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**Ninth Session of the Regional Committee Meeting for the
Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and
Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific**

in conjunction with the

**Regional Seminar on Regional Harmonization: Establishing
a Common Higher Education Area**

Seoul, Republic of Korea

22-23 May 2007

Country Report

LAO PDR

Country Report Lao PDR

1. Introduction

- Brief description of the higher education systems in terms of number and types of institutions (state, private), enrolment, government agencies in charge of coordination of higher education

The Lao education system is depicted in the Chart 1 as below. The selection to the technical and higher education programs is usually governed by the national entrance examinations. There are 3 types of training program namely quota , non-quota and special courses.

The quota system is selected by the Provincial Educational Service with reference to the quota allocated by the Ministry of Education for each year , the best score of students and to the special considerations that means those disadvantaged students or students of the parents who had outstanding contribution for the country .

The special course is selected by the higher education institutions with the consultation with the Ministry of Education based on the regulations of the Ministry of Education pertaining to the entrance to education system.

It is to be noted that the private schools and colleges organized themselves the entrance examination with the respect of regulations of the Ministry of Education.

There is 3 public universities with the total of 31771 enrolments in Lao PDR. In 2005-2006 the National University has a total enrolments of 27,071 of which 9,335 female students (34 %). From the total students there are 109 students of which 23 female students at the master degree, 148 students of which 62 female students at the post graduate degree, 20,622 students of which 8,155 female students at the bachelor degree and 6,192 students of which 1095 female students at the bachelor degree. The total new entrants are 8878 students of which 3210 female students . From the total new entrants there are 6793 students of which are 2789 female new entrants study at the bachelor degree, 2085 students of which 421 female students study at the higher diploma degree.

In 2005-2006 , the National University has changed the training program concept from 2+ 3 to 1 + 4 . That means the duration of foundation study has been reduced from two to one year.

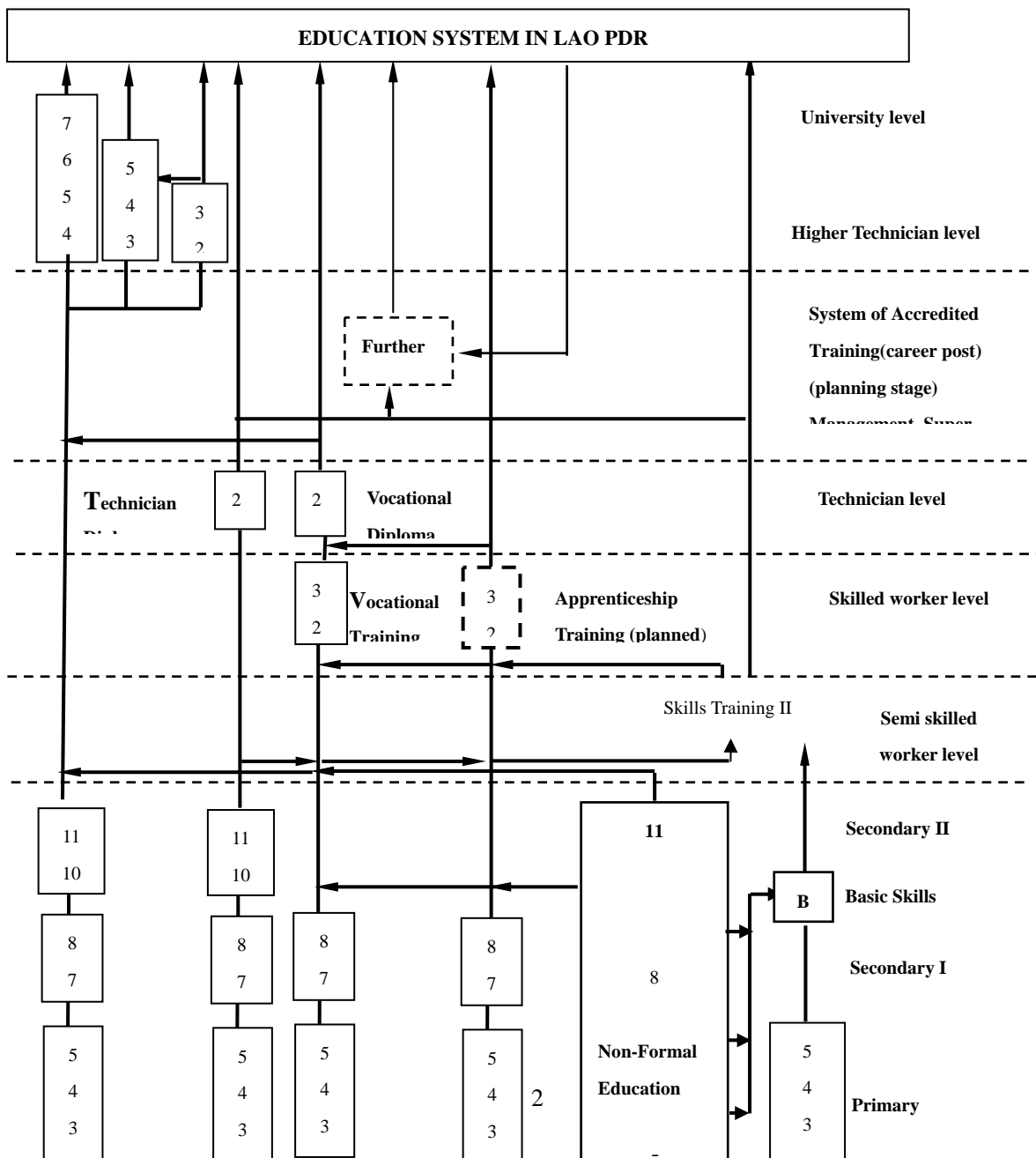
There are 11 faculties , one foundation study and one training center for distance education. There are 45 departments and 105 training program of which 9 at the master degree, 8 program at the postgraduate degree, 60 at the bachelor degree, 9 at the diploma degree, 18 at the continuing program from the higher diploma to the bachelor degree and one continuing program from technical education to higher diploma. The new offering program at the bachelor degree are environment and development, the external relation, mass-media, tourism and hostelry.

The University of Souphanouvong has 2768 students of which 1122 female students . From the total students there are 838 quota-students of which 369 female students, 624 non-quota students of which 281 female and 1306 students of which 472 female for special courses . There are 3 faculties namely faculty of education, agriculture and business administration.

The university of Champasak has a total of 4780 students of which 1796 female students. From the total students there are 3488 quot students, and 1238 non-quota students and 54 students for special course.

There are 3 faculties at bachelor degree namely faculty of education, agriculture and business administration. There 4 faculties at the higher diploma degree namely : agriculture, tourism and service, electricity , civil engineering and transport.

The Department of Higher, Technical and Vocational Education is responsible for the coordination of higher education. It is to be noted that there is one private education bureau in the Ministry of Education in charge of private education in terms of accreditation and supervision of private education.



- Recent reforms in higher education policies and higher education institutions
The Decree on education reform was recently promulgated to reform the education of the Lao PDR from 2006-2020. The education reform will taken place in two phases.

The first phase from 2006 to 2010 will be undertake in two steps. The first step will be concentrated to work on the elaboration of decrees, nomination of sub-committee in administration of education, open the comments and discussion in details concerning the education reform, to write the contents of its curriculum at the lower secondary school, strengthen the capacity building of the staff and teachers from 2006-2008. The second step will be concentrated on the projects priorities decided by the government on the education reform from 2006 to 2008.

The second phase will be continued to implement the education reform referring to planned activities . The main points are to continue to resolve the issue of teachers, the improvement of quality and the promotion of equitable access. From 2011 to 2012 higher education curriculum reform will be undertaken . And The experiences will be drawn up and the issue concerned will be further resolved. Since the education system will be reformed by increasing of one more year at the lower secondary school by 2009 and there is no foundation study anymore for the higher education system after the year 2009.

- Emergence of new providers of higher education
The new providers of higher education are the private higher education providers which deliver the training programmes and the joint programmes with the existing public and private accrediting training programmes through the cross border education.

2. Situation analysis of Cross-border Education

- Movement of academic staff, students, programmes and institutions across borders

In 2005 -2006 there are 956 staffs and students being studying in overseas of which 33 at doctoral degree, 255 at the master degree, 193 at the bachelor degree, 67 at the higher diploma degree, 8 at the technical and vocational education level , 9 students at the general education level , 193 for the training.

From the mentioned scholarships there are 513 students of which 138 female who got the scholarship through the bilateral cooperation , 260 of which 87 female through the project cooperation and 183 private students of which 56 female are studying with their own resources.

Besides there is a number of students that studying abroad without register at the Ministry of Education.

In 2006 education distance unit has been set up at the National University which

allows the staffs and students to study without interruption of works. The guidelines for distance higher education programme is being developed in consultation with all stakeholders and will be submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval.

- Number of foreign students studying in the country and number of students studying abroad

From 2001 to 2006 there are 638 foreign students who studied at the National University usually at the literature faculty (Lao Language) . There are students exchange programme or students funded by their sponsored organization,, embassies or private investment company.

- Types of higher educational institutions and programmes imported into and/or exported out of the country

Usually the types of higher education institution and programmes imported and exported out of the country have to be accredited by the public or private at the Ministry of Education with respect to the profile of the curriculum of higher education programme at the Higher Diploma , Bachelor Degree and at the Master degree of the Ministry of Education promulgated in 2000.

- Emergent issues relating to cross-border education such as the implication of GATS

The quality assurance is very critical since there is not yet the establishment of quality assurance board. Even though the mandate to supervise the curriculum of education remain to the Ministry of Education as mentioned in the education law but the capacity to control and supervise the quality of all education public and private training program is quite limited.

3. National policies and practices on Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

As mentioned above the issue of recognition of qualifications has been proposed to be included in the revised education law .The criteria , guidelines and other requirements pertained to the training programmes and joint training programmes delivered within and outside the country should be developed and respected by all public and private training providers It is to be noted that in the framework of education reform , this matters of concern will be discussed and would be resolved in the different meeting of the tasks force on the education and the organizational structure reform . Since the ratification of the regional convention

- National framework and agencies – names, functions, division of roles among these agencies, etc.

As stipulated in the education law, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the control of quality of education at all levels . In so far the Department of Higher, Technical and Vocational Education is responsible for the validation of diploma and qualifications obtained in overseas.

- Degree conferring agencies, quality assurance agencies, accreditation bodies, etc

The Ministry of education and the higher education institutions has the right to confer the degree based on the profile of curriculum promulgated by the Ministry of Education . The Ministry of Education act as accreditation body of training program registered by the public and private training providers. The university has the quality task force and assign the academic section to act as chief executive officer for the internal quality evaluation. Each faculty has to monitor and control the quality of teaching and learning.

To recognize the qualification and diploma obtained in overseas, there was a committee to consider regulations and mechanisms of the equivalency of diplomas and qualifications. The Department of Higher , Technical and Vocational Education has the mandate to validate the qualifications and diplomas obtained in overseas based on the international comparison of the education system.

- Recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions within and outside the country: laws and policies adopted since 2000, etc.

In the past the issue of recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions within and outside the country has been discussed and resolved by the Department of Higher , Technical and Vocational Education, Ministry of Education in consultation with the committee on the validation of diplomas and qualifications established in 2004 and in 2006.

This issue has been recently discussed and proposed to be included in the revised education law in the framework of education reform.

4. International Cooperation, Bilateral and Multilateral Agreement

The international Cooperation is undertaken through the bilateral and multilateral agreement. In so far there is no specific statement concerning the recognition of qualifications and diplomas in the bilateral agreement at the level of Government or institutional level.

- Activities and actions undertaken to date to enhance international, regional cooperation concerning mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education;
The activities and actions concerning the recognition of qualifications in higher education are to take part in the meeting or conference to learn some experiences or

best practices on the recognition of qualifications and on the setting up of quality assurance board and to enhance the international and regional cooperation . The Ministry of Education has sent the staff to take part in the regional meeting such as the APQN , UNESCO , AUN etc...

- Bilateral and multilateral agreements for recognition of qualifications in higher education

The Ministry of Education has signed the bilateral cooperation agreement with Vietnam, China on exchange of staff and students. Number of scholarships has been provided , but the qualifications of staffs and students usually has been automatically accepted by the receiver countries.

5. Emergent Issues relating to Recognition of Studies, diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education

- Issues concerning recognition of academic qualification in the context of changing environment of higher education such as e-education, transnational higher education, virtual universities, corporate universities, etc.

The Government of Lao PDR has signed the regional convention on recognition of qualifications, in 1983 and ratified it in 2003. The practices on the recognition of qualifications in higher education is needed for public and private higher education institutions because of the complexity of different education systems and the particularity and the logic of each country.

- Relevance of the 1983 Regional Convention for Asia-Pacific to the changing context of higher education and suggestions for its revision.

The relevance of the 1983 Regional Convention for Asia-Pacific should be further explored in consultation with all countries in the region and other region as well by taken into consideration on the situation and requirements of each country.

The issue of the cross-border education , the modes of training and its delivery and the articulation of the technical and higher education level etc... should be considered to be included in the revised version.

6. Suggestions for the Ninth Session of the Regional Committee

Based on the country report and the issue of the countries in the region, the Regional Committee should plan the further action as following :

1. *Resolve the issues of recognition of qualification within and outside the countries.*
2. *Revise the regional convention by including the issues of cross-border education and the guidelines on the accreditation and implementation of different training programmes ,, clarifying some definitions of terms pertaining to the cross border education and the recognition of qualification,*
2. *Organize the policy dialogue at the Ministerial level*