

The Current Situations of Implementation in the Postgraduate Education Administration System at the National University of Laos

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 2025-12-29

Revised 2026-03-11

Accepted 2026-03-17

Keywords:

Administration system
National University of Laos
Postgraduate education

ABSTRACT

Postgraduate education administration at the National University of Laos has been a growing concern due to its improper management. This study, therefore, examines the current implementation of the administrative system using a quantitative approach. The data were collected from the target group of all 136 administrators and academic staff involved in postgraduate education administration. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data. The document synthesis identified four key dimensions of the postgraduate administration system - curriculum management, teaching and learning management, student affairs, and academic title management. Each dimension was structured around input, process, output, and feedback components. The findings revealed that respondents rated all dimensions highly, indicating that the system is generally effective. However, significant challenges were identified across all components. These included limited budgets, shortages of specialized and qualified staff, and outdated facilities (input); complex and time-consuming procedures and insufficient needs assessments (process); delays in academic progress and curricula misaligned with current demands (output); and weak stakeholder collaboration and slow responsiveness to change (feedback). Overall, this study contributes academically by offering a systematic framework for postgraduate education administration and, practically, by providing evidence-based guidance to improve administrative effectiveness at the National University of Laos.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Resolution of the 11th Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party has identified the development of quality human resources as an important factor in promoting socio-economic development and creating quality economic growth [1]. In order to enhance the development of human resources, the government has promulgated the Decree on the

National Human Resources Development Strategy to 2025 and set a vision to 2030, stating that “develop human resources into the main productive force that can respond to sustainable socio-economic development in the direction of industrialization and modernization, and can integrate and compete with the region and the world” [2]. The Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic has also provided budgets for human resources development, infrastructure development, vehicles, equipment, teaching and learning media, and various educational facilities, including health and nutrition promotion [3].

In relation to human resource development, higher education plays a crucial role in providing academic programs ranging from associate to doctoral degrees, promoting lifelong learning to develop scholars, specialists, researchers, and scientists; within this structure, higher education comprises associate, bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, and postgraduate education programs. For postgraduate education, it is specified in separate regulations [3], [4], [5]. Higher education promotes lifelong learning to develop competent scholars, specialists, researchers, and scientists. The curriculum serves as a foundational document that defines educational principles and objectives, the structure of subject content, methods for organizing teaching and learning at each level, and approaches to measurement and evaluation, ensuring that learners acquire appropriate knowledge, abilities, skills, intellectual capacity, and moral qualities. Curricula may take the form of national, local, international, or bilingual education curricula [3].

Furthermore, the content of the national education curriculum must ensure the three characteristics and five fundamentals of national education, and integrate with the region and the international community. For the content of the national education curriculum to be uniform throughout the country, localities with special features, potential, and outstanding wisdom may determine the content of their local education curricula upon approval by the Ministry of Education and Sports. For international curricula or bilingual curricula between the Lao language and a foreign language, it is specified in separate regulations [3]. Regarding curriculum development and improvement, educational institutions can develop and refine their curricula in line with the educational development strategy plan, with the approval of the Ministry of Education and Sports [3].

In connection to that, the Law on Higher Education states that the state's policy on higher education is: The state encourages Lao citizens to have access to higher education according to their knowledge, abilities, and needs for national socio-economic development and the strategic plan for the development of higher education in each period, promotes investment and development of higher education to grow and strengthen both in quantity and quality, including scientific research, technology, and academic services to society and the community by recruiting personnel, providing budgets, infrastructure, vehicles, materials, modern techniques and technologies, encouraging, promoting, and utilizing excellent students, those with talents and special abilities, including the disadvantaged, and allowing individuals, legal entities, and organizations, both domestic and foreign, to invest and participate in the development of higher education [6], [7].

To help strengthen higher education, the National University of Laos (NUOL) plays a key role as a national center of education and culture, with responsibilities that include training scholars, researchers, and scientists across various fields, preserving and promoting

the fine arts, culture, and traditions of the nation and its ethnic communities, and providing technical services to society [8], [9], [10]. In this context, postgraduate education management at NUOL is already known to vary considerably across faculties due to differences in organizational structures, administrative arrangements, and operational practices, resulting in inconsistencies in the implementation of postgraduate education activities. In particular, key administrative areas—including curriculum management, teaching and learning management, student affairs, and academic title management—are not yet governed by a unified and systematic framework, and coordination among the Postgraduate Studies Office, faculties, university-level administration, and the Ministry of Education and Sports remains fragmented and insufficiently organized [11]. Despite recognition of these structural and coordination challenges, the actual effectiveness of the existing postgraduate education administration system, its consistency in practice, and its responsiveness to the evolving needs of postgraduate education remain unclear. Therefore, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the current implementation, challenges, and opportunities of the postgraduate education administration system, thereby establishing a systematic knowledge base to support informed decision-making, strengthen coordination across institutional levels, and guide future improvements in postgraduate education management at the university.

2. METHOD

To investigate the current situation of implementation of the postgraduate education administration system at the National University of Laos, the study was conducted through a quantitative approach by examining the components and indicators of postgraduate education administration through a review of relevant documents, concepts, theories, and research articles related to the postgraduate education administration system of the National University of Laos. The elements and indicators were refined in collaboration with education administrators from the Office of Postgraduate Studies and the faculties. Subsequently, a questionnaire was developed based on these synthesized elements and indicators. Data were then collected from the target group, processed, analyzed, and interpreted in accordance with the research objective.

Regarding the conceptual framework for the postgraduate education administration system at the National University of Laos, through reviewing related documents, it has been established, encompassing four key elements: input, process, output, and feedback [12], [13], [14]. Within the process element, four sub-elements have been identified: curriculum management, teaching and learning management, student affairs, and academic title management [15], [16].

To examine the current situations of implementation of the postgraduate education administration system at the National University of Laos, the target group used in the survey consisted of all 136 participants who are associated with post graduate education administration ranging from deans/deputy deans of 12 faculties, director/deputy director of Lao-Japan institution, director/deputy director of the Postgraduate Office, heads and deputy heads of departments with postgraduate courses, heads and deputy heads of postgraduate divisions, and affiliated academic staff at the National University of Laos.

The research instrument utilized was a questionnaire divided into three sections. Part One gathered general information about the respondents, including workplace name, sex, age, work experience, qualifications, and work position, presented in a checklist format. Part Two assessed the current implementation of the postgraduate education administration system at the National University of Laos, using a five-point Likert scale for responses. Part Three invited additional opinions and comments on the implementation of the postgraduate education administration system through open-ended questions, allowing for more nuanced insights from respondents.

The researcher developed and validated the instrument through a series of methodical steps as follows: Elements and indicators were reviewed and synthesized from relevant theories and previous studies; Bring the created questionnaire to the advisor and co-advisor to check and make corrections; The questionnaire was validated with the assistance of five experts in education administration in Faculty of Education at the National University of Laos, who evaluated the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) for content and construct validity [17]; Finally, the questionnaire was refined and its reliability tested with 30 staff at the three faculties, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.95, indicating excellent reliability [18]. For the Data Collection and Analysis, the researcher collected 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 12 affiliated faculties including departments, divisions, and one institute and Office of postgraduate studies 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; The completed questionnaires were collected and subjected to statistical analysis. For Part One, frequency distributions and percentages were calculated. For Part Two, the mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.) were computed for each item, and the results were interpreted according to the specified criteria. For Part Three, a descriptive approach was employed to analyze the qualitative content [19].

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. The research ensured inclusive participation by all stakeholders involved in postgraduate education administration at the National University of Laos, with careful consideration of work positions, gender balance, and professional experience to maintain fairness and representation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. RESULTS

The questionnaire administered to the target group consists of three main sections: general demographic information about the respondents; an evaluation of the current state of the postgraduate education administration 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 components and indicators of postgraduate education administration are divided into 4 components: Input, Process, Output, and Feedback. In which each component has four aspects: curriculum management, teaching and learning management, student affairs, and academic title management.

The general respondent information shows a slight gender imbalance, with females accounting for 45.6% and males for 54.4%. The largest age group comprises the upper 40s, making up 79.4%, followed by the 30-40 age group at 19.9%. In terms of work experience, 52.9% of respondents have over 20 years of experience, followed by 22.8% with 16-20 years, 17.6% with 11-15 years, and 6.6% with less than 10 years. As for qualifications, the majority hold a master's degree (65.4%), while 32.4% have a doctoral degree and 1.5% possess a bachelor's degree. For work position, 35.3% of respondents are Deputy Head of Department, while those with academic staff are 19.1%, followed by Deputy Head of Division 15.4%, Head of Department 14%, Head of Division 10.3%, and 2% possess a Dean or Vice Dean of Faculties.

The current situation of implementation of the postgraduate education administration system at the National University of Laos is presented in the following tables, accompanied by corresponding interpretations.

Table 1. Curriculum management

No.	Curriculum management	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level of opinion
1	Input	3.91	0.62	High
2	Process	3.74	0.62	High
3	Output	3.75	0.67	High
4	Feedback	3.56	0.61	High
	Average	3.73	0.57	High

Table 1 highlights that the inputs are at a good level ($\bar{x} = 3.91$, S.D. = 0.62), but there are also budget constraints and a lack of specialized personnel. Overall, the process is seen to be operating at a relatively good level ($\bar{x} = 3.74$, S.D. = 0.67), but there are still problems in the monitoring and evaluation process, which is not yet as good as it should be, with many steps and a long time. In terms of results, it is found to be in line with the standards ($\bar{x} = 3.75$, S.D. = 0.67) but is not considered to be as acceptable as it should be. In terms of input data, the university is seen to be at a moderate level ($\bar{x} = 3.56$, S.D. = 0.61), and lessons have been learned, but outstanding problems have not been resolved as well as they should be.

Table 2. Teaching and learning management

No.	Teaching-learning management	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level of opinion
1	Input	3.90	0.74	High
2	Process	3.85	0.60	High
3	Output	3.83	0.63	High
4	Feedback	3.94	0.66	High
	Average	3.88	0.57	High

Table 2 highlights that the inputs are rated as good ($\bar{x} = 3.90$, S.D. = 0.74), but there are still personal limitations. The overall process is seen to be operating at a relatively good level ($\bar{x} = 3.85$, S.D. = 0.60), but there are still problems in the monitoring and evaluation process, and it takes a long time. In terms of results, it is found to meet the specified criteria ($\bar{x} = 3.83$, S.D. = 0.63) but is not considered to be acceptable in terms of reliability. In terms

of input data, the university is seen to be at a good level ($\bar{x} = 3.94$, S.D. = 0.66) and lessons have been learned, but outstanding problems have not been resolved.

Table 3. Student Affairs

No.	Student affairs	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level of opinion
1	Input	3.84	0.66	High
2	Process	3.90	0.80	High
3	Output	3.64	0.66	High
4	Feedback	3.76	0.72	High
	Average	3.79	0.90	High

Table 3 highlights that the inputs are rated as good ($\bar{x} = 3.84$, S.D. = 0.66), but there are still limitations in personnel and facilities. Overall, the process is seen to be very well implemented ($\bar{x} = 3.90$, S.D. = 0.80), but there are still problems in the monitoring and evaluation process and the implementation of research results that are not done as well as they should be. In terms of results, they are found to be good ($\bar{x} = 3.64$, S.D. = 0.66), but it still takes a long time for students to complete their studies. In terms of input, the university is seen to be at a good level ($\bar{x} = 3.76$, S.D. = 0.72).

Table 4. Academic title management

No.	Academic title management	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level of opinion
1	Input	3.91	0.70	High
2	Process	3.84	0.69	High
3	Output	3.69	0.70	High
4	Feedback	3.69	0.80	High
	Average	3.78	0.71	High

Table 4 highlights that the inputs are at a good level ($\bar{x} = 3.91$, S.D. = 0.70), but there are still limitations in terms of academic performance and unclear legislation. In terms of the overall process, it is seen that the operation is at a good level ($\bar{x} = 3.84$, S.D. = 0.69), but there are also problems in the process of many steps, and it takes a long time. In terms of the results, it is found that it is at a good level ($\bar{x} = 3.69$, S.D. = 0.70), but there are still limitations in some fields. In terms of input data, it is seen that the university is at a relatively good level ($\bar{x} = 3.69$, S.D. = 0.71), but the process is long, and the legislation is unclear.

Table 5. Postgraduate education administration system

No.	Academic title management	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level of opinion
1	Curriculum management	3.73	0.57	High
2	Teaching and learning management	3.88	0.57	High
3	Student affairs	3.79	0.90	High
4	Academic title management	3.78	0.71	High
	Average	3.80	0.60	High

Table 5 showed that all four aspects are viewed at the High level of agreement. This means that the Postgraduate Education Administration system is generally good, but several concerns are still underlying its practice, such as:

- a. Input – insufficient budget, field expertise teachers, unqualified responsible staff and committee, and insufficient and outdated facilities.
- b. Process – facilities provision is complicated and time-consuming, due to a lack of an intensive need assessment survey and tracer study.
- c. Output – delayed learning progress and achievement, the curriculum does not meet needs.
- d. Feedback – lack of collaboration among related stakeholders and a lack of quick response to changes.

Regarding the additional section (Part Three of the questionnaire), the interviewees' opinions were consistent with the quantitative results. The respondents further suggested the need to improve the management structure and operational mechanisms of the postgraduate education administration system, and to ensure closer implementation, monitoring, and systematic evaluation.

3.2. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the postgraduate education administration system at the National University of Laos (NUOL) is perceived as high across core administrative components, namely curriculum management, teaching and learning management, student affairs, and academic title management. This overall positive evaluation suggests that the university has established a functional administrative structure that effectively supports postgraduate education. Nonetheless, despite these strengths, several systemic challenges remain, underscoring the need for ongoing improvement and strategic reform.

The high evaluation of curriculum management reflects NUOL's efforts to align postgraduate programs with national education policies and institutional regulations. Effective curriculum management has been widely recognized as critical for enhancing academic quality and ensuring that curricula are responsive to evolving educational and societal needs [20]. However, the results suggest that some curricula may not fully align with current labor market demands, indicating a need for greater integration of external stakeholder expectations and labor market trends into curriculum planning - a challenge also noted in studies of higher education governance and strategic alignment with employment demands [21]. In addition, the findings suggest limited integration of digital technologies and data-driven management systems in postgraduate administration. Contemporary higher education institutions increasingly rely on digital governance and information systems to enhance transparency, efficiency, and quality assurance [22]. Strengthening digital infrastructure and administrative competencies would therefore further improve the effectiveness and sustainability of postgraduate education management at NUOL [23].

In terms of teaching and learning management, the findings reveal strong instructional practices and commitment among academic staff, aligning with prior research asserting the importance of instructional quality and academic supervision for effective

postgraduate education [24]. However, identified constraints, such as limited resources and outdated facilities, may hinder innovation in teaching and limit opportunities for research-based and technology-enhanced instruction. Addressing these issues is critical to improving the teaching and learning environment and to supporting academic staff in adopting contemporary instructional strategies.

Student affairs administration was also rated positively, particularly in academic guidance and administrative support. Despite this, issues such as delayed academic progress and complex administrative procedures persist. These results align with broader evidence that inefficient administrative processes can negatively affect student satisfaction and progression, highlighting the need for streamlined procedures and enhanced coordination across units to improve service efficiency and student outcomes [25].

Academic title management emerged as an influential component affecting staff motivation and professional development. Although existing policies provide a structured framework for academic promotion, limitations related to transparency, workload allocation, and research support were noted. This finding is consistent with existing studies, which indicate that transparent promotion criteria, balanced workload distribution, and adequate research support significantly influence faculty motivation, job satisfaction, and career advancement in higher education institutions. Effective academic title management should therefore be integrated with targeted professional development opportunities and institutional research strategies to sustain academic excellence and organizational performance [26].

Overall, the findings underscore that, despite ongoing reforms, higher education administration in Laos continues to face structural and resource-related challenges. Strengthening stakeholder collaboration, improving feedback mechanisms, and adopting evidence-based administrative practices are vital to enhancing the effectiveness, sustainability, and international competitiveness of postgraduate education administration at NUOL. Such improvements are consistent with contemporary discussions on strategic education administration and the need for adaptive governance frameworks that respond to internal and external demands [27].

4. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, all four components—curriculum management, teaching and learning management, student affairs, and academic title management—were evaluated highly, indicating that the postgraduate education administration system is generally effective. Nevertheless, several underlying challenges remain in its implementation. These include insufficient budget allocation, a shortage of teachers with appropriate field expertise, unqualified staff and committee members, and inadequate or outdated facilities. Additionally, slow and time-consuming work processes, the absence of rigorous needs assessment surveys and tracer studies, and delays in student learning progress and achievement were observed. Inconsistencies between the curriculum and actual needs, limited collaboration among relevant stakeholders, and insufficient responsiveness to emerging changes further highlight areas requiring improvement.

To address these issues, the university should allocate additional resources to support postgraduate education activities, including staff training, teaching resources, and facility upgrades. Outdated work procedures and documents should be revised to reflect current needs, and rigorous needs assessments and follow-up studies should be implemented to ensure the quality of student recruitment and curriculum development. Strengthening collaboration among relevant stakeholders is also essential. Overall, the system was found to be feasible, appropriate, accurate, and useful in many respects, providing a solid foundation for ongoing improvement and strategic development.

Despite its contributions, this study presents several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research relied primarily on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be subject to response bias and social desirability effects. Second, the study was confined to administrators and academic staff at the National University of Laos, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to other higher education institutions within Laos or in different national contexts. Third, a cross-sectional research design captures perceptions at a single point in time and does not reflect potential changes or longitudinal developments in the postgraduate education administration system. Future research may benefit from employing mixed-method or longitudinal approaches and expanding the scope to multiple institutions to enhance the depth, validity, and broader applicability of the findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Bouadam Sengkhambhouthavong, Ph.D., and my assistant supervisor, Somsanith Vongkhamchanh, Ph.D., for their unwavering guidance and support throughout this research. Their invaluable insights and constructive feedback were instrumental in bringing this project to fruition. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to the experts, administrators, and teachers who provided essential information and assistance, making this research possible. Your cooperation and support are deeply appreciated.

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