

# The Current State of Implementation of the Research Management System of the National University of Laos

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the current implementation of the research management system at the National University of Laos. The population comprised 1,302 faculty members across 13 affiliated faculties, with a sample size of 306 determined using Yamane's formula (1973). A five-point Likert scale questionnaire, validated by five experts in research and management, served as the primary data collection instrument, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.97. Stratified sampling was employed to gather the data, which were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Additionally, content analysis was used for the qualitative component. The findings revealed that the overall input of the system was rated at an Agree level, although limited budget allocation and the absence of research manuals were identified as critical issues. The research process was frequently practiced, but deficiencies in applying research findings were noted. The output was similarly rated at an Agree level, though there was limited utilization of research outcomes. While generally positive, feedback mechanisms lacked sufficient depth in reflection and improvement. To optimize research management, it is recommended that managers focus on securing financial resources, providing comprehensive research guides, enhancing the utilization of research outputs, and strengthening feedback processes.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research is a scientific process that investigates subjects from diverse perspectives of individuals, and it is also viewed as finding the truth or generating innovation [1], [2]. To address the dynamic changes in social and economic environments, the government of Laos has prioritized research as a cornerstone for national development, particularly in key sectors such as industry, agriculture, tourism, and services. In this context, the Ministry of

Education and Sports oversees research promotion and has made significant strides to support these initiatives. This includes financial backing, establishing research-related regulations and laws, and implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for research activities. Additionally, the Ministry emphasizes capacity building for researchers through comprehensive training programs and seminars. It has established a Center of Research Excellence to foster innovation and collaboration. Furthermore, the Ministry is dedicated to strengthening a research network that connects domestic institutions with regional and international universities and agencies, facilitating knowledge exchange and collaborative research efforts. These initiatives collectively aim to enhance the research landscape in Laos, ensuring that it effectively contributes to the country's development goals [3].

The ongoing support for research in Laos has led to significant improvements in various areas. This is evident in the increasing number of journal articles published domestically and internationally, reflecting a growing commitment to academic excellence. Additionally, there has been a noticeable emergence of young researchers, indicating a vibrant and dynamic research community poised to contribute to the nation's development. Moreover, the research management mechanisms have substantially enhanced, resulting in more effective oversight and support for research activities. These advancements facilitate better resource allocation and strategic planning and promote research collaboration. These developments underscore the positive trajectory of research in Laos, highlighting the country's dedication to fostering a robust research culture that can drive innovation and address societal challenges [4], [5]. With these substantial achievements, the National University of Laos has become a key contributor to research development among higher education institutions. This recognition has positioned the university as a target for transformation into a leading institution of research excellence. By prioritizing research capabilities and attracting top scholars, the National University of Laos aims to enhance its role as a catalyst for innovation and socio-economic development in the region [3], [6]. While recent research efforts at the National University of Laos have shown continuous improvement in quantity and quality, several persistent challenges require urgent attention. The report highlights fundamental issues related to research inputs, including the capacity of researchers and responsible staff, inadequate research facilities, and insufficient budget allocation. Additionally, the lack of a well-developed research management manual has resulted in confusion and inconsistencies in practice, negatively impacting the overall quality of research management and outcomes [5], [7], [8].

It is essential to reflect on the entire research management system to address these challenges, identify specific issues, and propose practical solutions. However, recent research evidence is lacking to substantiate these concerns, making it imperative to conduct further studies that can provide empirical data to inform and guide the development of appropriate interventions. Given the importance and necessity of an effective research management system, the researcher is interested in examining the current state of implementation of the research management system at the National University of Laos. This interest stems from the lack of sufficient empirical evidence to inform future improvements to the system. By conducting this examination, the researcher

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aims to identify existing challenges and opportunities, thereby contributing valuable insights for enhancing the research management framework at the university.

## 2. METHOD

**Research Design:** To investigate the current state of implementation of the research management system at the National University of Laos, the researcher opted for a quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire to gather data from a large population within the university. This method allows for the collection of structured responses, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of the research management system and enabling the identification of trends and patterns in the data.

**Research Procedure:** Following the approval of the research topic, the researcher began by reviewing and synthesizing relevant theories and studies to conceptualize the framework for the research management system at the National University of Laos. The elements and indicators were refined in collaboration with research administrators from the Research and Academic Services Office, as well as the research divisions of various faculties. Subsequently, a questionnaire was developed based on these synthesized elements and indicators. The questionnaire was validated by five research and management experts through purposive sampling and tested for reliability with a sample of 30 teachers from the Faculty of Education at the National University of Laos. Data were then collected from the sample group, processed, analyzed, and interpreted following the research objectives.

**Conceptual Framework:** After reviewing and synthesizing relevant studies, the conceptual framework for the research management system at the National University of Laos has been established, encompassing four key elements: input, process, output, and feedback. Within the process element, five sub-elements have been identified: writing research proposals, monitoring, evaluation and approval, publication, and utilization of research results [9], [10], [11], [12], [13]. This framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the research management system's operation and highlights the critical components contributing to its effectiveness (see Figure 1).

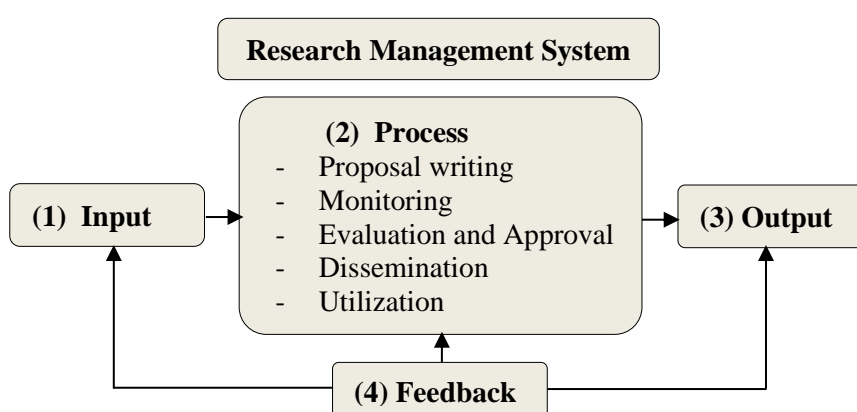


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Research Management System

**Population and Sample Group:** To examine the current state of implementation of the research management system at the National University of Laos, the population comprised teachers from 13 affiliated faculties, totaling 1,302 individuals. Utilizing Yamane's formula (1973) [14], a sample size of 306 was determined. Data collection was then conducted using a stratified sampling method to ensure representation from each faculty, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the research management system across the institution.

**Research Instrument:** The research instrument utilized was a questionnaire divided into three sections. Part One gathered general information about the respondents, including demographic data such as sex, age, qualifications, work experience, and job position, presented in a checklist format. Part Two assessed the current state of implementation of the research management system at the National University of Laos, employing a five-point Likert scale for responses. Part Three invited additional opinions and comments regarding the research management system's implementation through open-ended questions, allowing for more nuanced insights from respondents.

**Forming and Validation of the Research Instrument:** The researcher developed and validated the instrument through a series of methodical steps:

- Elements and indicators were reviewed and synthesized from relevant theories and previous studies;
- The appropriateness of these elements and indicators was assessed by nine research-related administrators from the Research and Academic Services Office and the research divisions of the faculties;
- The elements and indicators were consolidated to create a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, ranging from 5 (strongly agree/very frequent) to 1 (strongly disagree/never).
- The questionnaire was validated with the assistance of five experts in research and research-related management from the Faculty of Education at the National University of Laos, who evaluated the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) for content and construct validity [15];
- Finally, the questionnaire was refined, and its reliability was tested with 30 teachers at the Faculty of Education, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.97, indicating excellent reliability [16].

**Data Collection and Analysis:** The researcher collected and analyzed the data by following these steps:

- Requested a data collection permission letter from the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the National University of Laos;
  - Visited all 13 affiliated faculties to present the permission letter to the relevant staff;
  - Explained the process for completing the questionnaire to the sample group in each faculty and collected their responses;
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Returned the completed questionnaires and conducted statistical analyses, calculating frequency and percentage for Part One, determining mean and standard deviation for Part Two, and employing a descriptive approach for content analysis in Part Three.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Results

The questionnaire administered to the sample group consists of three main sections: general demographic information about the respondents, an evaluation of the current state of the research management system at the National University of Laos, and additional feedback or observations related to its implementation. The results of the study are presented as follows:

The general respondent information reveals a slight gender disparity, with females representing 55.2% and males accounting for 44.8%. The largest age group comprises those under 30, making up 51.3%, followed closely by respondents aged 30-40 at 47.1%. The smallest age group, those over 40, represents only 1.6%. Regarding qualifications, most hold a master's degree (78.8%), 13.1% have a doctoral degree, and 8.2% possess a bachelor's degree. As for teaching experience, 56.9% of respondents have 10-20 years of experience, 26.1% with less than 10 years, and 17% with over 20 years. When examining academic titles, 32.7% of respondents do not hold an academic title, while those with the titles of assistant teacher and assistant professor each account for 32.7% and 31%, respectively. The lowest percentage, 2.6%, is held by those with the title of associate professor.

The current state of the implementation of the research management system at the National University of Laos is presented in the following tables, accompanied by corresponding interpretations.

Table 1. Input of the research management system

No.	Indicators	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level of opinions
1	Resources (researchers, research facilitators, facilities, and budget)	3.78	0.70	Agree
2	Laws and regulations on research by the Government	3.70	0.73	Agree
3	Research documents (manuals) provided by the university	3.61	0.78	Agree
	Average	3.70	0.67	Agree

Table 1 highlights the input factors of the research management system at the National University of Laos, evaluated based on three key indicators: resources (including researchers, facilitators, facilities, and budget), government laws and regulations, and research documents (manuals) provided by the university. Respondents rated the overall input components at an "Agree" level ( $\bar{x} = 3.70$ , S.D. = 0.67), indicating a consensus that these critical elements are available and adequately allocated to support research activities.

Among the individual indicators, resources were rated the highest ( $\bar{x} = 3.78$ , S.D. = 0.70), followed by laws and regulations governing research ( $\bar{x} = 3.70$ , S.D. = 0.73). However, the research documents (manuals) provided by the university received the lowest rating ( $\bar{x} = 3.61$ , S.D. = 0.78), suggesting significant concerns regarding their organization. In particular, respondents pointed out issues with the clarity and structure of the manuals, specifically regarding proposal writing, as well as the monitoring and evaluation processes for research projects.

In connection to the item of research documents, the research manuals are. Although all items fall within the "Agree" range, the ratings are only slightly above moderate, suggesting room for improvement.

Table 2. Process of the research management system

No.	Indicators	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Frequency of practice
1	Research proposal writing	4.03	0.58	Frequent
2	Monitoring	3.82	0.69	Frequent
3	Assessment and approval	3.86	0.69	Frequent
4	Research dissemination	4.01	0.58	Frequent
5	Utilization of research results	3.50	0.89	Sometimes
	Average	3.77	0.63	Frequent

Table 2 outlines the process of the research management system at the National University of Laos, focusing on five key indicators: research proposal writing, monitoring, assessment and approval, research dissemination, and the utilization of research results. Overall, respondents perceive the process to be practiced at a "Frequent" level ( $\bar{x} = 3.77$ , S.D. = 0.63), indicating that the various stages of the research management system are regularly implemented. Among these indicators, research proposal writing ( $\bar{x} = 4.03$ , S.D. = 0.58) and research dissemination ( $\bar{x} = 4.01$ , S.D. = 0.58) are the most frequently practiced. Following closely, the assessment and approval process ( $\bar{x} = 3.86$ , S.D. = 0.69) and monitoring ( $\bar{x} = 3.82$ , S.D. = 0.69) are also frequently carried out, although slightly less so. However, utilizing research results is identified as the least frequently practiced aspect, with a rating of ( $\bar{x} = 3.50$ , S.D. = 0.89), highlighting a notable gap in the process. This suggests challenges in the mutual agreement on how research results should be utilized and insufficient monitoring of the application of these results.

Table 3 presents the output of the research management system at the National University of Laos. Overall, respondents rated the output at an "Agree" level ( $\bar{x} = 3.74$ , S.D. = 0.69), indicating that the research outputs generally meet the basic standards and expectations. The most highly rated aspect is aligning research results with social and economic development goals ( $\bar{x} = 3.82$ , S.D. = 0.76). This is closely followed by applying scientific methods in conducting research ( $\bar{x} = 3.81$ , S.D. = 0.64). Respondents also agreed that the research results are considered reliable ( $\bar{x} = 3.79$ , S.D. = 0.64) and are being utilized ( $\bar{x} = 3.67$ , S.D. = 0.88). Although the outputs are generally positive, the data

suggests room for further improvement in ensuring that research outcomes are fully leveraged and consistently meet high standards.

Table 3. Output of the research management system

No.	Indicators	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level of opinions
1	Acquired research results conducted by applying scientific methods	3.81	0.64	Agree
2	Acquired reliable research results	3.79	0.64	Agree
3	Acquired research results accepted to publish domestically and internationally	3.77	0.73	Agree
4	Acquired research results consistently with social and economic development	3.82	0.76	Agree
.5	Acquired research results that can be utilized	3.67	0.88	Agree
	Average	3.74	0.69	Agree

Table 4. Feedback on the research management system

No.	Indicators	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level of opinions
1	Improve research management through an annual meeting organized by the Research and Academic Service Office, National University of Laos.	3.84	0.72	Agree
2	Improve research management through other meetings with 13 faculties, the National University of Laos, and stakeholders	3.78	0.80	Agree
3	Improve research management through Internal Quality Assurance (IQR)	3.63	0.90	Agree
4	Improve research management through External Quality Assurance (EQR)	3.59	0.93	Agree
	Average	3.71	0.76	Agree

Table 4 presents the feedback on the research management system at the National University of Laos. Overall, feedback is rated at an "Agree" level ( $\bar{x} = 3.71$ , S.D. = 0.76), indicating consensus among respondents that improvements are necessary. Specifically, respondents believe that the research management system should be enhanced through regular meetings with relevant stakeholders and internal and external quality assessments. The highest priority for improvement is the suggestion of organizing an annual conference led by the Research and Academic Service Office of the National University of Laos ( $\bar{x} = 3.84$ , S.D. = 0.72). In addition, meetings with the 13 faculties within the university and critical stakeholders are also seen as essential ( $\bar{x} = 3.78$ , S.D. = 0.80). Moreover, there is recognition of the need for improvement through both internal ( $\bar{x} = 3.63$ , S.D. = 0.90) and external quality assessments ( $\bar{x} = 3.59$ , S.D. = 0.76), although these are rated slightly lower, suggesting that they still require attention but may not be the top.

The following elements summarize the additional opinions on the current research management system at the National University of Laos:

**Input:** While the system's input is generally acceptable, several concerns have been raised. The primary issue is insufficient budget allocation, compounded by unorganized research manuals and outdated research facilities, especially laboratories and related equipment. Additionally, the national financial regulations do not align with the current research promotion policy set by the Ministry of Education and Sports, creating further constraints. To ensure consistent practice, it is essential to establish comprehensive research guidelines for faculties and relevant stakeholders. Clear instructions on utilizing these guides should be communicated to all staff, ensuring a unified understanding and practical implementation across departments.

**Process:** The major challenge in the process lies in the mechanism for utilizing research results, which remains underdeveloped. Other issues include difficulties in proposal writing, particularly the limited access to proposal feedback. Monitoring research progress is also problematic due to a lack of clear research management guidance. To effectively utilize research results, it is crucial to designate an intermediary stakeholder or broker responsible for bridging the gap between researchers and end-users. This role would facilitate communication, ensuring that research findings are accurately translated, disseminated, and applied to meet the needs of relevant audiences.

**Output:** While the research results are generally considered reliable, concerns have been raised about the reliability of specific findings due to a lack of systematic research procedures and insufficient control over data collection. These issues contribute to inconsistencies in the utilization of research outcomes, particularly in addressing social and economic development needs. This gap significantly undermines the research's potential impact and practical application, highlighting the need for stricter research methodologies and better alignment of results with development objectives.

**Feedback:** Although annual research improvement meetings are regularly held at the National University of Laos, persistent problems and challenges are often overlooked. To enhance the effectiveness of these meetings, it is essential to implement a more structured follow-up process to ensure that identified issues are addressed and resolved. Additionally, incorporating input from wider stakeholders - including researchers, faculty, and external partners - can provide diverse perspectives and foster collaborative problem-solving.

### 3.2 Discussion

**Input:** While the input of the research management system at the National University of Laos is generally regarded as acceptable, significant concerns persist. The primary issue is the insufficient budget allocation, which restricts the availability of necessary resources. This issue is compounded by unorganized research manuals and outdated facilities, particularly laboratories and related equipment. As Kamalakanan,

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Nguyen, and Tran noted, constraints constitute a significant challenge in developing countries, hindering research capacity and overall national development [17], [18]. Without adequate funding, critical aspects of research, such as infrastructure and human resources, suffer. Moreover, the national financial regulations do not align with the current research promotion policies of the Ministry of Education and Sports, creating additional challenges for researchers as the lack of a supportive financial framework stifles innovation and progress [19]. These findings are consistent with the reports from the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Science Management [20], highlighting the need for better financial strategies to support research.

**Process:** The process aspect of the research management system faces several challenges, particularly in utilizing research results. Although research proposal writing and monitoring are regularly practiced, the mechanism for utilizing research results remains underdeveloped. According to Poiroux et al., one of the critical issues in research is the gap between knowledge generation and its application, often due to inadequate systems for translating research into actionable policies or innovations [21]. The limited access to feedback on proposals exacerbates the problem, leaving researchers without clear guidance to improve their work. Deepali and Chavan argue that the absence of structured feedback processes in research institutions can lead to subpar research output [22]. Monitoring research progress is another concern, as the lack of clear management guidance hampers researchers' ability to stay on track and meet expected standards. Improved guidance and feedback mechanisms are necessary to strengthen the research process [23].

**Output:** The reliability of research results at the National University of Laos is generally recognized, but notable concerns exist. A lack of systematic research procedures and insufficient control over data collection has led to inconsistencies in the research outcomes. Bias, poor methodology, and inadequate sample sizes undermine the reliability of results, as highlighted by Poiroux et al. [21]. Furthermore, the inconsistencies in utilizing research outcomes, particularly in addressing social and economic development, significantly reduce the potential impact of the research conducted. Their value diminishes without a clear strategy for applying research findings in real-world contexts. Kamalakanan emphasized that aligning research outputs with development goals is essential for driving societal progress [17]. Stricter research methodologies and better alignment of results with these goals are needed to ensure that research has a meaningful impact.

**Feedback:** While annual research improvement meetings are regularly conducted at the National University of Laos, they often fail to address persistent problems and challenges effectively. This is partly due to a lack of structured follow-up processes, which leaves identified issues unresolved. Poiroux et al. emphasized the importance of continuous feedback and regular assessments to ensure that research systems evolve in response to emerging challenges [21], [24]. Incorporating input from broader stakeholders, including researchers, faculty, and external partners, fosters collaborative problem-solving and brings fresh perspectives. Liao highlighted the role of domestic and international research networks in improving research outcomes [25]. These networks facilitate the exchange of knowledge and resources, enabling institutions to enhance their research

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quality through collaboration. Strengthening these networks and ensuring comprehensive and inclusive feedback mechanisms can significantly improve the research management system [26].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The research aimed to investigate the current state of implementation of the research management system at the National University of Laos, focusing on four elements: Input, Process, Output, and Feedback. The findings indicate that respondents generally agreed that research inputs are available and organized, though their level of agreement remains only slightly above moderate. Notably, limited budgets and disorganized research manuals were identified as significant concerns. Regarding the research process, practices were reported to occur frequently; however, there is a critical need to enhance the methods for utilizing research results and provide feedback on proposal writing and research management guidance, which are currently lacking. The output element was generally acknowledged to meet basic requirements. Nevertheless, there are concerns regarding the reliability of some research results, which are not consistently applied to social and economic development.

Regarding feedback, respondents agreed that the research management system requires improvement through regular meetings with stakeholders and internal and external quality assessments. However, it is essential to note that existing problems and challenges have not been adequately addressed. To enhance research management, managers should prioritize key strategies. Securing adequate financial resources is essential for supporting research initiatives. Providing comprehensive research guides will equip researchers with the necessary tools for navigating the process effectively. Improving the utilization of research outputs ensures that findings are applied in practical contexts, maximizing their impact. Strengthening feedback processes fosters a dynamic research environment, promoting continuous improvement based on insights from researchers and stakeholders. By focusing on these areas, research managers can optimize their research management systems and drive meaningful institutional advancements.

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