



LAOS

2023 Trend Report

Higher Education & e-learning in ASEAN

INDEX

Click each Index to go to the page that you want to read.

- 01** e-learning and teaching implementation during the outbreak of COVID-19 01
- 02** Quality Assurance at Higher Education 03
- 03** Higher Education Department, Ministry of education and Sports, Lao PDR. 05
- 04** 12-Module Teacher Training Program at Public Universities of Laos 06

e-learning and teaching implementation during the outbreak of COVID-19

Dr. Khamkeo HANSANA / Deputy Director General



Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 has changed a lot of things in Lao Education especially in the field of e-learning. Not only Four universities called National University of Laos, University of Savanneket, University of Champasack and University of Sophanouvong but also teachers in school fields were trained to use the online teaching tools. Furthermore, considering the importance of e-learning, many projects related to e-learning, such as SITOS and UNICEF Laos(2021) are now being implemented.

01

► Background of e-learning in Lao PDR

Learning through the digital platform has been considered to be the most important part of learning in every single country because it not only provides interesting learning topics that meet students' learning types but also to access the literacy skills like information, media and technology skills simultaneously in the digital age. Since the Ministry of Education and Sports has started to implement the National Education System Reform Strategy, e-learning itself is recognized at an early stage. Later on, since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the concept of the e-learning has played an important part in the education system of Lao PDR like other countries that have been integrating in their education systems.

► e-learning and teaching implementation during the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to the Ministry of Education and Sports (2021), due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the government of Lao PDR, as well as the Ministry of Education and Sports has made and issued the notice on e-learning to instruct and manage the learning and teaching implementation from the basic education to the higher education levels. For example, Teachers at National Universities like national universities of Laos, University of Savanneket, University of Champasack and University of Sophanouvong, teachers of secondary school as well as teachers of primary school were trained the online teaching tools which are called the Google Classroom, zoom and Moodle to make use in their teaching. The Google Classroom is one of the teaching and learning tools that have been applied widely at National University of Laos because it is free and the amount of the time is not limited. By using this teaching and learning tool productively, Teachers were trained how to use the program of the Google Classroom. For instance, the program of teaching, how to download their teaching materials, how to share the teaching materials for students on screen, how to assign homework, how to make examination papers and grade students.

► Challenge of e-learning implementation

It can be seen that there were some difficulties that teachers experienced while they were implementing of the e-learning. For example, some teachers who are not good at Information Technology could not deliver their teaching effectively. Some of whom did not have the internet access at home so they needed to go the use in the internet at workplace to deliver their teaching. In addition, students also faced difficulties especially, the ones who live in the provinces could not take part in their learning properly.



► Lesson learned

Through the implementation of e-learning, it was found that the e-learning implementation was not effective enough. However, it helped the majority of students to continue their studies and finished their studies definitely. At the same time, teachers could deliver their teaching programs based on the timeframe.

► e-learning project

Currently, there is a project with the aim of improving the ICT-System for e-learning, as well as the school management information system of the Lao PDR. There are 6 areas of the project. These include the e-learning management system called SITOS, ICT e-learning courses, an authoring tool for own e-learning content creation, the school management system SOKRATES, physical hardware structure and Capacity Building and Human Resource Development (EEE Austria, n.d.).

UNICEF Laos (2021) claimed that because the importance of e-learning was emphasized, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) on 05 October 2021 officially launched the country national digital teaching and learning platform, called the Khang Panya Lao on 05 October 2021. It is the first national digital platform which has been developed with the support of UNICEF and in collaboration with the European Union (EU) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The aim of developing this digital platform is to facilitate distance learning for students and teachers to ensure the continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies. In addition, it is designed as a supplementary teaching resource for use in face-to-face classes.

In addition, for example, in 2022 The National University of Laos (NUoL) signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on e-learning with a South Korean university. Both agreed to jointly develop e-learning content. This became the important step for implementing e-learning in higher education (Kang, 2020).

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Quality Assurance at Higher Education

#qualityassurance #highereducation #laos

Dr. Khamkeo HANSANA



To support learning and teaching with the regional and international education institutions, the quality assurance is one of the most important thing. With this circumstance, Lao Ministry of Education and Sports provides training to public teachers of four public universities. Furthermore, nowadays, the universities are considering using the Quality Assurance to the education field.

01

Quality Assurance is very important in Higher Education institutions of Lao P D R in these days. This is because of the fact that the Quality Assurance itself plays an important part in supporting learning and teaching practice of teachers, helping administrative teams and supporting staff to plan their work, ensuring that there is quality in teaching and learning practice and helping the Higher Educational institutions enable to integrate with the regional and international education institutions. In addition, the Quality Assurance ensures that foreign education intuitions recognize Lao Education. Because of such important roles of the Quality Assurance, the Ministry of Education and Sports; especially the Quality Assurance Department has been implementing trainings on how to write a Self-Assessment Report for teachers of four public Universities of Laos and other Higher Education Institutions. At the same time, there are internal and external accessors who under the supervision of the Quality Assurance Department, Ministry of Education and Sports. There are trainings which are always organized for them in order to assess the education institutions.

In the current time, every higher education institution takes the Quality Assurance into consideration. This is because it helps the higher education institutions improve their teaching and learning practice of teachers, curriculum, and human resources together with infrastructures. It becomes the factor that can draw students to study and ensure that they will have knowledge and competences that meet the of labor markets.

Due to the fact that the Quality Assurance plays an important role in improving education, recently, for example, University of Champasack organized training workshops on Quality Assurance; especially on how to write a Self-assessment Report for teachers. In addition, all faculties of National University of Laos organized the training workshops for teachers. Through having been trained, it can be seen that teachers, for example, have deepen understandings of writing their course syllabuses, assessment criteria, and marking schemes.



Moving from the institutional quality assurance, there are two faculties of National University of Laos namely: Faculty of Law and Political Science as well as Faculty of Economic and Business management would like get the ASEAN University Network QA Standard. These two faculties were assessed by the AUN accessors in recent years. For example, five years ago, Quality Assurance team of each department of the Faculty of Law and Political Science were trained on the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance Framework many times. After finished the trainings, teams of the quality Assurance in each department started writing the Self-Assessment Report. In 2021, under the support of LuxDev's Project LAO/031, the Faculty of Law and Political Science held the Quality Assurance and it was assessed by the accessors from the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance Agency. The result of the assessment came with the satisfied results. The results of assessment are very important because they were used to improve the weaknesses in order to get the standard of ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance.

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Higher Education Department, Ministry of education and Sports, Lao PDR.

Dr. Khamkeo HANSANA



Some problems have been taking place in Higher Education Institutions in the current situation—for example, student mobility. Transferring learning outcomes from one program to another is difficult, like students who want to study in other domestic and foreign universities because of family movement or getting scholarships. However, the receiving universities tend not to accept the learning outcomes of the original universities. This makes them lose opportunities in their learning, such as wasting time studying the same subjects they studied. Furthermore, some of them got scholarships to study in foreign universities, like short and long-term student exchange programs. However, when they finished the program and returned to their universities, the credits that they earned were not accepted. This made them waste time because they needed to study again at their universities. Because of this, the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Sports, playing an important part in supervising Higher Education Institutions, takes credit transfer into account seriously and finds ways in order to solve such problems.

To solve these problems, the Department of Higher Education seriously created the Credit Transfer Agreement. This agreement aims to set a principle, regulation, condition, process, and measure on the Credit Transfer, the change of study field, monitoring, learning outcomes checking of both qualifications that are necessary to be compared between Higher Education Institutions inside and outside countries. This agreement promotes education cooperation, qualification recognition, and exchange. This agreement will become the reference for domestic and foreign universities to facilitate universities in transferring credits for students.

Currently, the National University of Laos itself, except other Higher Education Institutions, has created agreement on student mobility, the change of study field, and credit compare-transfer for students of the National University of Laos, and it has already been implemented. The Purpose of this agreement is to set a principle, regulation, and measure on mobility, change of study field credit compare-transfer for students who are permitted to move, change their study field or get internship scholarships in other domestic and foreign universities which have academic cooperation. This agreement aims to ensure uniform implementation of entire faculties in the National University of Laos and assess and monitor students' learning outcomes in each field of study to meet National, regional, and international quality assurance.

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12-Module Teacher Training Program at Public Universities of Laos

Dr. Khamkeo HANSANA / Higher Education Department, Ministry of education and Sports, Lao PDR.



Teacher Training programs play an important part in upgrading teaching knowledge and competence of teachers in order to help learners learn effectively. There have a number of Teacher Training Programs and academic workshops provided for teachers of public Universities in each year. One example of domestic Teacher Training Program is called a 12-Module Teacher Training Program. It was supported by Second Strengthening Higher Education Project (SSHEP) under Higher Education Department, the Ministry of Education and Sports. This program has been providing trainings on teaching implementation for teachers especially; the ones did not study the pedagogy but they have been teaching in several faculties of the public universities. for instance, teachers of faculty of law and political science, faculty of environment and so on. It is 3-week Training program which trainees were trained a variety of new teaching skills and knowledge. Basically, the Faculty of Education, National University of Laos, is the one which is leading the idea of 12-Module Teacher Training program for university of Champasak, University of Savanakheth and University of Souphanouvong. The training was conducted by the experienced teachers in the field of teaching and learning.

In 2022, there were two training programs which were held at the Faculty of Education, National University of Laos. There were around 24 trainees who were dominated from different faculties of National University of Laos to attend the Trainings. The training program provided subjects that were related directly to teaching and learning implementation. These include learning assessment and evaluation, learning environment, learner development, different types of learners, teachers' development, professional teachers, cultural and social study, teaching technology, teaching design, presentation and facilitation, and learning participation respectively.

In addition to this, University of Savannakhet held 12-Module Teacher Training Program in 2019 and it took 09 days for training with Second Strengthening Higher Education Project (SSHEP). There were 30 trainees dominated from different faculty especially; the ones did not take the course of pedagogy. The subjects provided were similar to the Faculty of Education, National University of Laos. However, there was an additional subject which is different. It was a basic knowledge of research.

A further example of this program training was organized by the University of Champasak and University of Souphanouvong. The Program was held in 2022 with the support of the Second Strengthening Higher Education Project (SSHEP). It took 11 days for training. There were 30 trainees who were dominated from different faculties especially; the ones did not take the course of pedagogy. The subjects provided were similar to the Faculty of Education, National University of Laos.

Through attending the training. It was found fruitful for teachers. This is because a number of teachers who attended the training had a better understanding, for example, of teaching, assessment of learning as well as helping students with different levels and types of learning learn effectively. This became the factor that contributed to better learning and teaching practice.



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