industry, and relevant stakeholders. In Cambodia, one-window service has been implemented since 2003 at the sub-national level and district level in three districts from three provinces such as Battambang province and Siem Reap province. The great achievement of the two pilot districts enriched the RGC to implement further in other provinces [72]. Then, many national levels, mostly state institutions, exercised one-window services to ensure accountability and save people's time. Considering the amount of research in this area, HEI students take advantage of the mechanism. A similar study also found that when using a one-window service, students only need to learn how to use a single gateway to access the service without having to go to another place or

department [34].

2.3. Industry and Community

The industry and community are the key stakeholders in boosting better student services in higher education through their functions as professional knowledge and skills persons. For instance, a research study found that the private sector offers undergraduates and recent graduates internships and jobs, as well as practical experiences and training opportunities, to improve students' knowledge and abilities [90]. Most importantly, another finding showed that it collaborates well with the career office [104]. Furthermore, similar research stated that higher education and industry have a relationship that involves collaborative and interactive technologies and recipient relationships [79]. In addition, a research study found that the involvement of the private sector in proper job training and/or internships helps build high-quality education [53]. Likewise, HEIs and private must provide students with the career counseling and understanding they need to make sure they have the abilities they will need to adjust to the workplace after graduation [75].

The community also plays a crucial role in offering real-world experience and knowledge. Students are specifically able to generate knowledge through their community service learning. Moreover, community support is a key factor in helping higher education succeed in its mission. Most importantly, the industry helps provide new knowledge and skills for students [97]. Links between academia and industry are essential for enabling the transfer of technological knowledge from academic institutions to businesses [43]. Thus, the suppliers and consumers have to talk and share their needs to design curricula to be more responsive. The private sector can offer input on curriculum design and the development of new courses that meet market demands [104]. Similarly, a study showed that they are hesitant to attend workshops or meetings that the MoEYS or HEIs host [90].

Additionally, donations of money and materials have a significant impact on student services. Industry and community are marked as potential sponsors in helping support student services by building a good infrastructure and service facilities. Particularly being an important sponsor for organizing and conducting outside class activities such as workshops, training, career fairs, field trips, and other events. Particularly, the private sector helps sponsor staff to continue building capacity while providing scholarships for students. Similarly, another research study found that industries covertly act as private donors by funding their employees' education at HEIs and even offering scholarships for such educational enrollment [90]. Links between academia and industry are essential for enabling the transfer of technological knowledge from academic institutions to businesses which helps saving money HE [43]. Furthermore, he added that university-industry linkages can provide funding and re-

sources for doing research and facilities.

2.4. Development Partner

The development partner has an impact on the higher education curriculum and operation. In 1993, it was acknowledged that the education sector was fundamental to both economic growth and sustainable development, as well as to the larger process of nation-building [82]. The Cambodian Royal Government began requesting international donors to assist in creating the HE masters plan. Then, development partners are more interested in the high education sector in Cambodia [4]. As a result, there are many internal donors' responses to help, such as AusAID, the World Bank, USAID, the French government, and UNESCO. Particularly, many legal documents regarding higher education, such as the accreditation of higher education and relevant documents, are the achievement of joining the team from diverse groups, including development partners [82].

The partnership also allows the HEIs in Cambodia to join staff and student exchange outside Cambodia. Importantly, technical experts have been working as assistants and mentors to help build a better higher education quality by joining groups. For instance, a study demonstrated that development partners were also included in the newly formed Higher Education Technical Working Group in 2013 [90]. Some HEIs have visited foreign lecturers and scholars to help facilitate and coordinate some public higher education in certain tasks [82, 90]. Importantly, donors offer scholarships to help recipients reach their full potential and advance their knowledge and abilities so they can support the growth of the industry. Another research showed that NGO involvement plays an important role in promoting partnerships promoting student academic success [30].

Besides knowledge and experience sharing, the development partner also takes a key role as the main donor for HE. Many fund projects have been implemented. For instance, a study also stated that since the 1990s and 2000s, a lot of international support has helped Cambodia's education sector. To date, the World Bank has become the main source of development funding in the higher education sector by implementing some important projects. For instance, the Higher Education Quality and Capacity Improvement Project (HEQCIP) was under WB's fund [59]. Furthermore, currently, another project named the Higher Education Improvement Project (HEIP) just finished the first phase and continues the second phase is in processing [69].

2.5. Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions are key implementers and have a great impact on student services due to their legitimate power and obligation. For instance, a study stated that the rules and guidelines developed by the ACC and the MoEYS for quality improvement are referred to as being directly im-

plemented by HEIs [90]. Essentially, the management of HEIs shall understand the values and advantages of student services. For instance, another study demonstrated that to support the development of institutions, leaders must possess a clear vision, recommendations, and knowledge of higher education [5]. In addition, the need analysis for students has to be conducted to provide a responsive plan to the student's needs by not providing general services. HEIs should adapt their curricula to the needs of their students. To ensure quality and sustainability, allocating a budget is also important. Similarly, a previous study found that increasing education funding is necessary to enhance human resources [49]. Likewise, the budget is a crucial tool for expediting and improving the capacity to plan the programs required to enhance student learning [108].

The next important is to build sufficient student services infrastructure and facilities. In the era of technology, most traditional services have to transform to digital due to the speed and quality of digital. Particularly, digital is familiar to the students. Currently, most HE's students are in Gen Z, which is closely related to touch and screen. For instance, a popular website showed that Generation Z was born between 1997 and 2012 [13]. Generation Z is a digital generation whose expectations are based on touch and screen and whose evolution has been shaped by smartphones and other technical devices. The Ministry of Education Yout and Sport showed that HE's students are between 18 and 22 years old. According to another finding found that the majority of students communicate with institutions using technology [88]. Furthermore, technology has connected student service to students more easily. In addition, combining technology and student services will improve communication and lower barriers, resulting in academic success for students. Thus, both the services provider and receiver are the advantaged group.

The most important of HEIs is to put the right person in the right student services sector with a workable structure. Fundamentally, student services are comprised of many services to help students to be successful in their academic journey. In some certain services required the qualified staff and skills person. Their specific area is mental health, career, research, technology, sport, etc.... While another sector needs competent and passionate officers. For instance, a research study found that a clear structure for student services is beneficial [91]. In addition, a study showed that professional service providers ought to make every effort to connect their work to the higher education aims and principles of student learning [17]. Similarly, another study demonstrated that service providers must be amiable and cooperative [35].

2.6. Parent and Guardian

Parent and guardian involvement in student service is important in many ways. Even though moving from high school to university is quite far from their home family for some students, parents, and guardians are still closely related to the

student's learning outcome. The motivation and sharing of experience with students enable them to figure out problems properly. Particularly, the student still gets warm and hopeful for their academic journey. Thus, these supports provide a positive impact on the student learning outcome. For instance, a study found that students who talked to their parents about their interests and worries performed better academically [27]. Likewise, a similar study showed that students' confidence in their academic pursuits was bolstered by parental support and involvement in higher education [100].

Furthermore, parents and guardians also join directly to student services in higher education. In some certain cases, parents and guardians can be representatives of their son or daughter to ask for better solutions. Importantly, they can provide constructive feedback and their son or daughter's information to HE. Their feedback and information enable HE to create certain content to help students. Regard to a research study demonstrated that parental participation improves students' academic performance in postsecondary education [48]. Moreover, MoEYS introduced the role of parent and guardian in supporting student service by directly participating in the student service guideline [65]. Another important is the financial support and literacy. Most students still ask for financing and share financial knowledge to get a better life at HE.

2.7. Religion

Mental health is recognized as a major concern for students in HE. Thus, student services have been taking this problem seriously. For instance, a study found that students who experienced significant levels of anxiety at the start of the school year ended up receiving poorer grades than those who did not [54]. Likewise, a similar study discovered that depression is a mental health issue among college students [33]. Besides being an expert and skilled person, religion is also a key component that contributes to student service in helping students with mental health problems. In addition, another study showed that during stressful and distressing moments, students will seek therapy from the religious community [25]. Moreover, the previous finding emphasized that religion has a good impact on students' ethics and learning as well [61].

Moreover, in Cambodia, Buddhism improves education in a variety of ways [60]. Additionally, Buddhism has been essential to Cambodian education [95]. For instance, a study found that Buddhist monks have been essential to Khmer civilization as Buddhism has been incorporated into their culture and society, especially in the area of education [89]. It is customary for Buddhist monks to preach the Dharma throughout every festival and function. Likewise, research findings highlighted that instruction takes the shape of guidance and covers morals, culture, religion, and social values [96]. Particularly, another study also showed that because living expenses and housing are high, impoverished individuals frequently use pagodas to study in Phnom Penh [52]. To

put it briefly, Buddhists are essential to Cambodian education, particularly for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

2.8. Student and Alumni

The main target group of student service is for the student to achieve their academic, career, and wisdom. For instance, [58] found that students can gain from skill development and extracurricular education. Moreover, a study highlighted that one of the most important elements in fulfilling the institution's objective is student participation [24]. Similarly, institutions must demonstrate inclusive environments to attract and retain students to enhance diversity [109]. The student services run more smoothly due to the active participation of students following regulations. HEIs must choose students as essential partners by involving them in leadership, decision-making, and the expression of opinions on important issues if they hope to succeed in the long run. It is expected that universities will work with students to create, share, and use knowledge. As a result, colleges are concentrating more on winning over students as customers and improving their competitive position [18].

Alumni have played two key roles in helping student services, including building a good connection and providing fun for HE. Moreover, alumni had a great academic experience at HE and work experience at work, which contributed much to current student services. For instance, a research finding highlighted that the role of alumni is essential to the expansion and advancement of higher education institutions [6]. Importantly, they can come to share knowledge and skills, particularly the working environment for the market, via training, workshops, forums, and relevant events. By participating in the above event, they also create a good connection with the current student, which plays an important role in helping shape their career plan and successful academic journey. Alumni can significantly improve the university's exposure and reputation both domestically and internally [6]. Another research demonstrated many areas of student service benefit from alumni, including career mentors, providing expertise, professional development, student recruitment effort, HE's reputation, and institutional governance [76].

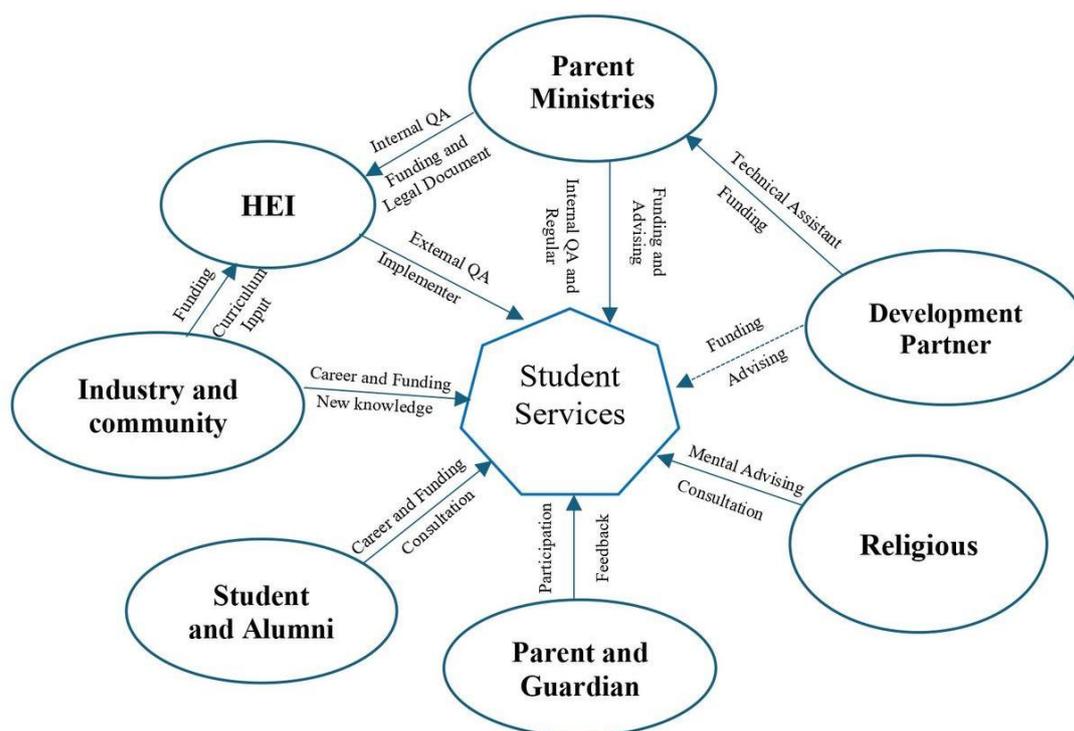
Furthermore, alumni also contribute financially to help their HE. This donation is important to help build infrastructure and student service facilities to get better quality and quantity. The funding can be from student cohorts or fundraising. For instance, a study highlighted that alumni provide large financial support to HE [76]. They also raised two example universities such as Harvard University and Al Azhar, that receive the largest endowment funds from alumni. Likewise, another study found that in the majority of public higher institutions, alumni play a crucial role in closing the financial gap [77]. Thus, this funding plays an important to help fulfill the needs of HE as well as student to generate more opportunity and enhance student services.

2.9. Conceptual Framework

Student services are essential in supporting student learning outcomes and improving the overall quality of education. Enhancing student services in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia requires the active participation of multiple stakeholders across various domains, including technical expertise, financial support, and knowledge sharing. International research has underscored the involvement of numerous

stakeholders in student services within higher education [5, 37].

However, research conducted on Cambodian HEIs identified four primary stakeholders [90]. Building on this, current trends in higher education institutions and student services suggest the presence of seven key stakeholders involved in supporting student services in Cambodia's HEIs. The solid line represents indirect influence, while the dotted line indicates direct influence.



Adapted ([5, 37, 90])

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Stakeholders Support Student Services in HE in Cambodia.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The researchers selected qualitative research based on the study's goal and subject. Researchers can categorize details when they use a qualitative approach [84]. The semi-structured interview was chosen as a method to gather information on this subject based on its merits. For instance, qualitative research allows researchers to readily get ideas from research participants and examine in-depth information [26]. Furthermore, interviews are a useful method for getting more precise information from people [92]. Similarly, interviews have a variety of purposes, including data collection, evaluation, hypothesis development, and question sampling [22]. For people with experience in this area, one-on-one

interviews allowed researchers to obtain more detailed information and practical experience. Furthermore, this interview enabled research participants to confidently and thoroughly present data. The researchers used quotations to provide specificity to the findings [84].

3.2. Research Setting and Participants

In this research study, ten research participants participated. The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports oversees the selection of both public and private higher education schools for this study. Six of the 90 institutions of higher learning were chosen. The six institutions listed above were selected because they had the most students in the academic year 2022–2023. Additionally, the key informants came from four groups: the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, the development partner, researchers, and six higher education institution rectors.

Table 1. Participant Geography.

| Code | Institution | Position |
|-----------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| MoEYS-MT1 | MoEYS | Management Team |
| MoEYS-MT2 | MoEYS | Management Team |
| DPT | Development Partner | Management Team |
| RES | Researcher | HE Sector |
| PHE-MT1 | Public Higher Education | Rector of HEI |
| PHE-MT2 | Public Higher Education | Rector of HEI |
| PHE-MT3 | Public Higher Education | Rector of HEI |
| PHE-MT4 | Private Higher Education | Rector of HEI |
| PHE-MT5 | Private Higher Education | Rector of HEI |
| PHE-MT6 | Private Higher Education | Rector of HEI |

3.3. Research Tool

The research methodology employed in this study utilized a semi-structured interview format to gather data. For instance, semi-structured interviews are recognized as an effective technique for qualitative research as they allow researchers to obtain specific and in-depth insights from participants [38]. The intention behind the individual interview questions was to explore the perspectives of stakeholders regarding support for student services in higher education. The interview questions were adapted from [94, 90, 17, 10]. This research used the same questions for the four target groups. The sub-research questions focus on three key areas: stakeholder participation, how they participate, and the advantages of participation.

3.4. Ethical Study and Data Collection

To comply with ethical guidelines and institutional procedures, the researcher sent a formal request letter, along with the research questionnaire, to six higher education institutions and pertinent stakeholders to obtain approval for conducting interviews. After obtaining consent, the researcher arranged interments were coordinated through social media platforms or via phone, depending on the participants' preferences. The interviews took place in various locations selected for the participants' convenience. Before starting each interview, the researcher clearly explained the role of the student services stakeholder and highlighted the importance of confidentiality regarding the information shared by the participants. Furthermore, interviews enable key informants to freely express their opinions and to withdraw from the interview or skip specific questions at any time without facing any consequences [92]. Face-to-face interviews were structured to last at least 45 minutes, allowing sufficient time to thoroughly

explore the topics and gather detailed insights from the participants.

3.5. Data Analysis

The process of gathering and analyzing data involved a thematic analysis to ensure precision and reliability. Thematic analysis assists in providing structured and detailed data [93]. Based on the literature review and related studies, the researcher developed multiple sub-questions to facilitate the categorization, classification, and grouping of subjects or data. The researchers meticulously reviewed each participant's responses several times, identifying key themes and putting them into organized categories. Once they recognized similar data points, they grouped them according to common themes or content. To highlight important insights, selected responses were indicated as direct quotes from the participants. The analysis was conducted using the activity cluster framework established. Moreover, another finding noted that a thematic approach allowed researchers to pinpoint patterns and systematically organize findings [16]. Similarly, the significance of self-analysis emphasizes that researchers should thoroughly read and segment participants' ideas, marking important concepts and categorizing them into separate sections [26]. After completing the preliminary analysis, the researchers polished the data into well-organized research findings. To enhance statistical rigor, the researchers quantified the number of key informants who highlighted the contributions of specific stakeholders on particular points. This process involved consultations with co-authors who have significant expertise in qualitative data collection and validation. The first author directed the data analysis with the guidance and collaborative contributions of these seasoned co-authors, ensuring the rigor and credibility of the research results.

4. Research Finding

4.1. Parent Ministries

Higher education-related legal documents serve as a roadmap for Cambodia's future higher education system. There are currently a lot of regular documents being launched in the higher education sector. The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport is always taking action to advise and comment to HEIs under the ministry's supervision to follow the guidelines and regulations. Particularly, the accreditation criteria have been updated regularly to ensure the quality of higher education in Cambodia to meet local and international standards. For instance, student services are the fifth among nine minimum standards of higher education quality evaluation comprised by the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC, 2009). Moreover, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has introduced the Higher Education Reform, which contains seven measures. Importantly, the Royal Government of Cambodia, in the seventh mandate, also prioritized building human capital as the priority in the vision. Student services play a key role in enhancing their learning outcome. Particularly, the extra curriculum helps encourage the student to build up their skill. As a parent ministry, the MoEYS has issued many important letters to introduce and circulars to higher education. The budget allocation to the HE sector also increased. The MoEYS has also been working very closely with foreign institutions to get MOU to provide more opportunities to HEIs in Cambodia in building human resources, staff and student exchange, and joint projects. All key informants emphasized the central role of parent ministries. As quoted by the management team in MoEYS below:

The government creates polity and allocates a budget to develop and improve the quality of HE. The 7th mandate, the Royal Government of Cambodia, and the Ministry's vision call for paying more attention to extra curriculum to enrich student learning outcomes and skills. Particularly to help improve Cambodian culture and identity. ACC has always revised the evaluation tool to meet the standard. As secretary of RGC, we also provide technical support, including budgetary planning, human resource development and training, curriculum designing, and technology facility.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT1)

Thus, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) has introduced a new higher education reform in alignment with the government's broader vision. This reform emphasizes the importance of enhancing student services in higher education institutions (HEIs) to better support students in achieving their academic goals. As highlighted by a prominent researcher in the higher education sector, as quoted below:

The parent ministry has worked in building policy and reform in the higher education sector in supporting student services. Their authority plays important to produce regular document for HEI.

(interview the researcher: RES)

Moreover, the parent ministries should create a clear student service plan and policy, which include incentives in cash or letters of appreciation to HEIs that provide the best student services. Importantly, creating a student services manual and providing extra support for the good services institution. The quotes of three interviewees, a management team of MoEYS, a researcher in the HE sector, and a representative of the development partner are below:

The Ministry urges HEIs to implement student services well and provide incentives to institutions that perform well, such as increased national budget. The ministry must have a clear policy system. Then, the HEIs try to compete with other HEIs in providing student services, which makes the services better. The ministry also needs to establish a well-implemented school support system.

(interview the representative of the development partner: DPT)

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) is a key regulator in the HE sector. For instance, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) includes student services as one of nine quality evaluation standards. The ministry also calls for clear policies on student services, including incentive programs and appreciation for high-performing HEIs. Manuals and additional support are encouraged to improve student services further. These measures aim to strengthen Cambodia's higher education system and produce skilled graduates.

Furthermore, as a lesson learned from developed countries, the ministry had delegated power and encouraged HEIs to initiate a benefit program in their institution, including a one-window service. One-window service is a good mechanism for good quality of providing student services. The management team in MoEYS also stated, as quoted below:

One Stop Service is essential for the university to assist students. Students would rather depart from the service one location at a time. When they have questions regarding administration, locations, and other financial matters, just go to one place.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT1)

This mechanism enables students to conveniently access institutional services in a centralized location, significantly reducing the time required to navigate more complex administrative systems. Higher education institutions (HEIs) now provide a range of services beyond traditional teaching and learning, aligning themselves with broader public service functions. Similarly, the rector of the HEI has highlighted the benefits of the "one-window service" approach. The quote is provided below:

To provide a good quality of student service in HEI, a one-window service mechanism is a good method that benefits both the university and students. Currently, we have already requested to establish a one-window service from the parent ministry. As a public institution, creating these services also needs the approval of the Ministry of Civil Service.

(interview the rector of HEI: HEI-MT2)

In developed countries, the Ministry has empowered HEIs to implement benefit programs, including a one-window service to streamline student services. This mechanism allows students to access services in one location, saving time and improving efficiency.

4.2. Industry and Community

Industry and community provide four advantages for student service in higher education: creating new knowledge, building career development, and producing global citizenship. For instance, industry is a competitive business that needs to enrich their knowledge and technology up to date. They are always finding a good method to make their produce more well-known and recognized quality internationally. Thus, new knowledge and technology always come up and are transferred and shared with students to understand and prepare for the future. Career planning is needed for student service to work very close to enterprises and communities to help share and guide student to shape their career goal. Importantly, allowing students to take part in a study tour, volunteer, internship, and work at part-time or full-time jobs enables students to match their theory to practical use in the workplace. Every significant informant stressed the importance of the community and industry. This is similar to the rector of HEI reported as quoted below:

We work very closely with industry to connect our student to their workplace. So far, we have conducted many workshops and forums focusing mainly on career preparation and the working environment. We reached an agreement to send our students to work as volunteers or internships to earn more working experience.

(interview the rector of HEI: HEI-MT2)

Furthermore, the representative of the development partner highlighted the career opportunities offered by the industry, emphasizing the crucial role these connections play in enabling students to gain valuable work experience while pursuing their studies. The following quote illustrates this point:

Student Services Collaborate with the enterprise to recruit students to work at a specific time; students will be better.

(interview the development partner: DPT)

Additionally, industries should collaborate closely with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to provide valuable feedback and insights regarding the pressing demands of the labor market. Importantly, industries should also create opportunities for students to engage in part-time employment while pursuing their studies. This perspective is further emphasized by a well-known researcher in higher education, as quoted below:

The working schedule of the private sector must align with the student learning schedule because students have to work both part-time and full-time jobs to enrich their knowledge and experience besides class.

(interview the researcher: RES)

The active participation of industry plays a crucial role in

providing valuable input for the development of a well-structured curriculum in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This aligns with the report from senior management within the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS), as highlighted in the quote below.

The private sector takes advantage of student resources. When they select the qualified candidate and take a look seriously at the school's name, then go deep into the CV or resume. HEIs should allow the private sector to participate in the development of curricula because they can raise their concern.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT1)

Industry and community play a key role in student services by offering three main benefits: creating new knowledge, supporting career development, and promoting global citizenship. Collaboration with enterprises helps students shape career goals through study tours, volunteering, internships, and part-time jobs, bridging theory and practice. Additionally, industries provide valuable input to HEIs on labor market needs, aiding in curriculum development and allowing students time for part-time work while studying.

Furthermore, some higher education institution has insufficient funds to operate and organize important student services, industry and community play a key role in providing funds as both in-cash or in-kind sponsors. They sometimes cooperate to conduct important events in technology innovation, skills development programs, and career fairs. Likewise, the quote of the management team in MoEYs is quoted below:

Industry and community are the source of funding for student services by supporting many extra activities, and they sometimes organize the event together.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT2)

In addition, the industry sometimes allows HE to join projects and get funds to help with another extra activity. In Cambodia, some private sectors also provide scholarships to HE's students and provide funds for staff development. Importantly, community services enable students to earn practical experience in certain situation. They then learn a lot of important knowledge, such as soft skills, which help build stronger and be a good citizen in society. Learning in class is not enough that need to go on site and learn. While participating in community services, students can know the real living conditions and appropriate solutions. As stated by the management team in MoEYS below.

The national fund is smaller than non-government funding. There are numerous ways to join the project and provide scholarships and direct funds for HE to obtain funding to support the construction and improvement of their facilities and infrastructure.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT2)

The industry and community play a crucial role in offering financial assistance, both in cash and in-kind. They often collaborate on events such as technology innovation programs, skills development, and career fairs. The industry also helps

fund extra activities and projects for HEIs. In Cambodia, the private sectors provide scholarships and funding for staff development. Community service opportunities allow students to gain practical experience, develop soft skills, and become better citizens by learning real-world solutions beyond classroom education.

4.3. Development Partner

Even if the budget allocation in HEI is increased, there are many tasks to do to ensure the quality of education in HE. The national budget would not respond to the need for the expense because the infrastructure and expertise in certain fields are insufficient. Thus, development partners play a key role in helping funding and sending experts to improve the quality of HE, particularly student services. For instance, the Higher Education Institution Project (HEIP) phase 2 includes student service as a component of higher education quality. Moreover, the ASEAN University Network also includes student services as a priority sector to recognize as regional quality standards. In Cambodia, the HEIP-II, a project funded by the World Bank, is implemented in many public higher education institutions. The importance of development partners was highlighted by eight key informants. This is similar to the quote of the representative of the development partner as quoted below:

In Cambodia, the World Bank is the key development partner to help improve the quality of higher education. We also encouraged all project implementers to concentrate on student services. For instance, the current project included student services as the main component.

(interview the representative of the development partner: DPT)

Through this funding, student services are capable of strengthening their quality and services. For instance, HEIP-II also concentrated on building dormitories for students and other important buildings and facilities for better teaching and learning. Furthermore, development partners also provide scholarships for students and staff to higher education outside Cambodia. The quote from a rector of HEI is below:

The dormitory is under construction in our institution for student accommodation. Another building just finished for university-industry linkage to help connect students to the working places. The funding is from the World Bank via HEIP-II.

(interview the rector of HEI: HEI-MT1)

Development partners play a crucial role by providing funding, expertise, and scholarships. Projects like HEIP-II, funded by the World Bank, focus on enhancing student services, building dormitories, and improving facilities. Additionally, the ASEAN University Network prioritizes student services as part of regional quality standards. These efforts strengthen education quality and expand opportunities for students and staff.

4.4. Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions are key implementers in supporting services. Many legal documents, particularly the sub-degree of the establishment of the university and national standard, have emphasized that all HEIs shall provide a good quality of student services to ensure the quality of education and to help students succeed in their academic journey. Mainly, the Public Administrative Institute (PAI) has autonomy in finance and administration. This important power enables PAI institutions to decide and act quickly on the activities that benefit students by not waiting for the recommendations and guidelines from parent ministries. Every important informant underlined the importance of higher education institutions. The management team in MoEYS also reported, as quoted below.

Student services are under the HEI authority. The parent ministries have delegated and given them autonomy, particularly PAI institutions. HEIs should not wait for circulars from the ministry. As an experience, outside HEIs earn more income and attract foreign students, but HEIs in Cambodia do not have many foreign students.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT2)

Furthermore, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should prioritize the selection of qualified staff and skilled professionals for specific services. Student service providers must also possess strong interpersonal and technological skills to ensure the delivery of high-quality services. Additionally, HEIs play a central role in budget allocation and guiding to enhance service quality. This is further emphasized by the management team of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS), as quoted below.

HEIs play a key role in supporting, facilitating, financing, and participating in some activities. HEIs have to ensure the student's service by maintaining a high enrollment rate, low dropout, and good education and achieve the expected results of student learning outcomes.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT1)

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in delivering quality student services to support education and student success. Legal documents emphasize the importance of these services, while Public Administrative Institutes (PAIs), with financial and administrative autonomy, can act quickly for student benefit. HEIs must hire qualified staff with interpersonal and technological skills to improve service quality effectively.

Moreover, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must actively ensure that graduates secure well-paid employment in their respective fields of study. This requires enhancing student services to include critical skills such as critical thinking, leadership, innovation, problem-solving, and digital literacy. To effectively meet students' needs, HEIs must conduct thorough research on students' circumstances to develop comprehensive student service plans. Achieving this goal demands strong leadership and unwavering commitment from

HEI rectors. This point is further reinforced by the management team of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS), as quoted below.

Higher education institutions rector should commit to and understand the value of student services. Then, they shall research student needs and design a master plan for student service. HEIs should not provide services generally with any data from students. Some services are offered, but few students need them. However, many services are in need, such as mental health and career consultation, but HEIs have not yet been paid attention to and put as a priority.

(interview the representative of development partner: DPT)

Specifically, HEIs must ensure that regulations are fully implemented with a strong sense of responsibility. To deliver efficient and effective services, it is essential to recruit skilled and qualified staff. Equally important is that service providers possess strong interpersonal and technological skills to meet the demands of modern student services. This aligns with the perspective shared by the rector of the HEI, as quoted below.

We need to put qualified and passionate staff in the student services sector. Student services are working mostly for students, and they meet and talk a lot every day. Thus, they need to provide effective feedback with skills. Students are our customers that we need to take care of and provide a comfortable environment.

(interview the rector of HEI: HEI-MT5)

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in supporting and creating supplementary activities that enable students to apply their knowledge and skills, particularly the 21st-century skills that are in high demand in the job market. HEIs need to establish close collaborations with industry and other private sectors to gain a deeper understanding of the market needs and subsequently develop more responsive curricula. As stated by the researchers, this collaboration is vital to ensure graduates possess the necessary skills to excel in their careers.

Higher Education, through student services, has to provide extra activities to ensure students are knowledgeable in the 21st-century skills that meet the needs of the market. Importantly, take a close look at the dropout rate to find out the reason and create a responsive mechanism. Particularly, HEIs should work with the private sector to know the needs of the job market and design a responsive education.

(interview the researcher in HE sector: RES)

Furthermore, HEIs are required to conduct regular professional training to allow the staff to keep up to date their skills and to ensure their working quality in the right place. The students are not from the same generation and social group that need to understand and use knowledge and skills correctly. As quoted from the management team in MoEYS below.

To help students both academically and non-academically. Student service providers must attend training courses to better understand this student service.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT1)

HEIs must ensure graduates secure well-paid jobs in their

fields by enhancing student services with critical skills like leadership, innovation, and problem-solving. They should implement regulations responsibly, improve teaching methods, and address dropout rates. Conducting needs analysis to gather student data is essential for planning future activities. Developing a master plan, allocating sufficient budgets, and collaborating closely with industry and private sectors are key to aligning education with market needs and sustaining effective student services.

4.5. Parent and Guardians

Parents and guardians serve as essential supporters for students in academic, physical, financial, and emotional aspects. Their motivation and encouragement empower students to persist in their studies and foster greater independence. The importance of parents and guardians was highlighted by six key interviewees. This sentiment is echoed in the response from the management team at MoEYS, as highlighted below.

Parents are funding for study at university. So, without support from them, students find it difficult to continue studying in higher education.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT1)

This approach serves as an effective strategy to motivate students to focus on their studies, engage more socially, and achieve higher academic performance. HEIs maintain direct communication with students' parents to gather relevant information about their circumstances, which has proven to be an effective method in preventing student dropout. As expressed by the rector of the HEI, the following quote reflects this approach.

Students sometimes cannot connect, so we call their parents to intervene and provide more detailed information related to their son/daughter. Then, we can find an appropriate way to help them. We do need help from parent participation.

(interview the rector of: HEI-MT6)

In some certain services, parents and guardians are allowed to be representatives to complain and request a better service and solution from higher education institutions. As a tradition, Cambodian students still need help and ask for mentoring from their parents and guardians even if they are more than 18 years old because they are not yet fully independent. Quotes from four interviewees, two management team in MoEYS, two rectors of HEI, and a researcher in the HE sector are below:

Parents and guardian can represent their son or daughter and complain about any irregular services and student problems.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT2)

Thus, parents and guardians have a vital role in supporting students in various aspects, including academically, physically, financially, and mentally. This statement is aligned with the views of the rector of a Higher Education Institution (HEI), which emphasizes the significance of parental involvement in the overall development and success of stu-

dents.

Student services really need the cooperation of the student's parent because the institution does not know all the details about them. However, the services would be better when we work together. Parental involvements play important to support student learning.

(interview the rector of HEI: HEI-MT5)

Their encouragement helps students study harder, socialize, and achieve better grades. They often guide students in selecting majors and HEIs and can represent them to request better services from institutions. In Cambodia, students traditionally rely on parental mentoring even after turning 18, as they are not yet fully independent.

4.6. Religion

Besides, religion plays a key role in keeping students' mentality healthy. Learning in higher education is not easy, and they have many tasks to do, such as assignments, presentations, projects, quizzes, and other class activities. They sometimes get stressed and decide not to continue or feel apart. In some certain cases, students have trouble with their family and work. When the problem came out, students required mental help and supports. Religion helps guide them to calm down and to handle problems peacefully by using religious methods. Thus, the connection between student services and religion provides many advantages for students in learning in higher education. According to four main informants, religion is crucial in supporting student programs. An interviewee of the management team in MoEYS testified that:

Allowing students to understand religion and practice is also effective. Student services should be associated with religion. Students can learn the Bible and other religious advice. These activities help them mentally and emotionally.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT1)

Religion plays an important role in supporting students' mental health in higher education. The academic workload, family issues, and work responsibilities can cause stress and lead to discouragement. Religion helps students manage challenges calmly and peacefully through spiritual guidance. Connecting student services with religious support offers significant benefits for students' well-being and academic success.

4.7. Student and Alumni

The student is the key person who is only the service user, but students' feedback also plays the main input in creating services to be more responsive. However, students themselves shall be actively involved in providing services when needed, particularly to raise their concerns and problems. Every key informant underlined how important students and alumni are to promoting improved student services. This is similar to the research in the HE sector, as quoted below.

Students have to exercise their right as customers and their

right to education, as mentioned in the constitutional law of Cambodia. If they are not happy with any inconvenient regulations, they should voice up.

(interview the researcher: RES)

The first person who receives an advantage from student services is a student. The participation of students in student services can improve the quality of the services because students can understand their needs better than others. However, they also need to inform the student services office about their concern and problems. Likewise, the rector of HEIs is quoted below.

We cannot know all the students need, so we want them to inform us what they need. There are many students in school.

(interview the rector of HEI: HEI-MT5)

To ensure success, students also have to respect and follow the regulations and guidelines. Furthermore, in some certain services, the presence of students joining events and relevant activities, the result would be more colorful. Mainly, students can also learn soft skills and practical knowledge, which help motivate their learning journey. The rector of HEI also reported similar to what was quoted below.

Student participation in some student services activities is not only a benefit for the school to achieve the goal, but the student also gains more experience in doing work as well as provides good input for a better service.

(interview the rector of HEI: HEI-MT1)

Moreover, student feedback is crucial in ensuring that the programs offered align with the strategic agenda and address the primary concerns of students. This perspective is echoed in the response from the management team at MoEYS, as quoted below.

Student feedback helps to improve the program because he knows how to provide input and suggestions to improve student services. In other countries, when the abandonment rate reaches 7%, it is a warning sign.

(interview the management team: MoEYS-MT1)

Students are the primary users of student services, and their feedback is essential for improving service responsiveness. Active involvement from students in providing services and following regulations is crucial for success. Their participation enhances service quality, as they understand their needs best. Engaging in events and activities helps students develop soft skills and practical knowledge, further motivating their academic journey.

In addition, alumni help create benefits for supporting student services through knowledge career sharing and monetary contributions. The cooperation between student services and alumni allows the former students to come to their university as speakers to help share their learning journey as well as career plans by joining workshops, training, and forums. This important event also allows students to meet face-to-face with alumni to enrich their understanding and knowledge and career environment and career pathway. As quoted from the management team in MoEY below.

Alumni help come back to their university as speakers and

sometimes as employers to share and provide guidelines for the academic journey as well as career transition.

(interview the management team in MoEYS: MoEYS-MT1)

Particularly, alumni donation is crucial for improving the quality and quantity of student service facilities and infrastructure. The money may come from fundraising efforts or student cohorts. A Quote from an interviewee representative development partner is below:

The Alumni have been able to help the school with millions of dollars because the graduates love the school then donate money to help the school. Good service, students feel love school. When the school takes care of him, he will be emotional with the school.

(interview the representative development partner: DPT)

Alumni play a vital role in supporting student services through career knowledge sharing and financial contributions. They participate in workshops, training, and forums, offering valuable insights into their learning journeys and career paths. These events provide students with opportunities to engage directly with alumni, enhancing their understanding of career environments. Alumni donations, often raised through fundraising or student cohorts, are crucial for improving student service facilities and infrastructure.

5. Discussion

The research found that parent ministries have high authority both financially and technically. Parent ministry, in its power, can create legal documents and allocate a budget to support student services in higher education. Importantly, they also serve as internal evaluations for the quality of education. According to the study's findings, all key informants—100% of them—emphasized how important the parent ministry is to assist in this area. This result is similar to [90] found that the parent ministry serve is in charge of creating laws and regulations for higher education. Likewise, [8] found that the government has a strong influence on the whole education system. Furthermore, this research finding is alike [45] found that the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport plays an important role in ensuring the quality of education in higher education. The key informant, as the researcher, also quotes that the parent ministry serves to create legal documents and improve quality in HEI.

Furthermore, the research found that the one-window service in HEI helps improve the quality of student services, which allows students to access services more easily. Similarly [103] found that one-window service preserved flexibility and efficiency for both students and staff. Particularly, a rector of HEI in Cambodia also raises the benefit of one-window service in HE.

The next result is that the presence of industry and community helps support student services in many areas, such as sharing new knowledge, guiding career plans, providing input in curriculum or master design, and serving as financial

support. The research findings reveal that 100% of participants emphasized the critical role that businesses and the community play in promoting this field. Similarly, [79, 90, 104] found that industry and community allow students to work in their areas and give feedback to HEIs in designing curricula to be more responsive. They also raised the experience of this sector to help share new knowledge and working experience and provide funds through many activities and events. A management team in MoEYs also raises good cooperation in providing students with jobs while they are studying.

Furthermore, the development partner is also found to be the main stakeholder in supporting student services in higher education. The main role found is that they help with technical and financial support in higher education in Cambodia. As a result, 80% of participants emphasized the crucial role of development partners in bolstering student services. Likewise, [30, 59, 82] also found that development partner plays a big role in higher education in Cambodia, providing support and facilitating to help build quality education, particularly by joining a working group to advise in creating legal documents. A representative of the development partner emphasized that the World Bank is the main development partner in higher education in Cambodia, and they also include student services as the main component.

The research found that higher education institution is the main player because student services are under their supervision. Thus, they have fully controlled whether to support or not. Particularly, the PAI institution receives power via delegation from the government and parent ministry. Therefore, 100% of participants acknowledged the critical role that development institutions in higher education play in bolstering student services. This result is similar to [35, 49, 90, 108], who found that higher education institution has the main power to support student services by designing master plans, recruiting qualified staff, working with stakeholders, and budgeting. All research key informants also put HEI as the main player in supporting services.

Moreover, parents and guardians are found to be the main stakeholders in the research. In Cambodia, some HE students still depend on their parents and guardians to help finance and motivate their studies at HE. The good connection between guardian and student services helps enhance their learning outcome because HE makes it easy to identify the student's needs and implement the right method. According to 60% of key informants, parents and guardians play a crucial role in supporting children's services. Likewise [27, 48, 65] found that parental involvement provides a positive impact on student learning. The management team in MoEYs and the rector of HE also emphasized the advantages of parent participation.

In addition, religion is found as a mental adviser for students. It has been indicated that 40% of students believe religion plays a supportive role in enhancing student services. Similar to [25, 33, 52, 60, 61, 89, 95, 96] also found that religious help provides mentor consultation and guidelines to

help reduce stress and continue fighting the challenges. The management team in MoEYS highlighted the important role of religion for HE students in mental health lessons.

The last finding is the role of students and alumni. Students are vital and unforgettable stakeholders in student services. Thus, they are actively involved in using the services that are needed. Particularly, they have to voice up to the student service sector about the problem or recommendations for better service. In some certain events, students also need to join as organizers to enrich their understanding and skills. The findings indicate that 100% of respondents reported that students and alumni play a significant role in supporting student services. This result is similar to [18, 24, 58], who also found that the participation of students in student services is very important, particularly the students' feedback is a good input for master plan design. Thus, the receiver and provider cannot leave apart. As stated by the researcher, the rector of HE, and the management team in MoEYS.

Furthermore, alumni help student services by organizing sharing sessions on knowledge and career goals to provide important information to students. Some students have not yet planned their career goals and prepared for the future. Importantly, alumni are the main funding for the student service sector in organizing and conducting important events for students. Likewise [76, 77] found that alumni help shape student career plans and financing in HE. The representative of the development partner raises the importance of alumni in enhancing student services.

6. Conclusion

Student services are essential for improving learning outcomes and the quality of educational institutions. This primary service is acknowledged by a regional and international partner that advises all higher education institutions to focus more on enhancing student services. The findings underscore the diverse and comprehensive network of stakeholders involved in supporting student services in higher education institutions in Cambodia. The contributions of parent ministries, industry and the community, higher education institutions, and students and alumni are universally recognized as critical, with 100% of respondents highlighting their importance. Development partners, parents and guardians, and religion also play significant roles, with 80%, 60%, and 40% of respondents, respectively, acknowledging their contributions. This collaborative effort emphasizes the vital role each stakeholder plays in enhancing the student experience in Cambodian higher education.

The parent ministries hold significant authority in both financial and technical aspects. These ministries can create legal documents and allocate budgets to support student services in higher education. Notably, they also act as internal evaluators of educational quality. Additionally, the study indicated that the one-window service in higher education institutions (HEI) enhances the quality of student services,

making it easier for students to access these services. Another finding is that the involvement of industry and community contributes to student services in various ways, such as sharing knowledge, guiding career planning, providing feedback on curriculum or master designs, and offering financial support. Moreover, development partners have been identified as key stakeholders in the support of student services in higher education. Their primary role is to provide both technical and financial assistance to higher education in Cambodia.

The research highlights that higher education institutions play a central role since they oversee student services and have full control over their support. Specifically, the PAI institution derives its authority through delegation from the government and parent ministries. Additionally, guardians and religious organizations emerged as significant stakeholders in the study. In Cambodia, some higher education students still rely on their parents and guardians for financial and motivational assistance in their studies. A strong relationship between guardians and student services facilitates a better understanding of student needs, allowing for the implementation of suitable methods. The final finding concerns the involvement of students and alumni, who are essential and irreplaceable stakeholders in the realm of student services. Thus, they play an active role in utilizing the necessary services. In particular, they should communicate with the student service sector regarding issues or suggestions for improved services. In certain instances, students are also required to participate as organizers to enhance their understanding and skills.

According to the results, improving and sustaining the quality of student services necessitates the participation of all parties involved, a strong commitment, collaborative teamwork, and prioritizing student interests.

However, his study explores the role of stakeholders in supporting student services in Cambodian higher education, conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport. Also, the research includes a limited number of key informants and uses qualitative methods.

6.1. Implication of the Research

Although this study is limited by the selection of higher education institutions with the largest number of students under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, it reflects and recommends the following:

6.1.1. Societal Contribution

This study found stakeholders in supporting student services in higher education in Cambodia. This research will contribute data to the national level in providing input and consideration in refining student service indicators and developing policies to make higher education programs more responsive to changes in the Cambodian economy and society, as well as in line with regional and international standards.

The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport shall create a

clear student services policy in higher education and strictly evaluate to ensure the quality. Then, MoEYS should provide benefits to those HEIs that meet the criteria through an increased budget or other incentive to motivate the best implementer. Furthermore, important regulations regarding student services should be created or revised based on the changes in the labor market and technology era.

Higher education institution is the key player who need to pay more attention and take action seriously by creating a master plan and working very close to all stakeholders to improve the quality of education and sustain their role as educator. Currently, high school students are capable of identifying which HEI is the best and providing a good service to support their learning and achieve their learning goals. Thus, if HEI does not make student services a priority and does not care about the student's needs, they are not losing several students but also facing unstable financing shortly.

6.1.2. Scientific Contribution

This research provides a potential input to create more in-depth knowledge for stakeholders, especially institutional leaders, and policymakers, to understand the status and benefits of student services in higher education. Study Cambodia. At the same time, the research results will contribute to providing knowledge for researchers to continue their study in the theoretical reminder point in the subsequent research related to student services in higher education in Cambodia.

6.2. Recommendation for Further Study

The research key informant is limited. Therefore, the results of this research do not have the power to evaluate all higher education institutions in Cambodia. To study the stakeholders of student services in higher education in more comprehensive and in-depth, the following recommendations should be considered. First, the Future research should select more key informants relevant to student services. Second, address stakeholders of student services in higher education of various ministries. Finally, use quantitative or mixed methods to get detailed data.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| MoEYS | Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport |
| PAI | Public Administrative Institute |
| SS | Student Services |

Author Contributions

Moeurn Chantrea: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Meth-

odology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Sam Chanpirun: Supervision, Validation

Mok Sarom: Data curation, Methodology, Supervision

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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