Students' Perceptions toward Private Sector Higher Education in Cambodia

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ABSTRACT

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A breakthrough in the modern history of Cambodian higher education is the introduction of the privatization policy in the mid-1990s. It allowed public universities to offer fee-paying programs and private universities to open. In just over ten years, private higher education institutions have been mushrooming, reaching 45 to this point. The rapid growth of private higher education has generated both positive and negative opinions among the public. This thesis joins the discussion by exploring the reasons why increasing numbers of students are gravitating towards the private higher education sector and how they view their experiences there. Data was collected, through surveys and interviews, at three private universities in Cambodia. The study employed the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. Nine key themes emerged in relation to private higher education in Cambodia, including quality of faculty, extensive use of English, reasonable and affordable tuition fees, various class schedules, easier and fewer entry requirements, weak school policies on student behavior, limited degree recognition, rich library resources and family influence. The study offers several directions for future research about the role of the private higher education sector in Cambodia.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Within this new, global, information-based society, the role of higher education has become increasingly crucial with regard to the social and economic development of a country. The increasing demand for higher education, especially in the post-communist and developing worlds, has normally resulted in the transformation of the education system from being selective and competitive to being massified and diversified (Altbach, 1999; Gibbons, 1998; Levy, 2006). As a result of this expansion process, diverse forms of higher education have gradually emerged, and, in most cases, the private sector has been legalized to ensure the mass participation of higher education for all (Altbach, 1999; Gibbons, 1998; & Levy, 2006).

Background

Cambodia is among the many developing nations with a recent history of rapid growth within the private higher education sector. Since Cambodia switched to a free-market economy in the early 1990s, higher education has been viewed as the key to human resource development in the economy. However, while the demands for higher education began growing during the 1990s, the public sector was still in a very poor condition and unresponsive to the growing need for a capable labor force (Pit & Ford, 2004). This was partly due to the continuous shortage of financial and skilled human resources in this field and the past legacies caused by many years of civil wars (Pit & Ford, 2004). Moreover, foreign financial support in this sub-sector was very limited and neglected, especially compared to basic general education (Duggan, 1997).
Even more problematic, the public higher education system in Cambodia in the 1990s was still following the centralized, elitist and competitive model of French education which allows only a limited number of students to enter universities (Pit & Ford, 2004). As a result of the limited capacity of the public institutions to offer higher education, the government introduced a new policy in the mid-1990s to allow for the participation of the private sector (Chet, 2006). In 1997, Norton University was officially inaugurated and became the first national for-profit private university in Cambodia to provide higher education (Sloper, 1999). Since then, the private sector has grown substantially. Chet (2006) stated that during the years 2002–2003 alone, there emerged 16 private higher education institutions. Currently, there are a total of 63 higher education institutions, with 45 private and 18 public (the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport [MoEYS], 2009).

Statement of Problem

While private higher education institutions have been increasing in numbers as well as absorbing more and more students, the establishment and growth of this sector in Cambodia remains new. Also, the increasing competition as well as the huge unmet demand for higher education have led to “the rapid expansion of the private sector into provincial centers”, which is a very new phenomenon in the history of modern higher education in Cambodia (Ford, 2006, p. 10). Because these private higher education institutions are profit-seeking, the majority of them are only offering courses with a high demand, the most common of which are related to Business Administration and Information Technology (Pit & Ford, 2004; MoEYS, 2009). According to Ford (2006),
some private universities have become very successful, at least at present, while others have gone or are likely to go bankrupt. Hence, the new existence of private sector higher education in Cambodia raises many questions concerning future success and quality.

While its new existence and role invoke growing concern among the public, the private sector keeps increasing the student enrolments year by year (Chet, 2006). This rising enrolment contributes to the continuous growth of the private sector in which the vast majority of private higher education institutions are for-profit, and thus, depend greatly on the students’ fee for their viability. But this growth has become a great issue, since the rate of annual unemployment for graduates is high, reaching almost 90 percent for first-year graduates (Ford, 2006). As pointed out by Ford (2006), “the mismatch between higher education provision and labor force demands has produced an oversupply of poorly trained graduates” (p. 11). This seems to be repeating what happened during the 1960s, when Cambodian higher education grew significantly, even though there was more and more unemployment among university graduates (Ayres, 2000a, discussed further in Chapter II). The current case of the rising unemployment for private sector graduates is even more serious because the cost of private higher education for students is great in a poor country as Cambodia. This has aroused my curiosity to explore students’ perceptions towards their investment in private sector higher education in Cambodia.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine how students view the private higher education sector in Cambodia. The study explores the critical factors influencing students’ decisions to pursue their study in the private sector and in choosing a particular
private higher education institution. It also assesses how they view the quality of private higher education based on their own experiences. The study is framed to answer the following four research questions:

1. What influences students’ decisions to pursue private higher education?
2. What influences students’ decisions to study at a particular private sector higher education institution?
3. How do students view their private sector higher educational experiences?
4. What are the implications of students’ perceptions for the future growth of the private higher education sector in Cambodia?

Significance of the Study

This research attempts to expand on the limited amount of literature presently available on higher education in Cambodia. Specifically, it contributes to the discussion of the critical factors that affect students’ decisions in choosing a private higher education institution as well as their perceptions of the quality of the private higher education sector. Given an understanding of students’ personal experiences of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in private higher education settings, the leaders of higher education institutions, public and private alike, would be better aware of their students’ needs and points of view as customers. Thus, they might respond by designing appropriate courses, programs, and services to meet students’ needs. Having such knowledge would also inform both those who want to enter and those who are already in the business of higher education of the possible threats and opportunities in the competitive environment of higher education in Cambodia.
The findings of this research will also allow policy makers in higher education to be better informed as well as aware of the new role of private sector higher education in Cambodia as seen through the lens of students’ perceptions. This should help them to formulate, implement and modify educational policy for the expansion of the higher education system at large, while hopefully avoiding past experiences with both development and destruction at the same time (See Chapter II). Above all, the findings would help contribute to the future growth, development and significance of private sector higher education in Cambodia.

Outline of the Study

This study has been framed in five chapters. Chapter I describes the background, statement of problem, study purpose and research questions, and the significance of study. Chapter II examines the historical development of higher education in Cambodia. It traces back to the traditional education system before French colonization and examines how the system has evolved until present. It ends with current issues affecting the development and growth of private sector higher education. Chapter III introduces the research design, the conceptual framework, the methods of data collection and analysis, and the limitation of the study. Chapter IV presents the findings and data analysis, using the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. Chapter V discusses each major research question and proposes recommendations to both public and private higher education institutions, the public at large, and to the ministry of education. Further research is also recommended.
CHAPTER II: DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

This chapter examines the historical development of higher education in Cambodia, beginning with traditional education in the 13th century and observing the evolution of the system up to the present time. Within this historical context one begins to see the rapid growth of private sector higher education as well as questions concerning its future quality and sustainability.

History of Higher Education in Cambodia

Studies of the history of Cambodian higher education normally take the French colonial period of 1863-1953 as its beginning (Ayres, 2000a; Hayden, 1967; Tully, 2005). However, to gain a thorough understanding of the matter, one needs to take a brief look at the role of traditional education in Cambodian society before the French and then see how the system has evolved over time.

Traditional Education during the Pre-colonial Period (Before 1863)

According to many scholars, including Ayres (2000a), Tully (2005) and Whitaker et al. (1973), the education system in the thirteenth century was monastic in style, and Buddhist monks played an indispensable role in transmitting knowledge. Monks taught Cambodian children, mainly boys, some carpentry skills along with how to read and write Khmer texts closely associated with the concepts of Buddhism and Cambodian culture. The vast majority of people during the pre-colonial period were illiterate, with pagodas the only place for education. As a consequence, Ayres (2000a) argued, “many Khmers learned the rich cultural heritage contained in the country’s proverbs, chhab (didactic poems), epics such as the Reamker (local version of the Ramayana story), and
the *Gatiloke* (folk tales) through word of mouth” (p. 13). In essence, the main purpose of education during the pre-colonial period was “to equip young men with the principles of life and society such as social conduct, moral ethics, as well as to achieve a certain degree of basic literacy” (Dy, 2004, p. 92). This period saw only a limited provision of general education, let alone higher education.

*French Colonization (1863-1953)*

The imposition of colonization by the French in 1863 was a turning point in the history of Cambodian education, mainly through the introduction of secular subjects. Like other colonial powers, the French took control of all aspects of Cambodia’s administration (Chandler, 2008; Tully, 2002). In the early 1900s, the French started to formalize, reform, and guide the pagoda schools with a European education style by bringing in such new subjects as arithmetic, history, and geography (Fergusson & Le Masson, 1997; Tully, 2002). By the 1920s, the French succeeded in introducing secular state schools in addition to the temple schools, and modernizing them with “curricular and teaching methods used in the Franco-Khmer state schools located in the capital Phnom Penh and provincial towns” (Gyallay-Pap, 1989, p. 258). This period saw some shift from pagoda education to secular education in the history of Cambodian education.

Access to secular education was exclusively restricted to the children of the French, the Cambodian elite, and other foreign officials working in Cambodia (Fergusson and Le Masson, 1997). Ayres (2000a) also points out that the French-style education per se did not function properly, and was thus viewed as less important among the ordinary
Cambodian people. Tully (2002) describes education during the colonial period as follows:

The schools suffered from poor teaching methods, lack of resources and funds, ignorant teachers and the reluctance of peasants to allow their children to attend classes when they could be of use in the fields. There was also a clash between the traditional values and beliefs of the monk-teachers, and the post-Enlightenment, European content of the new curriculum, which the monks often considered heretical. (p. 220)

In the same sense, Ayres (2000a) argues that the French purpose of modernizing Cambodian education was more to “engender indigenous loyalty” than to promote the development of Cambodia or its people (p. 26). Almost all peasant children continued to be educated in the pagodas (Ayres, 2000a; Fergusson & Le Masson, 1997).

The higher education germinating during the French colonial period was not widely available (Ayres, 2000a; Hayden, 1967; Tully, 2002). Lycee Sisowath, opened in 1935 as the country’s only secondary school, was the only place offering a limited form of higher education comparable to Western post-secondary trade schools or associate degrees until the establishment of the National Institute of Juridical, Political and Economic Sciences in 1949 (Ayres, 2000a; Hayden, 1967; Tully, 2002). In addition, a small elite group was able to study at French universities in France or Vietnam (Tully, 2002). A study by Clayton & Ngoy (1997) illustrates that the French government used higher education as a “sorting machine to select the best students from basic education for advanced education in order to equip the country with a large number of modern and
competent civil servants” (pp. 22-23). On this ground, scholars and most Cambodians normally thought of the graduates of French colonial higher education as “new men” or “Westernized Cambodians,” and it was believed that “through their educational interactions with the French, these Cambodians were fundamentally changed, discarding their traditional values and ideologies for those things [of the] French” (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997, p. 23). Hence, higher education during the French colonization was seen as just another avenue through which the French exploited Cambodia’s natural resources and its people.

Post-independence (1953-1979)

The development of higher education during the post-independence period has been viewed in three major divisions: Sihanouk’s regime (1953-1970), Lon Nol’s period (1970-1975), and the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979).

Sihanouk’s regime (1953-1970): As part of a movement for independence in Southeast Asia after the Second World War, Cambodia obtained independence in 1953. Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the postcolonial leader of Cambodia, saw formal education as a key vehicle for the modernization and development of Cambodia (Ayres, 2000b; Tully, 2005). Within his ideology of “Buddhist socialism”, a consolidation of “Buddhist notions of accumulating merit with loyalty to the monarchy and Marxist egalitarianism,” Sihanouk introduced a program of massive education expansion, constituting more than 20 % of annual national expenditure (Ayres, 2000b, p. 449). The new educational system witnessed substantive curricular reforms, and subjects related to France were replaced with Cambodian-related content covering culture, history, arts, etc. (Clayton, 2005).
As a result of this campaign, the number of primary and secondary schools increased dramatically throughout the country, as did the establishment of new universities (Chandler, 2008). The first such university, Buddhist University, was established in 1954, with the purpose of offering religious studies and Khmer language studies (Chhum, 1973). The Khmer Royal University (now the Royal University of Phnom Penh) followed in 1960 (Chhum, 1973). In 1965, six additional universities emerged: the Royal Technical University, the Royal University of Fine Arts, the Royal University of Kompong Cham, the Royal University of Takeo-Kampot, the Royal University of Agricultural Science, and the People University (Pit & Ford, 2004). The total student enrollment in higher education rose from 347 in 1953 to 10,800 in 1967 (Sloper, 1999), and signified a great achievement in the history of Cambodia’s higher education.

However, this growth did not last long. By the mid-1960s, Sihanouk’s regime began to be challenged by an emerging middle class. A small group of intellectuals embarked on public criticism of Sihanouk’s poor socio-economic management and left-wing political system (Ayres, 2000b; Chandler, 2008; Tully, 2005). They targeted Sihanouk’s regime for corruption and nepotism as unemployment rates increased. They also objected to the regime’s close alliance with Communist Vietnam (Ayres, 2000b; Chandler, 2008; Tully, 2005).

Scholars observed that the educational policy and practices under Sihanouk contained faults. While the previous educational system of rural pagodas was suited to an agrarian society such as Cambodia, the modern urban schools were not (Duggan, 1996).
Educational policies were highly bureaucratic and opportunities were largely restricted to the city and some provincial centers. It was hard for rural children to continue their studies, especially with higher education (Duggan, 1996).

Ayres (2000b) and Huon (1974) suggested that the educational policies in Cambodia of the 1950s and 1960s, like those in other developing countries, were a disaster. In response to the evolution of capitalism at that time, many developing countries, including Cambodia, adopted modernization and human resource development theories (Ayres, 2000b). This led to “discrepancies between promises and reality, between educational delivery and social needs, and between the rising costs of educational provision and the funds available to meet those costs” (Ayres, 2000b, p. 443).

In the case of Cambodia, an educational system with modern ideas and knowledge of capitalism was not only bewildering to Cambodian students, it did not work for an agrarian society (Ayres, 2000b; Huon, 1974). Such Western knowledge was too new and inappropriately applied for a Cambodian society in which the majority of people were still farmers. This, in turn, showed little return on the investment in education, as more and more graduates were unemployed due to an educational system removed from the reality of society.

Extensive use of foreign teaching staff in higher education also provoked conflicting ideologies in the educational system during Sihanouk’s regime (Chhum, 1973; Huon, 1974). While many universities had been established, especially after the mid-1960s, there were too few proficient local lecturers to handle the teaching responsibility (Chhum, 1973; Huon, 1974). Most universities had to employ foreign
lecturers, who brought different ways of teaching methods and curriculum development, not to mention different political viewpoints (Chhum, 1973; Huon, 1974).

**Lon Nol’s period (1970-1975):** The problems with higher education, along with other social and political issues, resulted in a movement to overthrow Sihanouk by the pro-American regime of Lon Nol in 1970. Like Sihanouk, Lon Nol saw education expansion as a key element to the success of Cambodia’s development (Ayres, 2000a). However, the ideologies of this new regime were considered too closely aligned with the Western concepts of republicanism, capitalism and democracy, in opposition to Sihanouk’s monarchy and socialism (Ayres, 2000a). The emergence of these political ideologies as well as civil wars throughout the country disrupted the education program between 1970 and 1975 (Ayres, 2000a; Chandler, 2008). War not only destroyed educational facilities, it also forced most foreign university lecturers to flee the country (Chhum, 1973). With too few qualified local lecturers, there was a severe shortage of teaching staff in most Cambodian universities. This resulted in both poor quality of education and incompetent university graduates.

**The Khmer Rouge (1975-1979):** A serious tragedy occurred in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979 when the Khmer Rouge took control and intentionally destroyed all existing social, economic, political and cultural infrastructures in the country (Chandler, 2008). Education was one of the sectors most affected in the new “Democratic Kampuchea”. The previous educational systems of Sihanouk and Lon Nol were condemned. The high unemployment rate among university graduates was used as evidence of their failure (Clayton, 1998). Criticizing the educational systems of both
Sihanouk and Lon Nol as Western ideologies, the Khmer Rouge demolished schools, burned educational materials and killed almost all educated people (Chandler, 2008; Clayton, 1998; Sloper, 1999). Estimates are that between 80 and 90% of teachers, including university professors, were killed during the regime (Clayton, 1998). The Khmer Rouge were trying to eliminate all past ideas and values so as to introduce a new educational system based on Pol Pot’s concept of “socialism without a model” (Ayres, 1999, p. 209). Clayton (2005) points out that:

Theoretically, education in Democratic Kampuchea included three years of half-time elementary education, a similar amount of secondary schooling, and some university studies; while attendance in formal education varied widely for children and young people around the country (and probably did not exist at all for many), political education was widespread among adults. (p. 508)

Clayton (2005) went on to suggest that education during the Khmer Rouge era served two major goals. One goal was to instill the political ideology of socialism among Cambodian students. For example, children were taught revolutionary songs about “the glories of Kampuchean socialism as well as the threat posed by Vietnam” (Ayres, 2000a, p. 113). The other goal was to help make Cambodia a complete agrarian society. The Khmer Rouge put every citizen, including students, to work in the fields with the rationale that this educational system fit an agrarian society.

In sum, between 1970 and 1979, Cambodia experienced civil wars, foreign intervention, and revolution by the Khmer Rouge. As a consequence, the previous almost
20-year expansion of all levels of education, including higher education, was totally destroyed in the space of a decade.

**Vietnam occupation (1979-1989)**

After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, Cambodia entered a new era, commonly known to Westerners as the “time of Vietnamese occupation.” Because of the massive devastation of materials and human resources caused by the Khmer Rouge and lack of international recognition, the new regime was totally dependent for survival on assistance from Vietnam and Eastern-bloc countries, mainly the Soviet Union (Chandler, 2008). These countries provided Cambodia with both teaching and learning materials as well as training assistance at all levels, including higher education (Ayres, 2003).

Over the course of the Vietnamese occupation, education served two main purposes: “good technical training and good political training” (Clayton, 2005, p. 510). Courses included, but were not limited to, “Marxist-Leninist Theories, World Revolutionary History and the History of the Cambodian Revolution, The Situation and the Role of the Revolution and the Policy of the Party, Moral Education and the Revolutionary Way of Life, and Attitude to the Common People” (Clayton, 2005, p. 511). Overall, higher education was stifled between 1979 -1989.

When the Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia in 1989, Cambodia’s higher education again entered a difficult period as assistance from Vietnam and the Soviet Union was cut off (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). But, due to Cambodia’s political and economic liberalization in the early 1990s, foreign aid from Western countries started
pouring into the country, first through non-governmental organizations and then directly from donor countries, as well (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). This significantly helped the restoration and growth of the higher education sector in Cambodia. But, Western ideologies once again permeated the study programs in higher education (Pit & Ford, 2004).

Modern Higher Education in Cambodia (1989 – the present)

The historical role of education in Cambodian society has always been linked to ideologies which differed with each era. In this sense, Ayres (2000) observed that, “formal education has [so far] served a dual role: making Cambodia look modern and at the same time sustaining the key tenets of the traditional polity, where leadership is associated with power and where the nature of the state is perceived to be a function of that power” (p. 3). The consequence of such practice has always been two-faced, simultaneously causing both development and destruction.

Given this historical context, the process of revitalization, development and reform of Cambodia’s higher education system since the 1990s has experienced many challenges. One of the major problems during the early 1990s was the lack of financial resources and capable human capital in all fields, the legacies of many years of raging civil wars (Pit & Ford, 2004). The various institutional models in the system, such as the French, the Soviet and the Vietnamese educational models, with their conflicting political ideologies, also had an effect on everything in higher education, at both the institutional and the ministerial levels (Clayton, 2006). In addition, the transition from a command economy to a market economy and to a different political perspective in the late 1980s
and early 1990s has induced greater demands for a qualified labor force. Thus, the challenges to the development of higher education in Cambodia magnified (Ahrens & Kemmerer, 2002; Sloper, 1999).

**Development and Challenges during Transition Period**

The early 1990s was a transition period in the chronology of Cambodian modern higher education. With great support from both local and international communities, the Cambodian government began to emphasize the need for higher education reform in academic programs, faculty and staff development, as well as with financial and managerial structures, in order to produce a skilled labor force for an open market economy (Ahrens & Kemmerer, 2002; Chet, 2006; Sloper, 1999). This led to the creation of the National Higher Education Action Plan (NHEAP) in 1995 with four main goals: “improvement in the quality of instruction, provision of relevance in academic programs, promotion of efficiency in operations, and development of effectiveness in institutional management” (Sloper, p. 279). This educational reform, along with the market economy, caused higher education enrolment to soar from 2,357 in 1985 to 13,465 in 1996 (Minxuan, 1998).

The government tried to avoid the international ideological influence in higher education which had been repeated so often in the history of Cambodian education (Clayton, 2006). This was clearly seen in the National Seminar on Higher Education (NHEAP) held in Phnom Penh in 1995, when the government reaffirmed its control over higher education (Sloper, 1999). In essence, among the six major themes identified in the NHEAP, the Khmer language was proposed as the medium of instruction, with the use of
both English and French for additional access to documents in these languages (Sloper, 1999). Still, the need for foreign financial and technical support kept Cambodia’s higher education somewhat vulnerable to international influence, namely Western ideologies (Pit & Ford, 2004; Clayton, 2006). For instance, the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Higher Technical Institute, (later renamed the Institute of Technology of Cambodia), turned to French as the medium of instruction in 1992 when the French government began to provide full financial support (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997).

Emergence of Private Higher Education Institutions

Even though significant progress and reform had been made since the early 1990s in the educational sector, Cambodia’s higher education during the 1990s was still in very poor condition and unresponsive to the growing need for a capable labor force (Pit & Ford, 2003). This was partly due to the incessant shortage of financial and skilled human resources in this field, and legacies of the past (Pit & Ford, 2004). Moreover, even though higher education was viewed as the key to human resource development in the economy, foreign financial support in this sub-sector was limited, compared to basic general education (Duggan, 1997). Even more problematic, the public higher education system in Cambodia in the 1990s was still following the centralized, elitist and competitive model of French education, which allows only a limited number of students to enter universities (Pit & Ford). By the mid-1990s the government introduced a new policy to allow for participation of the private sector in providing education (Chet, 2006; Sloper, 1999).

In 1997, Norton University was the first national private university in Cambodia to provide education with affordable prices (Sloper, 1999). Since then, the private sector
has mushroomed. During 2002–2003, 16 higher private institutions emerged, and by 2003-2004 the total student enrolment in higher education was 45,000 and 40% was in the private sector (Chet, 2009). Currently, there are a total of 63 higher education institutions, 45 private and 18 public in Cambodia (the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport [MoEYS], 2009). An unpublished report by the ministry of education indicated that in 2008-2009 academic year there were more than 131,000 undergraduate students (bachelor degree level only) in higher education system (MoEYS, 2009).

Several factors have been cited for the rapid growth of the private higher education sector over this short period of time. First, insufficient salaries in the public sector have driven more and more government teaching staff to private institutions which offer higher pay (Pit and Ford, 2004). Second, conflicting ideologies between young and old Cambodian scholars have spurred growth in the private sector. According to Pit and Ford (2004):

Young newly qualified lecturers returning to public institutions from egalitarian Western countries have not always been welcomed by their older, less qualified colleagues in Cambodia’s traditional hierarchical society. Some have sought employment elsewhere and contributed to the emergence of the private sector. (p. 345)

Third, the role of private higher education institutions in producing human capital was viewed as more crucial after Cambodia became a member of ASEAN in 1999 and the WTO in 2004. These memberships highlighted the nation’s need for a skilled labor force to remain competitive in the region and the world (Chet, 2006).
Current Problems and Issues

Scholars and the public have now begun to voice concern over the rapid, yet unregulated, growth of the private sector. Pit and Ford (2004) showed that most private higher education institutions have been commercially operated with courses which “require only little capital investment at the expense of fields that are vital for expansion and economic growth (e.g. science, technology, and in particular postgraduate research)” (p. 356). In 2006-2007, more than 40% of bachelor degree students were in business programs (MoEYS, 2009). But, there has been little foreign investment in Cambodia that could generate jobs related to courses such as management or information technology being widely offered by most private universities (Pit, and Ford, 2004).

Chet (2006) argues that because the private sector focuses mainly on short-term needs of market forces and without sufficient quality, this will diminish the whole system of higher education. In his article “Cambodian Higher Education – Growing Pains”, Ford (2006) also points out that one of the biggest consequences of deregulation and focus on short-term commercial courses could be the high unemployment rate among university graduates, especially from the private sector. He states:

Accurate figures are notoriously difficult to obtain in Cambodia, but estimates at present put unemployment among graduates from public universities, one year after graduating, at about 30 percent and as high as 90 percent from the private universities, in spite of the relatively small proportion of students in higher education. Many graduates only get employment in fields unrelated to their study,
indicating a mismatch between higher education provision and labor force needs. (p. 10)

At this point the role of the private higher education sector in Cambodia is unclear. While the government agency had played a significant role in policy development and program accreditation for both the private and the public sectors, there were no clear and standardized mechanisms to supervise the quality of higher education institutions in either sector until the establishment of the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) in 2003 (Ford, 2003; Woodd, 2004).

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the historical development of higher education in Cambodia by looking at the traditional education back to the 13th century and examining how the system has evolved. Throughout the discussion, higher education at both institution and ministry levels has affected by the country’s traumatic history, different political ideologies, social and cultural issues, and various institutional influences. With massive destruction, during the Khmer Rouge regime, the subsequent development of Cambodia's higher education experienced many challenges. Complicating the situation is the current privatization and expansion of higher education without clearly regulated mechanisms. The growing annual high unemployment rate, mainly among graduates from the private higher education sector, has greatly increased concern for the future quality and sustainability of higher education in Cambodia.
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design, research questions, and overall conceptual framework for the study. It also describes its methods of data collection and analysis, research ethics and study limitations.

Research Design

The design of this study largely follows qualitative research methodology. Creswell (2005) describes a qualitative method as “a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner” (p. 56). Merriam (1998) asserts that in qualitative research, “the researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed” (p. 6). Further, the researcher normally employs an inductive strategy to analyze data (Merriam, 1998). The major goal of qualitative research is to “understand a phenomenon by focusing on the total picture rather than breaking it down into variables” and to see “a holistic picture and depth of understanding, rather than a numeric analysis of data” (Ary, et al. 2009, p. 29).

With all the characteristics above, the qualitative research method was most suited for a study that sought to explore the new role of the private higher education sector within the Cambodian context, as seen through students’ eyes and without any predetermined theories or hypotheses. The study focused on the reasons why increasing numbers of students were coming to the private higher education sector and how they
viewed their experiences there. Surveys with mostly open-ended questions were used, as well as in-depth interviews with some participants from the surveys at each university.

With its emphasis on the context-bond, holistic and inductive approach of theory generation, the qualitative method seeks to understand a phenomenon by identifying and categorizing key elements of that phenomenon that emerge from data, rather than to verify theory or just to describe data (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). Hence, this method is very different from the quantitative approach in which theories cannot be derived from data, but emerge from the researcher’s assumptions or hypotheses. In this study, quantitative analysis, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program, was limited to describing study demographics and students’ perceptions about the private sector higher education in Cambodia in a larger population.

Conceptual Framework

The core purpose of the study is to explore students’ perceptions of the private higher education sector in Cambodia. Specifically, it investigates the factors influencing the students’ decisions to enroll in the private sector and choose to study at a particular private university. The study also explores how each private higher education institution creates its strategies to compete for students by trying to satisfy their wants and needs. Hence, the underlying conceptual framework for the study is based on the concept of the marketing mix in higher education, in particular on what Kotler and Fox (1985) have described as a 4 Ps matrix of product, place, price and promotion. This study will limit the examination of the marketing mix specifically to students’ perceptions using the
intersection of product, place, price, and promotion (Kotler and Fox, 1985). The use of this framework in the study is to assist in organizing the data and the analysis.

4 Ps Matrix of the Marketing Mix in Higher Education

The term marketing was originally applied in the business sector, commonly associated with the main concept of buying, selling, advertising and the like (Krachenberg, 1972). However, the marketing concept has evolved and become widely used in all kinds of organizations (Kotler, 1972). Likewise, Gibbs and Knapp (2000) define marketing in a broader sense as “a social and managerial process through which institutions and individuals obtain what they want through creating, offering and exchanging products and services with others” (p. 5). These marketing activities and strategies are commonly conceptualized as a marketing mix (Kotler, 1972; Gibbs & Knapp, 2000).

The concept of a marketing mix in education is not new and, consciously or not, has been broadly utilized by many higher education institutions in order to improve the quality of education as well as to achieve institutional goals (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Its role is highly significant in Cambodia today, because each higher educational institution needs to compete for students, nationally and internationally, through various methods and strategies (Driscoll & Wicks, 1999; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). The fact that the vast majority of private higher education institutions in Cambodia are for-profit, commercial institutions further indicates the significance of the application of the marketing mix concept in the private higher education sector.
Product: Kotler and Fox (1985) have defined the product of higher education as both tangible and intangible, asserting that, “a product is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need” (p. 221). Likewise, Lauer (2002) characterizes the product of higher education as the various activities, programs, and services offered by an institution, including, but not limited to, the curriculum, the academic programs, classes, people, library, athletic facilities, counseling, new-student orientation, placement service, career counseling, and health services. Moreover, the packaging of the product, such as good service, clean rooms, carpeting, etc., helps enhance the quality and image of the product of a particular institution (Gibbs & Knapp, 2000; Kotler & Fox, 1985).

Kotler and Fox (1985) mention other intangible products produced by the university, including friendship among students, or feelings of pride in or belonging to the university. The experience of the learning process during their stay is also considered an intangible product (Kotler and Fox, 1985). Lauer (2002) has claimed that, “in the world of service marketing, the product actually exists in the prospect’s mind,” (p. 20) and thus, all elements of the product work together to complement the overall image of the product in the customers’ mind.

Price: Price, as a component of the marketing mix, mainly refers to tuition fees, and scholarships (Kotler & Fox, 1985). It also refers to various other forms of financial aid, including “grants, subsidized loans, unsubsidized (market rate) loans, tuition remission, and work study wages” (Heller, 1997, pp. 631-632). Moreover, price may be described as any kind of expense during a school stay such as rent for apartments, the
costs of transportation between school and home, bank interest on loans, income taxes and other miscellaneous expenses (Kotler & Fox, 1985).

**Place:** Place is mainly associated with distribution, which refers to making the available programs accessible to the target customer (Kotler & Fox, 1985; Lauer, 2002). This can be achieved in many ways, such as sitting the programs closer to the market (class location), as well as offering different schedules of the program (class timetables) so that potential customers have more options and are thus able to access the courses they need. This could mean, for instance, making courses available in the afternoon or evening, during lunch hours, on weekends or during the summer (Kotler & Fox, 1985). Place also includes the surrounding environment: Is it safe and pleasant, or boring and isolated? (Lauer, 2002). In addition, as a part of place Kotler and Fox (1995) include a delivery or distribution system, which covers teaching methods/styles (lectures, individual study, or sessions with tutoring), teacher assistance, and class size.

**Promotion:** As another major component of the marking mix, promotion has been described as “the range of activities that stimulate interest in a service” (Rudd & Mills, 2008, p. 47). In the same sense, Lauer (2002) and Kotler and Fox (1985) describe promotion as various communicative strategies, formal and informal alike, which institutions employ to inform their markets and publics of their educational service. Most educators use simple and common means, including “catalogs and bulletins describing their institution and its programs” (Kotler, & Fox, 1985). These days, more and more institutions are turning to advertising on the web, in newspapers, on TV and radio, and at
other public places (Gibbs & Knapp, 2000). Ivy (2008) includes other promotional tools including open days, international higher education exhibitions, and conventions.

**Criticisms:** This concept of a marketing mix of 4 Ps has evolved and been challenged over time. In their study about service marketing, Young et al. (2002) have extended the marketing mix for the service industry, including education, with three additional factors: people [staff], physical evidence and process. They believe that bringing out these three additional Ps would allow service providers to better communicate with customers and meet their needs (Young et al.). Similarly, in his study about the new marketing mix of MBA programs, Ivy (2008) discusses these three Ps with a slightly different use of the term *physical facilities*, instead of *physical evidence*. Still, he refers to the same concept and supports Young et al. on the fact that educational service is both tangible and intangible, thus identifying more aspects of the marketing mix to be of great importance for service industries (Ivy). However, since the main purpose of this study is to use this concept only to help frame the analysis of the qualitative data, Kotler and Fox’s (1985) concept of the market mix of 4 Ps is most appropriate.

**Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The purpose of using the conceptual framework of the 4 Ps matrix is to help frame the analysis of the students’ perceptions about the role of the private higher education sector in Cambodia, mainly through their own experience. This framework is shown in Figure 3.1. For this study, product covers programs of study, curricula, professors, facilities, image and reputation, brand name, quality of education, degree,
health services etc. (Kotler & Fox, 1985; Lauer, 2002; Gibbs & Knapp, 2000). It also includes entry requirements, packaging, and personal experience (Kotler & Fox, 1985). Price primarily includes tuition fees, scholarships and other miscellaneous expenses incurred during school attendance (Kotler & Fox, 1985). Place in this study refers mainly to the location of the university, the school environment, branches, class size (teacher-student ratio), and different class schedules (Kotler & Fox, 1985; Lauer, 2002). Promotion is limited here to advertising in various forms, including on TV and radio, and in public places (Gibbs & Knapp, 2000; Lauer, 2002; Kotler & Fox, 1995). It also covers families or relatives (Kotler & Fox, 1985)

![Figure 3.1. The Conceptual Framework of Four Ps matrix of Product, Place, Price and Promotion](image)

Data Collection

Data was collected at three private universities in Cambodia’s capital city, Phnom Penh, for seven weeks from June 22 to August 7, 2009. There were two steps in data collection: surveys and interviews, each of which was supplemented by observations. Using generic sampling, the surveys and interviews targeted students from year one to
year four in two major programs: Business Administration (BA) and Information Technology (IT). The major reason for selecting these two programs was due to their current popularity among students (Ford, 2006).

Sample Universities and Target Population

In accordance with the Institutional Review Board or IRB (Appendix A), and to ensure privacy and anonymity, the three participating universities are referred to as University A, University B and University C. Two reasons underlie the researcher's decision to choose these particular private universities for the study. First, they are the accredited universities, and have been in the business of higher education in Cambodia for several years. This is aligned with the method of generic sampling, since the study looks at the students in the same programs from year one to year four. Second, available networking with these three private universities helped the researcher to gain entry to conduct the study. Without such a connection, it would have been difficult to complete the research. For example, the researcher was told by a staff member at University A that he was the first student allowed to conduct research there. Through such networks, the researcher sent a formal letter from the Southeast Asian Studies program at Ohio University to seek each university’s permission (Appendix B).

Pilot Study

Before the actual surveys, a pilot study was conducted randomly with six students at University A. The researcher learned from the pilot that most students could not finish the survey in 30 minutes and seemed overwhelmed by the large number of open-ended questions. Thus, the researcher decided to drop from the survey a set of questions about
students’ recommendations for the future growth and development of the private sector in Cambodia. However, these questions were still used in the interviews.

Formality was also important. Even though the researcher tried to explain the surveys’ purpose to the students, there still was doubt about his identity as well as the underlying purpose of the study. Some participants tried to finish the surveys as quickly as possible, without thinking thoroughly about the questionnaire, skipping many open-ended questions, and handing it back to the researcher. Also, most of them kept glancing curiously at the researcher while filling in the questionnaires. The researcher was sure that without school permission and their representative to help with the study, it would have been difficult to collect the data.

Final Surveys

Surveys consisting of open-ended questions (Appendix C) were first administered to students from year one to year four in each program. Participants were selected on a random and volunteer basis. Technically planned, it took between 20 and 30 minutes for students to complete the questionnaires. At University A, the school assigned one person to help facilitate the surveys with a very clear schedule. He arranged the classes that would be used for the surveys and obtained the teachers’ permission asking for the final 30 minutes of the class period, normally 90 minutes long.

At universities B and C the researcher did not have a chance to meet with students for the surveys. All the questionnaires were given to the dean of the graduate programs and were then distributed to the individual instructors in the programs of Business Administration and Information Technology to pass out to their respective classes.
However, there were not many students in the Information Technology program at University C. Surveys and interviews with a few students in this program were done later.

*Final Interviews*

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to supplement the survey findings. Students were randomly selected from the participants who took the surveys. As planned, the study tried to interview at least six students at each of the three universities, with a minimum of three students from different years within each program. The researcher had the option to contact the participants by either email or telephone from information listed on the surveys, but chose to arrange interviews by telephone because it was faster and more convenient. The researcher was able to complete 15 of 18 attempted interviews; the remaining three did not show up for scheduled interviews.

To facilitate a comfortable relationship with the interviewees, the researcher normally began with general questions such as what they were studying, where they lived, or discussed weather or traffic as a starting point. In exploring the students’ experience in the private higher education sector, the researcher used the questions with broad themes so the participants could express their experiences in their own terms. Some additional, probing questions were used during the interview process.

Interviews were conducted both in focus groups and individually for several reasons. It is difficult to set an appointment that works for students across different school levels as well as different programs. Some students were uncomfortable with participating in a group setting. Actually, getting any students for interviews was difficult because most of them had never been interviewed before and did not really want to
participate. The researcher had to take time to explain the procedure and convince them to do interviews. As a result, the researcher sometimes did two or three interviews on the same day at a university or sometimes at two different universities, interviewing at one university in the morning and at the other in the afternoon. Fortunately, the three universities were not far apart.

The interviews normally ranged from 20 minutes for individuals to 40 minutes for a focus group. They were documented with notes and digitally recorded with the advance permission from the participants. The researcher began the interviews with some students at University A, and then University B, with University C last. Each participant was given a notebook and pen at the end of the interview session as a thank-you for their kind involvement in the study. The participants were asked to keep in touch, in case the researcher required more information or clarifications in the future.

Data Analysis

This study utilized a constant comparative method of qualitative analysis for the surveys and the interviews. According to Creswell (1998), the constant comparative method is the “process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories” (p. 57). Likewise, Merriam (1998) asserts that by repeatedly comparing and integrating these categories within the triangulation of data, researchers are able to generate themes and theories. Seal (1999) also argues for the use of the constant comparative method in grounded theory, due to the fact that “it is a rigorous strategy for producing thoroughly saturated theoretical accounts” (p. 96).
Data from the surveys was first coded into appropriate categories with the 4 Ps matrix of product, price, place and promotion. The SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program was used for basic descriptive statistics to clarify the samples. It was also employed to help identify the patterns of the findings in a larger population. After initial analysis of the results from the surveys, the digitally recorded data from in-depth interviews were transcribed as were the interview notes. Coding was then done in the same manner as survey data. From the triangulation of data, comparisons were repeatedly made to find the emerging themes or concepts in relation to students’ perceptions of the quality of private higher education sector in Cambodia.

Research Ethics

Since this study dealt with human subjects, the researcher followed all the regulations applied by the Ohio University Institutional Review Board (IRB) in order to ensure compliance with the codes of conduct in the research (Appendix A). First, the researcher applied for and received IRB approval, with all research requirements fulfilled. During all surveys and interviews at each university, the researcher brought this approval letter with him. Furthermore, permission was sought from all participants before either the surveys or interviews. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. They could also choose not to answer any particular question with which they felt uncomfortable.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by a number of factors. First, it was conducted at two large-sized and one medium-sized accredited private universities in Cambodia. In
particular, it targeted only students in two major programs of study: Business Administration and Information Technology. The findings might be different or offer more insights about the role of the private sector, if the study had included students in other programs as well as in public sector higher education. It would also have been interesting to include students who had already graduated and those who had just finished high school but not yet entered the private sector. It would also be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study with the same sample to see how they view the private higher education upon their graduation.

Second, access to the studied universities was limited. The researcher had little or no access to other information related to the total population of students in each program as well as the instructors working there. This was partly due to the privacy of their business. In order to expand the study, the researcher would have had to work with the administration of each private university. This would have been a difficult, bureaucratic nightmare, complicated and time-consuming.

The sample selection at each university might also have affected the findings of the study. At University A the researcher was provided a set schedule for specific classes for the study. At the other two universities, however, the deans of the graduate programs distributed all the questionnaires to the instructors to pass on to their respective classes. The researcher did not meet with the participants during the survey process, only later interviewed a few of them.
Given these limitations, other researchers and scholars reading this study need to be cautious and beware of making generalizations from it. However, findings do provide the groundwork for further study about the private higher education sector in Cambodia.

Summary

This chapter introduced the research design of the study which utilized a qualitative research methodology. As part of the data collection and analysis, the study employed the conceptual framework of the marketing mix and the 4 P matrix pertaining to product, place, price and promotion. The purpose of using this conceptual framework was to facilitate the analysis of the findings both from surveys and from interviews, rather than to test any preliminary assumptions or hypotheses. Limitations of the study include sample selection, access to other information at each university, and researcher’s interaction with students in some sampling universities. Hence, scholars and researchers have to be cautious about generalizing the findings. However, the study does highlight the significance of understanding students’ experiences as implications for the future growth of the private higher education sector in Cambodia.
CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of data both from surveys and from interviews. It begins with the presentation of the demographics of the sample. Then, it goes further to analyze the data. It is worth noting that the study approaches the analysis by looking at each university as a whole, rather than breaking them down into different programs or different years of study. This is due to the fact that, according to initial analyses, there is little difference between the Business Administration and the Information Technology programs within each university. As also stated earlier, the major purpose in choosing these two major academic programs is for the convenience of generic sampling, rather than to test the programs themselves. The details of each program can be found in the Appendix.

Demographics of the Participants

This section outlines the demographic characteristics of the study sample, including number, gender, age group, location of high school, and attendance at two higher education institutions. The answers come from questions one to five on the questionnaire. As stated earlier, the researcher employed a random sampling method both in surveys and in interviews. All returned questionnaires were used for data analysis, although some participants did not answer certain questions.

Number of Participants

Of out 303 questionnaires handed out, 234 (77%) were received from the three private universities. Although the study was planned to have 120 participants from each university, almost half (105=45%) of the participants were from University A, with 45
(19%) and 84 (36%) from University B and University C respectively (As demonstrated in Figure 4.1 below). The breakdown of the number of participants in each program as well as in different years can be found in Table A in Appendix D.

![Figure 4.1. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Sample in Both Programs at the Three Private Universities.](image)

**Gender**

The study had no preliminary plan for the selection of the number of male and female participants. The following table illustrates the breakdown of gender at the three private universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
<th>Three Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>73 (69.5%)</td>
<td>20 (44.4%)</td>
<td>46 (54.8%)</td>
<td>139 (59.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32 (30.5%)</td>
<td>25 (55.6%)</td>
<td>37 (44%)</td>
<td>94 (40.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped Question</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
<td>234 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 indicates that at University A male participants (73) were almost twice the number of female participants (32). While there was an equal number of male and female participants within the Business Administration program at the university (30 males/30 females), female participants within the Information Technology program (2) were greatly outnumbered by male participants (43). In contrast, there is little difference between the number of male and female participants at University B (20 males/25 females) and University C (46 males/37 females). One participant at University C did not answer the question. (Table B in Appendix D illustrates the male/female breakdown in each program at the three private universities.).

**Age Group**

Table 4.2 below demonstrates the different age groups of participants at the three private universities. According to the table, the majority of respondents in the study were between the ages of 20-25, with 83.8% at University A, 73.3% at University B and 76.2% at University C. Some participants were below the age of 20 and others were between 26 and 30. Very few participants were older than 30. At least one participant at each university skipped the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
<th>Three Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 20</td>
<td>9 (8.65)</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
<td>11 (13.1%)</td>
<td>29 (12.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>88 (83.8%)</td>
<td>33 (73.3%)</td>
<td>64 (76.2%)</td>
<td>185 (79.10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>7 (6.7%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>14 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 30</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (3.6%)</td>
<td>3 (1.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped Question</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
<td>3 (1.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
<td>234 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Location of High School

Although all three private universities are located in the Cambodian capital city, Phnom Penh, Table 4.3 below demonstrates that almost two thirds of the participants at University A graduated from provincial high school. In contrast, only 20% of the participants at University B and one third at University C finished the high school in provinces. One participant at University C did not answer the question.

Table 4.3. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Sample at the Three Universities by Their Locations of High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of high school</th>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
<th>Three Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>38 (36.2%)</td>
<td>36 (80%)</td>
<td>55 (65.5%)</td>
<td>129 (55.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>67 (63.8%)</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
<td>28 (33.3%)</td>
<td>104 (44.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped Question</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
<td>234 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendance of Two Higher Education Institutions

As seen in Table 4.4 below, more than half of the total participants at each university attended two higher education institutions either simultaneously or at different times (43.8% at University A, 35% at University B, 46.4% at University C).

Interestingly, at University A and University C there is little difference between the number of students attending two higher education institutions and those studying only at their own institution. In contrast, more than half of the respondents at University B were studying only there. The table also illustrates that 24.8% of the participants at University A, 8.9% at University B, and 9.5% did not answer the question. It is worth noting that the
The study did not go into detail of whether they were attending/attended either two universities in the private sector or one in the private sector and the other in the public sector.

Table 4.4. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Sample at the Three Private Universities by Their Attendance at Two Higher Education Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance at Two Higher Education Institutions</th>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
<th>Three Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46 (43.8%)</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>39 (46.4%)</td>
<td>101 (43.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33 (31.4%)</td>
<td>25 (55.6%)</td>
<td>37 (44%)</td>
<td>95 (40.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped Questions</td>
<td>26 (24.8%)</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>8 (9.5%)</td>
<td>38 (16.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
<td>234 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutional and Subject Anonymity

Following the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the study did not use the real names of the three private universities or study participants in order to maintain their confidentiality as well as anonymity. Pseudonyms used to refer to each interviewee are listed in Table C in Appendix D. Out of 18 attempted interviews in the study, the researcher was able to complete 15; the rest never showed up for the arranged interviews.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data collected from surveys and interviews (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 1998). Coding was completed, and numerous core categories were identified and then framed under the marketing concept of the 4 Ps matrix of product, place, price and promotion (Kotler & Forx, 1985). These
categorizations were examined to identify common key themes or concepts in relation to the private higher education sector in Cambodia. Specifically, these themes were generated to explore the major research questions: (1) What influences students’ decisions to pursue private higher education? (2) What influences students’ decisions to study at a particular private sector higher education institution? (3) How do students view their private sector higher educational experiences?

Core Categories

Table 4.5 below describes the common core categories within the 4Ps of product, place, price and promotion in alphabetical order. It is notable that among the 4 Ps elements, promotion-related categories were not commonly mentioned by respondents in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Ps</th>
<th>Core categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Product** | A. Academic Programs  
C. Entry Requirements  
C. Faculty  
D. Library Resources  
E. Quality of Education  
F. School Policies  
G. Others (School Facilities, Administrative Services and Staff, Clean/dirty Classroom/bathroom, Reputation, Degree Recognition, workshops, etc.) |
| **Price** | A. Scholarships  
B. Tuition Fees  
C. Miscellaneous Expenses (food, car fee,) |
| **Place** | A. Class Schedules  
B. Class Size  
C. Location  
D. School Environment |
| **Promotion** | A. Advertisements  
B. Family |
Key Themes

Through the triangulation of data across the three private universities, nine common themes emerged in relation to students’ perceptions toward the private higher education sector in Cambodia: (1) quality of faculty, (2) extensive use of English, (3) reasonable and affordable tuition fees, (4) various class schedules, (5) easier and fewer entry requirements, (6) rich library resources, (7) family/relative influence, (8) weak school policies toward student behavior, and (9) limited degree recognition.

Themes one to seven emerged from the answers to three survey questions:

Question 6. Why did you decide to come and study at a private, not public university?

Question 9. Why did you choose University A, B or C? And Question 10. As a student at University A, B or C, what do you like most about it so far? Theme eight emerged from answers to Question 11. As a student at University A, B or C, what do you dislike most about this university so far? Theme nine arose during the interviews, rather than the surveys, especially when students gave general comments about the private higher education sector.

The following table shows the frequency and percentage of the categories specifically in relation to the nine core themes from the four research questions on the questionnaire. It should be noted that besides these nine common themes, other factors were described by students in the surveys. These details are found in Appendixes G, H, I, and J. However, those categories were either too broad or too narrow to be regarded as core themes.
Table 4.6. Percentages of Responses within Categories to the Three Defining Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q6. Why did you decide to study at a private, not public university?</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>University A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier and fewer entry requirements</td>
<td>17 (16.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-based academic programs</td>
<td>------*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>14 (13.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich library resources</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition fees</td>
<td>12 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various class schedules</td>
<td>11 (10.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q9. Why did you choose University A, B or C?</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>University A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier and fewer entry requirements</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-based academic programs</td>
<td>------*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>32 (30.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/relative influence</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich library resources</td>
<td>4 (3.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition fees</td>
<td>21 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various class schedules</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q10. As a student at University A, B or C, what do you like most about it so far?</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>University A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier and fewer entry requirements</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-based academic programs</td>
<td>------*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>59 (56.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich library resources</td>
<td>11 (10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition fees</td>
<td>5 (4.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various class schedules</td>
<td>------*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11. As a student at University A, B or C, what do you dislike most about it so far?</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>University A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak school policies</td>
<td>49 (46.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Participants did not mention the point
Quality of faculty: The quality of faculty in the private sector was highlighted throughout the three universities. Participants cited faculty quality when they chose the private higher education sector, chose a particular university within that sector and then during their stay in the sector, as shown in Table 4.6. During the interviews, all 15 participants mentioned faculty quality, though not always for the same or similar points. Among their answers, four common quality characteristics were identified – reputation, experience either in teaching or in their field of expertise, high degrees from abroad, and English proficiency. The following student comments exemplify these characteristics:

“At my university, many teachers are famous and work at different government ministries; some also teach at a public university.” (Roatha, University A)

“Many professors here have years of professional experience… They are very good at teaching. Their explanations are very clear and easy for all students to understand, not just the bright ones in the class.” (Virak, University B)

“Most teachers here hold at least a master’s degree from abroad and are very good at teaching. They speak English very well, and teach in English, too.” (Seyha, University C).

A large number of participants across the three universities cited two common quality characteristics of faculty: professional experience and reputation. However, high degrees from abroad and English as indicators of quality were only identified by respondents in universities B and C. None of the participants at University A referred to these factors as a quality of teaching staff at that institution. Instead, a few students at this
university asserted that there were some foreigners who taught the English language but not skills.

**Extensive use of English in the private sector:** This theme emerged out of three product-related categories at University B and University C: Academic programs, faculty and library resources. Among the three categories, the extensive use of English in academic programs as a benefit of the private sector was the most appealing factor cited by a number of survey respondents at both universities, as indicated in Table 4.6. All four interviewees at University B and five at University C mentioned this aspect again and further explained it. To quote from one student at University B:

*The programs at University B focus on English. Before students can start their major and specialization, they have to go through the General English program to improve their language proficiency. This is due to the fact that when starting the programs, students will learn the basic in English. (Panha, University B)*

Interviewee Sokha similarly emphasized that a large number of students at University C were required to enroll in the general English programs based on the results of their placement tests.

*Both the researcher’s personal observations and students’ answers, through surveys and interviews, show that these two universities require students to take a placement test assessing their language proficiency before they can begin their fields of study. English proficiency is important because teaching, students’ assignments, and other class activities were all conducted in English. Some respondents at University B*
and University C answered in English, although the questionnaire and interviews were conducted in Khmer.

Under the category of library resources, some students at these two universities underlined the availability of learning materials, especially textbooks, in English. One interviewee at University C said that, “The school has a large library with a lot of books in English. This is conducive to studying and doing research.” (Sokha, University C). Other interviewees at universities B and C agreed. But, none of the participants at University A mentioned English language as an advantage at their university. One interviewee did complain that academic programs there were in Khmer, rather than English.

Reasonable and affordable tuition fees: This theme emerged from two price-related categories: tuition fees and scholarships. As indicated in Table 4.6, a number of respondents, especially at University A, claimed that private universities in Cambodia set reasonable and affordable tuition fees. To quote from Roatha at University A: “The prices at most private universities are not expensive, so my parents are able to support me.” This was supported by four other interviewees at University A.

More than a third of respondents at University B mentioned scholarships in the surveys, as shown in Table 4.6. All four interviewees said that the majority of students at University B were awarded partial scholarships in different amounts. Virak and Rithy further explained that this enables students, including themselves, to pay tuition fees. At University C, however, only a few participants discussed tuition fees or scholarships.
Various class schedules in the private sector: With regard to this theme, the study found that the private sector offers various class schedules, in the morning, afternoon, evening, or on weekends. This point was mentioned by six interviewees. One said:

“At a private university, I can study at any time I like. This is convenient for me to find a job, and change to a different schedule of learning. I can also study on Saturday and Sunday if I have to work during the week.” (Panha, University B)

Easier and fewer entry requirements: Data in Table 4.6 show that the entry requirements were important to a good number of participants at the three universities. They described both in surveys and in interviews that the private sector set fewer and easier requirements. One interviewee at University A said, “There is an entrance exam at private universities, but all people who apply will pass.” (Roatha). Two respondents also mentioned that the private sector admitted students without a grade 12 certificate. One reported: “I failed the grade 12 examination. Public universities do not admit students who have failed grade 12 exams. Hence, private higher education is my last choice.” (Vichea, University A)

During the interviews, participants normally mentioned their grade 12 examination grade as one of the criteria for admission to the public higher education sector. Some said they failed to get into public universities, especially through the scholarship programs, because of their exam grades. Among all 15 interviewees, 11 were willing to share their grade 12 examination grades: Two received C, five D and four E. Seyha who was one of the two with a C grade, did not try the public university at all, although he claimed his grade would have offered him at least one place at a public
university if he had applied. The other student with the same grade was studying at both public and private universities, due to having received a scholarship from both sectors. All interviewees agreed that getting into the private sector universities was much easier than the public universities.

Weak school policies towards student behavior: A number of participants attending the three private universities pointed out weak school policies governing students’ behavior. One negative was a lack of concern about students’ unpunctuality or improper dress at their own institution. Seven interviewees shared negative opinions about punctuality as well as improper dress. For example, one complained:

“School policies are not strict. Some female students wear clothing that is too sexy, so it is like a fashion show. Some students are rarely on time.” (Dara, University A)

Sehya was the only interviewee who was very satisfied with the way the school allowed everyone to choose their own dress style. He said, “At the university level, students should be able to dress however they like. We had school uniforms in high school.”

Different opinions emerged among respondents at different universities regarding school policies on examinations. Respondents at University A were critical of the examination system that allowed students to cheat and pass easily. University B and University C, on the other hand, maintained strict regulations during examinations, which pleased the study participants.
Rich library resources: Library resources were also mentioned by a good number of respondents in the three private universities throughout the study, as clearly shown in Table 4.6. Some students commented:

“There are so many kinds of books at the library for students to do research.” (Chenda, University A)

“Compared to the university in the public sector that I am also attending now, University C has a larger number of up-to-date books. Its library is open to the public to study. The library is also equipped with Wifi internet to facilitate students’ learning.” (Dary, University C)

“There are a lot of computers, copying machines and various kinds of books in English.” (Virak, University B)

Only respondents at University B and C mentioned library materials in English. None from University A associated the resources with the English language.

Family/relative influence: Although only a few students mentioned specific family factors during the surveys, ten interviewees indicated that their families influenced their perceptions about the private higher education sector as well as their own private university. To quote from some of them:

“My sister, who was a student here, normally told me that studying here is good. Teachers and programs are also good. My parents were also satisfied with her education at this university and said that I should choose this one.” (Thida, University A)
“My sister was a student at this university, and persuaded me to come here too, when I was deciding whether to attend public or private sectors. She was able to speak English after just one year here.” (Virak, University B)

“I have an uncle who is an alumnus at University C. I was very impressed that after finishing studying here, he knew a lot and became an expert in his field. I never heard him complain about this school. I became determined to come here after high school.” (Punlok, University C)

**Little degree recognition:** This theme emerged during interviews, when respondents were asked to provide their overall opinions about the private higher education sector in Cambodia. Many students claimed there was little recognition of the degree by the private sector, especially in terms of job opportunities in both the public and private sectors, and scholarships abroad:

“When you apply for a job, employers will consider the degrees from public universities first.” (Roatha, University A)

“I want to further my Master’s degree in the public higher education sector. It will give me a chance to work for a government institution.” (Sathya, University B)

“It is hard for students in the private sector to apply for scholarships abroad. Only students from a public university can apply and have a chance to get it.” (Virak, University B)

Despite their negative perceptions about their degrees, almost all participants argued in the interviews that the quality of education at the private sector, especially at their respective universities, was the same as in the public sector.
Conclusion

This chapter used the constant comparative method to analyze the data both from surveys and from interviews. First, the demographics of the sample, including number, gender, age group, location of high school, and attendance of two higher education institutions were delineated. From coding, the study identified core categories within the framework of the 4 Ps matrix of product, price, place and promotion. Qualitative analysis identified nine common key themes: (1) Quality of faculty, (2) extensive use of English in the private sector, (3) reasonable and affordable tuition fees, (4) various class schedules, (5) easier and fewer entry requirements, (6) weak school policies on students’ behavior, (7) little degree recognition, (8) rich library resources and (9) family/relative influence. The study found various other categories, but there were not enough supporting data to regard any of them as a core theme.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter concludes the findings by discussing each research question and the related key themes. Then, it offers various recommendations for private and public institutions, the public, and the Ministry of Education. Further research is also suggested in relation to the private higher education sector in Cambodia.

Discussions of Results

This study investigated students’ perceptions of the private higher education sector in Cambodia. As stated earlier, the first national private higher education institution was established in 1997. Over a decade later, the sector has enjoyed remarkable growth in the number of institutions as well as in student enrolment. This growth has allowed many students to get into higher education even though they are shut out of public sector opportunities. But, scholars have voiced concern over rapid unregulated growth as well as the high unemployment rate of new graduates in the sector, which Ford (2006) described was around 90%. Still, an increasing number of students are pursuing private sector higher education. This fact aroused the researcher’s curiosity to explore the new role of the private higher education sector in Cambodia, especially through students’ first-hand experiences. The following discussion is based on results from an empirical study conducted in 2009.

Q1: What Influences Students’ Decisions to Pursue Private Higher Education?

Students report numerous reasons for choosing private, rather than public higher education. Among the nine key themes emerging in the study, the three that are most influential in explaining students’ decisions to choose the private sector are the
extensive use of English, easier and fewer entry requirements, and family influence.

Other factors which influenced students’ decision to choose private sector higher
education include rich library resources such as textbooks and computers with internet
and various class schedules in the morning, afternoon, evening or on weekends. See
Table D in Appendix D for lists all factors which influenced students to choose private
sector higher education.

**Extensive use of English:** The extensive use of English, particularly at universities
B and C, was one of the common reasons influencing students’ choices to pursue private
sector higher education. Study participants at these two universities commonly associated
academic programs, faculty quality, and library resources with the English language.
None of respondents at University A, however, discussed English as a factor in their
decisions to choose the private sector.

English has gained popularity in Cambodia since the early 1990s when the
country switched to a new economic and political system (Chhuon, 2000; Clayton, 2006;
Pit & Roth, 2004). Contact with Western countries began through investment and foreign
aid in all sectors. Especially in higher education, English as a foreign language became
more and more attractive to students and began to supplant the French language which
had dominated higher education for years, especially in the public sector (Chhuon, 2000;
Clayton, 2006; Pit & Roth; 2004). Interestingly, the vast majority of private universities
in Cambodia claim English as their choice as a foreign language (Chhuon, 2000; Clayton,
2006). However, Clayton (2006) further indicated that the majority of private universities
in Cambodia used Khmer as the language of instruction. Hence, his study is consistent
with the findings at University A, in which none of the participants associated academic programs with the English language. While his study tends to contradict respondents at universities B and C, the researcher noticed that these two universities were among the few private higher education institutions that use English extensively in their academic programs.

At least one third of the participants in this study were studying at two universities, either both in the private sector, or one in the public and the other in the private. Chet (2006) claimed that it is not uncommon for students to attend two higher education institutions at the same time in Cambodia. However, he did not go into detail of the matter. This study found that some students already enrolled at a university in the public sector decided to simultaneously pursue a degree in the private sector so as to improve their English. In a recent article “the Price of Private Students at Public Schools,” Meyn (2009) discovered that fee-paying students at public universities received different attention and care from scholarship students. In terms of language learning, for instance, he found, “While scholarship students were studying English four times a week, fee-paying students were given only once a week” (Meyn, 2009). This might be one reason contributing to their poor proficiency in English and thus prompting them to attend the private sector.

When asked why they were interested in the English language, study participants gave two common answers: future job opportunities and scholarships abroad. For instance, one student commented, “With a good command of English, it will be easier for me to find a job. Also, I want to study abroad, so I have to learn English” (Virak,
University B). This finding was consistent with the importance of English as a language of business now that Cambodia has switched to a free market economy. In education, added impetus has come from the availability of scholarships offered by such English-speaking countries as the US and Australia, and in Europe (Chuon, 2000; Clayton, 2006). A recent article “the Importance of Speaking English” by Bun (2010) reaffirmed how significant in all sectors English has been viewed by the public.

**Easier and fewer entry requirements:** Another common factor that influenced students to choose private sector higher education was easier and fewer entry requirements, as indicated in Table 4.6 (Chapter IV). This finding is consistent with the study by Pit and Ford (2004), Ford (2006) and Chet (2006, 2009), that Cambodian private universities accepted all kinds of students, ranging from those with good grades to those who failed a grade 12 exam. However, among the three private universities, only universities A and B accepted students without a grade 12 certificate through associate degree programs.

Easy access into higher education, especially through the private sector, signifies the massification of higher education in Cambodia. According to Lee and Healy (2006), massification of higher education is a contemporary global trend in which access to higher education is widely available to all kinds of students who want to further their higher learning. In the case of Cambodia, the report by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (2009) shows that at present more than 90% of students passing grade 12 were able to pursue higher education in a public or private sector, and half of those who failed grade 12 chose the private sector through associate degree programs. The vast majority of
the participants (84.6%) in this study were able to pursue their higher education immediately after they finished high school (See Table H in Appendix D for details).

**Family influence:** Another common factor behind students’ perceptions did not appear in the surveys but was mentioned by ten respondents during the interviews – family influence. When asked why they chose the private sector, many said the university they were attending was suggested by relatives. This shows that family had great influence on their decision to go to the private sector.

**Q2: What Influences Students’ Decisions to Study at a Particular Private Sector Higher Education Institution?**

The findings from the study revealed numerous factors influencing students to choose a particular private higher education institution. Four of the nine key themes dominant within this research question were family influence, extensive use of English in academic programs, faculty with expertise and professional experience, and reasonable and affordable tuition fees. For other less common factors affecting students’ selection of a particular university, please refer to Table E in Appendix D.

**Family influence:** According to the surveys, as shown in Table 4.6 (Chapter IV), only two respondents at University A and two at University C pointed out relatives as a factor influencing their decision to choose their respective universities. However, ten interviewees mentioned that relatives, either a student or an alumnus of the particular university, recommended they choose the school. This result was consistent with a Phnom Penh Post’s (2009) article, “Shopping for Schools,” in which the author found that Cambodian students’ families’ recommendations were one of the most influential
factors affecting their choice of a particular higher education institution, either in the 
public or private sector.

**Extensive use of English:** The extensive use of English was another common 
factor driving many participants to either University B or C. Within this theme, the 
academic programs in English were commonly mentioned by respondents, mainly at 
universities B and C, as shown in Table 4.6 (Chapter IV). All interviewees at universities 
B and C further explained that their respective university was able to employ both 
Cambodian and foreign teaching staff, who were fluent in English. English was also used 
in the teaching. It is interesting that whereas 30.5% of respondents at University A 
mentioned academic programs when choosing the school, they did not associate it with 
English. Rather, they described the academic programs as varied and interesting. A few 
participants at University B and C also associated the wealth of textbooks at these two 
universities with the English language. None of the participants at University A discussed 
library resources in English.

**Quality of faculty:** The third common factor that influenced students to choose a 
particular private university was quality of faculty. The findings indicated that all three 
private universities employ faculty who were experienced and famous. In addition, many 
participants at universities B and C pointed to two more characteristics of faculty quality: 
a higher degree from abroad and English proficiency.

This finding was consistent with the studies by Pit and Ford (2004) and Ford 
(2006), which found that private universities with greater financial resources were able to 
employ better teaching staff. They also mentioned that new Cambodian scholars educated
in Western countries have a tendency to go to the private sector rather than the public one (Pit & Ford, 2004). This was mainly due to ideology conflicting with the old scholars in the public sector, most of whom were educated in the Eastern bloc in the 1980s (Pit & Ford, 2004). Also, a Ministry of Education’s (2009) report indicated that “too many Cambodian higher education institution staff have experienced only the world of education – from school to higher education institution then to higher education institution teacher” (p. 6). In contrast, this study found that many teachers at the three private universities were viewed by students as experienced in their field.

Reasonable and affordable tuition fees: The fourth common factor influencing students to choose a particular private university was reasonable and affordable tuition fees. Under this theme, two categories stood out as reasons for students to choose a particular private higher education institution: tuition fees and scholarships. Participants at University A (20%) mentioned tuition fees as reasonable and affordable. In terms of scholarships, these were mentioned by a little more than one third of participants at University B. However, at University C, only one student cited scholarships and none talked about tuition fees. This indicates that these three universities set up different price strategies to attract students. This price-related finding, along with the researcher’s observations, indicates that University A and B targeted all kinds of students, rich and poor, outstanding and less talented. Also, University B used scholarships in various forms to attract more outstanding students, while University C targeted mainly students of upper class families. This was evidenced through the researcher’s observation of the way
they dressed, their expensive cars, and use of modern cell phones. None of these were common at University A or B.

While only a few survey respondents and no interviewees mentioned entry requirements as influencing the selection of a particular private higher education institution, it can be inferred that getting into private universities in Cambodia is not difficult. However, as mentioned earlier, different from University C, universities A and B also admitted students without a grade 12 certificate, through associate degree programs. Likewise, class schedules were not broadly mentioned by participants as affecting choice of a particular private higher education institution. But, the researcher observed that all these private universities offer various class schedules, three times a day as well as on weekends. This indicates that the three participating private universities offered flexible class schedules in order to enable all kinds of students, including working people, to further their higher education.

Q3: How Do Students View Their Private Sector Higher Educational Experiences?

Through questions 10 and 11 on the questionnaire, the study discovered students’ negative and positive attitudes at each university. In terms of satisfaction, three themes were common in the study: quality of the faculty, extensive use of English in academic programs, and rich library resources. In terms of dissatisfaction, weak school policies toward students’ behavior was influential in students’ negative perceptions.

Satisfaction

A great number of respondents at three private universities were greatly satisfied with the quality of faculty at their respective university. They claimed the teaching staff
were knowledgeable and experienced. Some students also expressed strong bonds with their own teachers, who, they said, were approachable and cared a lot about their learning.

Moreover, students were also satisfied with the extensive use of English in the private sector. The majority of participants at universities B and C indicated that extensive use of English in academic programs, in lectures, group discussions, and assignments, allowed students to improve their English proficiency in a short period of time. Some participants in this study even wrote their answers or spoke in English during the interviews. However, none of the respondents at University A credited anything about English in their satisfaction.

Respondents at the three private universities also indicated satisfaction with the wealth of learning materials at their respective universities. Most claimed that their own university had a large number of books with up-dated content, wifi internet, and enough computers for students learning. Some who were studying at a university in the public sector compared the two sectors, asserting that the library in the public sector was not properly equipped. The books were also out-of-date, and mostly in the Khmer language. There was no internet, and there were only a few computers to accommodate a lot of students. This finding was consistent with studies by Pit and Ford (2004), Pit and Roth (2004), and Ford (2004) that higher education institutions in Cambodia were not sufficiently funded by the government, and were short of learning resources.
A good number of participants at universities B and a few at University C were also satisfied with the application of the credit system, associating it with the American standard of higher education, and claiming that it benefited them a great deal. One said:

The credit system enables students to learn a variety of disciplines. For instance, I major in IT, but I have an opportunity to learn Business, through taking elective courses in the field. It is also very flexible. I can have a break, if busy, for one semester and come back. (Sathya, University B)

While all participants at University B reaffirmed their satisfaction with the application of the credit system during the interviews, none at University A and C discussed the matter. The researcher’s observations as well as his informal conversations with a few participants and alumni at each university discovered that at universities B and C, students were allowed to take both elective and course courses. However, at University A, albeit its application of the credit system, students only took courses set by the school. This finding, consistent with the studies by Chet (2009) and Ford (2006) indicates the continuous inconsistency of the application of the credit and credit transfer system in the Cambodian higher education system. Chet (2009) found that,

Full implementation of the credit system is, however, not yet undertaken. This may mainly be due to both the lack of capacity in practice and comprehension of the concept. Supporting guidelines, training, and coordination need to be developed, and schools need to function in a collaborative manner for the best interest of the students. (p. 161)
Table F in Appendix D lists other less common factors with which respondents at each university were satisfied. These include good administrative services, a large campus, and small class size.

**Dissatisfaction**

The study found that weak policies governing student behavior is a common theme indicating the negative aspects of the private higher education sector, as indicated in Table 4.6 (Chapter IV). Across the three universities, school policies on dress as well as punctuality were commonly criticized. For example, one student at University A said, “I do not like the school policies to allow students to wear torn-style jeans, or too sexy clothing. They are university students, so they should wear uniforms” (Dara, University A). When asked if there was a uniform for everyone, he said yes, but it was not compulsory. Respondents also said some students were habitually late and neither the teachers nor the schools cared. According to them, the school just ignored tardiness due to its customer-oriented approach.

It is worth noting that among the three universities, University A was most criticized by participants for weak school policies towards a number of factors. Besides dress and punctuality, study participants reported dissatisfaction with rude students, noisy classes, and too many absences. Interestingly, four interviewees claimed that the rules for exams at University A were very weak. Everyone could cheat and easily pass, although there were only a few outstanding students in the class. In contrast, universities B and C were much stricter, as shown through participants’ answers both in the surveys and in interviews.
Beside policy-related factors, participants disliked numerous other things at their own universities. These included dirty bathrooms, rude administrative staff, poor services, a few teachers with improper attitudes toward students, and corruption. Table G in Appendix D details all the factors that negatively affected students’ experience in higher education.

Recommendations

The findings from the study have implications for private and public higher education institutions, the public at large, and the Ministry of Education.

Public and Private Higher Education Institutions

From the students’ perspective, it is obvious that English proficiency is a significant goal in their pursuit of higher education. According to the studies by Chhuon (2000), Clayton (2006) and Pit and Roth (2004) English will gain more popularity among students, at least in the foreseeable future. This suggests that to attract students, both public and private universities need to focus their academic programs on English. This can be achieved through the extensive use of the language in teaching and research. Faculty with English proficiency and library resources in English are indispensable to ensure English-based education.

In terms of promotion, the finding of the study, consistent with Meyn’s (2009) article “Shopping for School”, revealed that family relatives, either students or alumni, played an influential role in students’ decisions to choose a particular private university. It is interesting to note that besides a family factor, almost all interviewees revealed that a large number of private higher education institutions in Cambodia distributed leaflets and
brochures during the grade 12 examination days and the days when the results were released to attract prospective students. Some of them even asserted that it was the first time they were introduced to many private universities that they had not even heard about before. Still, none of them claimed this as an influential factor on their choice of either the private sector or a particular private university. Instead, a few interviewees at University C argued that private higher education institutions that advertised less in the news had better quality than those that advertised a lot. Hence, it is wise for higher education institutions, public and private alike, to build a good network with their stakeholders, including current students, their parents, alumni, staff and others. Through such networks, each institution can develop promotional strategies to target prospective students. This would be more effective and efficient.

The study also suggests that to gain more prospective students from diverse backgrounds, each higher education institution, public and private alike, should offer programs with various and flexible class schedules. Classes should be available in the morning, afternoon, evening, and on weekends.

Besides the aforementioned recommendations for both sectors, it is imperative that higher education institutions, especially those in the public sector, improve their library resources, by offering more books with updated contents, and computers with internet. It is increasingly hard for students to conduct research without good access to the Internet. As for private higher education institutions, the study also suggests that school’s policies on clothing, punctuality, and students’ behavior be reinforced. The rules for exams should also be strict in order to guarantee graduate with quality.
**The Public at Large**

As stated earlier, students relied almost totally on their family to choose a particular private university. It is suggested that students should try to learn more about schools, academic programs, and faculty before making their choice. They can seek information by using the school’s website, visiting the school, or emailing administrations and faculty members. Furthermore, they are encouraged to attend any career or educational fairs offered by higher education institutions, public and private alike. They should also recognize that, “a license is not the same as accreditation” (Odrerir, 2009). A number of private higher education institutions are still legally operating even though they have failed to meet the quality requirements by the ACC.

This study revealed that a good command of English is perceived as an opportunity to gain success in future job markets and scholarships abroad. In the same sense, the study found that some participants in the public sector decided to study at another university in the private sector so as to improve their English language. Hence, it is wise for students to select their perspective higher education institution, either public or private, that offers English-based education in their academic programs. This will be more efficient, and cost-saving in their investment in higher education.

**The Ministry of Education**

The findings of the study, consistent with the study by Chet (2006), discovered that it is somewhat common for students to simultaneously pursue two degrees at two different higher education institutions. This is a unique case in comparison with higher education systems around the world. Pit & Ford (2004), and Chet (2006, 2009) voiced
their concern over the lack of research activities at the higher education level, which they believe is the main factor that enables students to simultaneously attend two institutions and earn two degrees easily. According to them, the lack of research activities at most higher education institutions has thus far resulted in poor quality of university graduates. Hence, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education take into account research activities, which are almost non-existent at higher education institutions in Cambodia in both the public and private sectors (Pit & Ford, 2004; Chet, 2006, 2009). To ensure the quality of education, the Ministry of Education should require each higher education institution to focus on research activities to earn status as a place of higher learning.

**Future Research**

As indicated earlier, there is little literature on Cambodian higher education, let alone the private sector. With the purpose of exploring the emerging role of the private higher education sector in Cambodia, this study offers several directions for further research.

First, the study found numerous factors influencing students’ perceptions about the private higher education sector in Cambodia. However, given its limitations, the study did not explore each category in detail as well as the correlations among them. Future studies can be conducted, using quantitative and qualitative methods, to further explore these categories in depth to learn more about the new role of private higher education in Cambodia.

Furthermore, this study was limited to only two large-sized and one medium-sized accredited universities. To gain a broader understanding about the new role of the private
higher education sector in Cambodia, future research should consider other private higher education institutions both small and large. Future research is needed to explore how students in provinces view Cambodian private higher education. Until recently, almost all higher education institutions were located in the city. Over the last few years, a few private higher education institutions have begun to establish branches in some provinces due to huge unmet demand and growing competition among all higher education institutions. Hence, it would be interesting to study students’ perceptions in provinces and make a comparison with the perceptions of students in the city.

Further study could and should be conducted in different programs besides Business Administration and Information Technology. Even within the same programs, longitudinal studies are needed to follow the same participants after they graduate. Other stakeholders’ perspectives about private sector higher education also deserve to be studied. These include teaching staffs, employees, and community leaders.

The study found that English was a major factor that drove some participants who were already in the public sector to pursue another degree in the private sector. This suggests need for future research to explore the reasons why some students attend two higher education institutions, either simultaneously or at different times. A study could be conducted with students who are pursuing two degrees in the private sector or one in the private and the other in the public sector.

Last but not least, the study discovered that 11 participants during the interviews commented about the current poor quality of private higher sector education as well as the high unemployment rate in the sector. Despite the existence of an Accreditation
Committee of Cambodia (ACC), which was established in 2003 as a watchdog to ensure the quality of higher education, there are still some private higher education institutions operating without the quality assurance recognized by the ACC (Meyn, 2009). Ford (2006) in particular voices concern over the unregulated growth of the private sector at the expense of quality. All this points toward future research on public policies in higher education, especially the concept of institutional autonomy (Chet, 2009). In other words, further research could be conducted to examine the impact of this concept on the growth and development of private sector higher education.
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2: research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Project Title: Students’ Perceptions Toward Private Sector Higher Education in Cambodia

Primary Investigator: Phirom Leng

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: Brett Noel

Department: Southeast Asian Studies

05/27/2009

Robin Stack, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Appendix B: Permission Letter

Dear President,

I am writing to seek your permission to allow Phiom Leng to conduct his research at your university.

Phiom Leng is a Master of Arts student in the Southeast Asian Studies Program at Ohio University. For his thesis, he plans to conduct research on private sector higher education in Cambodia. The purpose of his thesis is to examine student perceptions and personal experiences of students enrolled in private sector higher education.

According to Phiom Leng, there have been few studies on higher education in Cambodia. This study, as outlined in his proposal, thus promises to make a number of important contributions. I have listed a few of them.

1. This study will contribute to the literature on the economics of higher education in Cambodia, and thus will provide an important reference for future studies of higher education in Cambodia.

2. This study will be the first of its kind in the sense that it is attempting to look at the private sector from the lenses of the people in the private sector, mainly the students. Because most of the studies on higher education in Cambodia have thus far been carried out by and on public institutions, they tend to view the role of the private sector in Cambodia in a more negative manner.

3. Understanding students’ perceptions will help private sector institutions, especially those participating in this study, create strategies that will enable them compete successfully with private institutions.

Phiom Leng’s thesis research proposal was recently approved by his MA committee and me as his academic advisor. His proposal was also approved by the Ohio University Institutional Review Board, ascertaining that there will participants will be advised as to the nature of the study and will be asked for their consent before being included in it. It also ascertained that there will be no physical or emotional risk for the participants.
Therefore, as his academic advisor and as Program Director, I would like to ask you to grant Phirom Leng your permission to conduct his study at your university.

If you wish further information, please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards,

[Signature]

Gene Ammarell, PhD
Associate Professor of Anthropology
Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies
Appendix C: Questionnaire

I. Personal Information

- Gender: □ Male □ Female
- Age: □ Below 20 □ 20-25 □ 26-30 □ Above 30
- Year of study: ............
- Major: ............
- Occupation (In addition to studying): ............

II. Please check or fill your answers in the blank.

A. General Education

1. Where did you finish your high school? What year?
   - □ Phnom Penh: Year: ........
   - □ Province: Year: ........

2. What did you do after you finished high school? (Please select one)
   - □ Went to university shortly after.
   - □ Did not go to university shortly after.

3. What year did you begin attending University A?
   Year: .....................

4. Do you study at another university in addition to this one? (Please skip to Question 6 if your answer is no)
   - □ Yes Name of the institution: .....................
   - □ No

5. What did/do you study at another university?
   .................................

6. Why did you decide to come and study at a private university, not public?
(If you are a student at both public and private universities, please describe the reasons that you decided to study at the private sector in addition to the public)

7. Before coming to BBU, how did you normally know about private universities in Cambodia? (more than one answer)
   I learned about private universities through:
   □ Friends
   □ Family (relatives)
   □ University leaflets or brochures distributed in public places
   □ University website
   □ Advertisement about universities on TV, radio, or newspaper
   □ Others (please specify): ..........................................

8. When choosing the private sector, what do/did you most consider?
   Please choose three among the following factors that you considered the most when choosing a particular private university.
   □ Price
   □ Academic program
   □ Reputation
   □ Location
   □ Facilities
   □ Entry requirements
   □ Others (Please specify): ..........................................

B. Build Bright University

9. Why did you choose University A?
I chose University A because ………………………………………

10. As a student at University A, what do you like most about University A so far?
………………………………………………………………………………..

11. As a student at University B, what do you dislike most about University B so far?
………………………………………………………………………………..

C. Private sector higher education

12. In your opinion, what are the strengths of the private sector higher education in Cambodia?
………………………………………………………………………………..

13. In your opinion, what are the weaknesses of the private higher education sector in Cambodia?
………………………………………………………………………………..

14. If you could make your decision again, would you still want to choose the private sector higher education? Why or why not?
☐ Still want to come to the private sector because
………………………………………………………………………………..

☐ Want to go to the public sector because
………………………………………………………………………………..

15. In the future, if you want to pursue your master’s degree, do you want to do it at a public or private university? Why or why not?
(Please skip Q16 if you do not want to pursue your master's at the private sector)
☐ I want to pursue my master's degree at the private sector because
………………………………………………………………………………..

☐ I want to pursue my master degree at the public sector because
………………………………………………………………………………..
16. If at a private university, do you want to do it at University or another private university?

☐ Remain at University A because

…………………………………………..

☐ Attend another institution because

…………………………………………

D. Ideal private university *(These questions are only for interviews)*

17. In your opinion, what is an ideal private university?

……………………………………………………………………

18. If you were asked to suggest something to the ministry of education, what would you suggest for the future growth of the private higher education sector?

……………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your participation in this study
Table A. *The Breakdown of the Number of Participants in Each Program as well as in Different Years within the Three Private Universities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>III</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>III</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University B</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>III</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>III</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>III</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>III</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Sample at Both Programs at the Three Private Universities by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA (4%)</td>
<td>IT (56%)</td>
<td>BA (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30 (50%)</td>
<td>43 (95.6%)</td>
<td>17 (40.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>17 (40.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
<td>42 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*BA = Business Administration
*IT = Information Technology*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chosen Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Higher Education Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boran</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>IT Program</td>
<td>University A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vichea</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>IT Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roatha</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>IT Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thida</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>BA Program</td>
<td>University B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chenda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>BA Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dara</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>BA Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sathya</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>IT Program</td>
<td>University B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virak</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>IT Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rithy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>BA Program</td>
<td>University C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>BA Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>IT Program</td>
<td>University C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punlok</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>IT Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sambath</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>BA Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>BA Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seyha</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>BA Program</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Table D. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Factors Influencing Students to Choose the Private Sector Higher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Academic programs**</td>
<td>57 (54.3%)</td>
<td>15 (14.3%)</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>29 (34.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administration (service &amp; staff)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (5.7%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>4 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entry requirements</td>
<td>17 (16.2%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>6 (7.1%)</td>
<td>10 (11.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>14 (13.3%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of Education</td>
<td>8 (7.6%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>23 (27.4%)</td>
<td>6 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library Resources</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Policies</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (7.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Reputation</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (2.4%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others (Furniture, equipment)</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>14 (13.3%)</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td>17 (37.8%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuition Fees</td>
<td>12 (11.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Branches</td>
<td>13 (12.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class schedules</td>
<td>11 (10.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class sizes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>5 (4.7%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Advertisements</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped Question</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (28.6%)</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
<td>16 (19%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Participants did not mention the point”
** “English” is included in “Academic programs”
Table E. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Factors Influencing Students to Choose Their Respective Preferred Higher Education Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>University A (Frequency, Percentage)</th>
<th>University B (Frequency, Percentage)</th>
<th>University C (Frequency, Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84 (80%)</td>
<td>40 (88.9%)</td>
<td>82 (97.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Academic programs**</td>
<td>32 (30.5%)</td>
<td>35 (77.8%)</td>
<td>52 (61.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administration (service &amp; staff)</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>----*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entry requirements</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td>----*</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>32 (30.5%)</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>18 (21.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library Resources</td>
<td>4 (3.8%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>3 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of Education</td>
<td>15 (14.3%)</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>20 (23.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Policies</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
<td>----*</td>
<td>6 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Reputation</td>
<td>24 (22.9%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>18 (31.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (clean classroom, degree, equipment, furniture)</td>
<td>----*</td>
<td>----*</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>25 (23.8%)</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuition Fees</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>----*</td>
<td>----*</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Branches</td>
<td>24 (22.9%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>4 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class schedules</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td>----*</td>
<td>----*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>----*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School environment</td>
<td>19 (18.1%)</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>2 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td>----*</td>
<td>2 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped Question</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 (7.6%)</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td>2 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Participants did not mention the point”
** “English” is included in “Academic programs”
Table F. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Factors Influencing Students' Satisfaction at Their Respective Higher Education Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Academic programs**</td>
<td>88 (83.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administration (service &amp; staff)</td>
<td>19 (18.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entry requirements</td>
<td>8 (7.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library resources</td>
<td>59 (56.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of Education</td>
<td>11 (10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Policies</td>
<td>4 (3.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Reputation</td>
<td>13 (12.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others (Clean classroom, degree, experience, workshops)</td>
<td>6 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25 (23.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>6 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuition Fees</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others (food, parking fees, etc.)</td>
<td>5 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Class schedules</td>
<td>19 (18.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-----*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class sizes</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>16 (15.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School environment</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>-----*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped Question</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 (10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Participants did not mention the point”
** “English” is included in “Academic programs”
Table G. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Factors Influencing Students' Dissatisfaction at Their Respective Higher Education Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>University A (Frequency (Percentage))</th>
<th>University B (Frequency (Percentage))</th>
<th>University C (Frequency (Percentage))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td><strong>Academic programs</strong></td>
<td>88 (83.8%)</td>
<td>38 (84.4%)</td>
<td>54 (64.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administration (service &amp; staff)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>11 (13.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>8 (7.6%)</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>13 (15.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of Education</td>
<td>23 (21.9%)</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
<td>17 (20.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Equipment</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Policies</td>
<td>10 (9.5%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>3 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others (degree, Unclean classroom/bathroom, experience, slow internet, viruses, etc.)</td>
<td>49 (46.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>6 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Tuition Fees</strong></td>
<td>12 (11.4%)</td>
<td>23 (51.1%)</td>
<td>12 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others (food, parking fees, etc.)</td>
<td>-----*</td>
<td>-----*</td>
<td>-----*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price had to be calculated based on the classification:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Tuition Fees</strong></td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>16 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others (food, parking fees, etc.)</td>
<td>-----*</td>
<td>-----*</td>
<td>9 (10.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Branches</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td>23 (51.1%)</td>
<td>17 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class schedules</td>
<td>-----*</td>
<td>-----*</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class sizes</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
<td>13 (28.9%)</td>
<td>-----*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>-----*</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School environment</td>
<td>-----*</td>
<td>-----*</td>
<td>-----*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>-----*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped Questions</td>
<td><strong>Advertisements</strong></td>
<td>15 (14.3%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>6 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Participants did not mention the point”

** “English” is included in “Academic programs”
### Table H. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Sample within Each University by Their Decision either to Pursue College Immediately after High School or Have a Break for a While

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA (200%)</td>
<td>IT (200%)</td>
<td>BA (200%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursue college after high school</td>
<td>54 (90%) 35 (77.8%)</td>
<td>37 (88.1%) 3 (100%)</td>
<td>33 (84.6%) 35 (77.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a break after high school</td>
<td>5 (8.3%) 10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>4 (9.5%)</td>
<td>5 (12.8%) 10 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped Question</td>
<td>1 (1.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
<td>45 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*BA* = Business Administration  
*IT* = Information Technology