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## The Gap between Business Management Curriculum and Employability Requirements: A Study among Banks and Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs) in Battambang, Cambodia

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**Abstract.** The critical role of business schools today is to articulate pool skills to graduates to meet the future employability requirements as well as to sustain business ecological system in global context (Araïn & Tipu 2008; Mamun & Mohamad 2009). This suggestion seems to be far from business schools in Cambodia. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to pilot the aforementioned problem, especially, examining the gap between management curriculum, skill development and employability requirements in Battambang, Cambodia. The research methodology used in this study is qualitative approach. Interview was conducted separately with university, employees and industry. The findings from this study revealed that there is no significant gap between curriculum of management education and the demands of industry. However, the gaps heavily rest on the quality employability skills resulted from the process of education. Especially, teachers and their teaching techniques are not so effective and efficient to articulate the necessary skills. Industry thought that graduates obtained 30%-50% skills while graduates rated acquired skills between 50% and 70%. The most contradict point of view was the perspective of university that claimed graduates could acquire 75% - 85% employability skill matching with the demand of industry. Both industry and graduates argued that communication skills, work attitude, IT skills and analytical skills are the most demanding skills for the current industry, but the university cannot provide. However, the result from this pilot study based on the perspective of a small sample, it should be another study to broadly and deeply examine the issue with larger sample size.

**Keywords:** Gap, Business Management, Employability Requirement, Industry

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### 1. Introduction

The critical role of business schools today is to articulate pool skills to graduates to meet the future employability requirements as well as to sustain business ecological system in global context (Araïn & Tipu 2008; Mamun & Mohamad 2009). Paul Uselding (1981); Steven Sass (1985); Charles Howell (1995); David A Hounshell (1996); Alan P. Loeb (1995); Louis Ferleger & William Lazonick (1994); Christopher D. Mckenna

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(1995); Anne Mayhew & Sedney L. Carroll (1993), Campling et al. (2008), and among other prominent scholars provide very accurate accounts of this regards in the United States, Europe and Asia Pacific. Uselding (1981) told us three reasons to have management field established: (1) the growth and changes of economic activities from agriculture to industry (Civil War-1890s); (2) the growth, changes and reforms of industrial structures and workforces owing to social and political issues (1880s-1890s, and (3) the growth of interests, participation and financial supports from business actors to establish and improve business schools from 1881 onwards. Uselding further claimed that prior to the establishment of Wharton School, there had been many people like Moses Brown, Johns Hopkins, Ezra Cornell, James Duke, Leland Stanford, John Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford and Cornelius Vanderbilt funded millions in cash to establish successful business schools.

However, Drucker (2001) claimed that from its inception, business management was not yet accounted into its field and was not originally practiced with business organization.

In between 1920s and 1940s was the turning point of management education to promote intellectual skills and social recognition (Uselding 1981). Thereafter, in 1950 under the influence of Frederick Winslow Taylor, Mary Parker Follett, Max Webber, Chester Barnard (Drucker 2001), Henry Grantt, Morris Cooke, Harrington Emerson (Mckenna 1995), Edwin Gay and Richard Ely (Howell 1995), and other scholars, management education was socially and politically accredited as playing a pivotal role to develop human capital for industry and government agencies (Drucker 2001).

However, it was not yet the end-road of business schools to develop management discipline. The 21<sup>st</sup> century, opening the door of globalization and the age of technology and economy, business management changes its nature as industry demands talented employees to operate business beyond local and national level (Campling et al. 2008). For this reason, business and industry have posed new challenges to academia (Araín & Tipu 2007). For that, it has demanded more attention and participation from researchers, educators and employers to blend business education curriculum with interdisciplinary subjects to promote knowledge and skills for employment market (Araín & Tipu 2007). Several new scholars have examined the current issue of business education, for example, (Colbey et al., 2011), Araín & Tipu (2007); Donald Nordberg (2008); AACSB (2002); Mamun & Mohamad (2009); Forray & Goodnight (2010); Phan, Siegel & Wright (2009); Ghoshal (2005); Predo & Moore (2008); Arbaugh et al (2010); Khuran & Spender (2011) and among other scholars. These scholars gave suggestive ideas to shape new educational framework adjustable with the global business and employment market. In the meantime, management skills have been proposed by management specialists such as Robert L Katz (1974); Griffin (2002); Antoszkiewics (2007); Olum (2004) and the American Management Association (2000) in responsiveness to market demands.

Relatively, this situation and its implication happen to business schools and industry in Cambodia. After experiencing the almost destruction on education, social and economic infrastructure for several decades, educators, researchers, development partners and government agencies pay greater efforts to restore and develop the country through many development plans: the Socio-Economic Development Plan 1996–2000, Socio-Economic Development Plan 2001–05, Public Investment Programme 1996–98, National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003–05, Cambodia Millennium Development Goals, National Strategic Development Plan (NSPD) 2009–2013. Goals and priorities of these development plans are to boost the growth of economy, employment, equity and efficiency to reduce poverty (National Strategic Development Plan 2009-2013). Education Strategic Plan has been singled out to develop human capital, employment and income generation, and investments (RGC, ESP 2009-2013). Through this implementation, the policy of curriculum development was created by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). The MoEYS has integrated the National Curriculum with Local Life Skills Program and Elective Vocational Education Program aiming to develop knowledge and skills of business to students. The core business subjects are accounting, tourism, management, economics, computer, marketing and language (RGC, MoEYS 2004) while the history of business education at higher education in Cambodia may be accounted from the Royal University of Rule and Economics (1948) (Ayres 2000). However, Cambodian education of all levels was interrupted and disconnected between 1972 and 1979. Shortly thereafter the war ended, Cambodian higher education institutions were reopened. The first higher education institution was the Faculty of Medicine in 1979 (Clayton 1999; Duggan 1997). Until 1984, Economics Institute was opened to provide five courses: Agricultural Economy, Industrial Economy, Commerce, Finance, and Economic Planning (Clayton 1999). A decade later with the supports from the National Economics Institute in Hanoi, Asia Foundation and USAID such as by the Georgetown University and the University of Sanfrancisco, Economics Institute evolve to be., due to the growth of industrial sector, management education became popular to students in Cambodia, the institute was evolved to the National University of Management (NUM). Another prestigious university, the University of Management and Economics (UME) specializes in the field management education was created in 1998 called Battambang Higher Education Centre, and by 2000, the Centre was developed to the

Institute of Management and Economics (IME), and until 2006, the institute was evolved to the university ([www.ume.edu.kh.com](http://www.ume.edu.kh.com)). Besides, there are many higher education institutions focus on business education. Today, according to the report from MoEYS (2011), there are 91 HEIs including public and private universities.

For this reason, it is found that Cambodia has received notable achievement of developing human capital and generating job opportunity for Cambodian youth. According the recent report from MoEYS (2011), there are 981 (5.6% female) students were admitted to doctoral degree while 12, 887 (estimated 18.18% female) students have enrolled in master's degree. In addition, 173, 274 (40.95% female) students have registered in bachelor's degree and 20,719 (31.49% female) students pursued associate degree in universities. In addition, by that time, 29,008 students (about 38.91% female) had already graduated and 53.42% of them were scholarship students. In addition, it was noted that the majority of university enrolment has been in the business major, especially in the major of management. The report of MoEYS (2009) revealed that 65,734 university entrants registered in business education. This number if compared to other fields is accounted for 50% of the national enrolment. Also, it found that the major of business management absorbed the highest enrolment at 13% of the total enrolment at university.

Relatively, there are number of studies claimed that Cambodia has increased the quality of workforce among youth. According to the report from ILO (2007), regardless their sexes, workforce has substantially increased 5.6% at primary education, and 6.6% at secondary and 0.6% at higher education. The increase of skill labour can help expand employment market and job growth, especially in the business-related sector. ILO (2011) claimed Cambodian industries has expanded at least 10%, and provided 94 % of employment to graduates at the national level (IFC & The Asian Foundation, 2009) According to D'Amico (2010), 82,000 graduate employees (approximately 55%) of 153,000 in total workers had been employed by business industries in the field of business administration, accounting, finance, banking, marketing, business management and economics.

Researcher argued that high skills and quality of workforce can help generate individual incomes. Comparing salary scale between high educated employees and low educated employees in 2007, the average wage of completed primary employees was only 58.14 dollars/month lower than those employees completed secondary who could earn 61.35 dollars/month. The salary of lower and upper secondary completed workers was not seen as much as different, only US\$ 0.82 per month. However, D'Amico (CDRI & ANZ) (2009) found that the university graduates can boost approximately 35% of incomes higher than those employees do not. For that, it has been noted that quality of education and skills are importance to generate income and economy.

However, mounting of studies and reports criticized Cambodian higher education institutions for not being able to fulfill their tasks on behalf of educational providers. Researchers like Devid Ford (2006) argued that Cambodian higher education institutions have produced surplus graduates who don't have match skills for employment market, and that because lack supports from the government and qualified personnel (Chinh & Dy 2009), lack of financial supports, low accessibility, quality, efficiency and management (Chealy 2009), low capable academic staffs (Chapman 2009), irrelevant curriculum, poor research skills, but over teaching loads (Chen, Sok & Sok 2007), and weak policy (Leng 2010). Besides, the report from Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training testified that only 50% of graduates have been employed, and the unemployment rate in 2008/9 remains high at 13% compare to the last decade. ILO (2011) further emphasized that Cambodia has not been able to provide enough job to Cambodian youth. Approximately 300,000 young job seekers enter the employment market, and will increase to estimated 400,000 the following years. Worse than this, the MoLVT (2011) stresses out that the numbers of graduate from university will be surplus at 220,000 compared to 86,000 jobs provided by market.

The underlying issues between employment market and graduate workers are always found with mismatch skills. In 2008, the YEP Project-CAMFEBA did a survey on Cambodian youth's work skills. The result indicated that only 13 % of the informants agreed "*Youth have "skills or almost skills" for the job market*" while 76 % of the participants stressed out that youth obtained "*they have some extent skills but not all*" required by market's demands. Besides, 11 % of them said youth do not have any "*appropriate work skills*" for employment market.

Significant skill gaps between graduate employees and employers are work attitudes, foreign language, experience, technical skills, communication skills, decision-making, analytical skill, education level and computer literacy (Sandra D'Amico 2009, World Bank 2010; UNDP 2011). The study further pointed out that these employability skills are difficult to find for the positions of management, marketing, sales and service, human resources, accounting and finance. For this reason, the ILO (2011) argued that skill shortages has not only hindered the employability and profitability of Cambodian people, but also pushed Cambodia to the economic deadlock under the global market and economy. To eliminate this problems, previous researchers like Sitha and Sideth, (2009) suggest to improve quality of curriculum at higher education.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the gaps between business management curriculum and employability skills of graduates for banks and micro-finance institutes in Cambodia. To examine this issue, the study has the following objective: (1) to analyze the gaps between business management curriculum at university and employability skills for banks and micro-finance institute in Battambang; (2) to examine the relative issues in the process of creating and providing business education curriculum at university to develop employability skills to students; and (3) to evaluate the process and progress of skills development through learning at university and working with industry in order to explore and compare the effectiveness and efficiency the curriculum and training program of employability skills.

1. How did universities develop and practice business management curriculum to develop employability skills for industry?
2. How did universities and industries collaborate to integrate business management curriculum to develop employability skill?
3. What are the perceptions of business graduate employees toward the development process of employability skills through learning at universities and working environment at industry?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Definition of Key Terms

Business management is the first and foremost key term for this study. Literally, the Cambridge Dictionary defines management as ability of controlling and organizing something (Cambridge Advance Learner's Dictionary 3rd Ed). According to Drucker (2001), management is defined accordingly in the context of legal or political entities. While Overton (2008) defines management as professional skills to perform the four functions: planning, leading, organizing and controlling. Some maintained that management is the same to business administration in the context of business organization. Others argue that management is equivalent to public administration in the context of government agency. While Sheldon (2003) distinguishes precisely the functions and definitions of the terms in the scope of management: (1) Administrative, (2) Management and (3) Organization. Sheldon goes on to explain that the three terms is accounted for three-in-one factor to run industry. Administrative sets a vision and mission, and management carries out the activities in the mission to reach the vision while the process of implementation, control, monitor and evaluation all activities in the mission to accomplish the goal of the industry is the organization. In short, Drucker (2001) summoned that the conceptualization and concept of management, both theory and practice is variables based on the purpose and structure of the organizations.

Another key term used in study is the word "GAP". The Cambridge Dictionary provides two meanings of the word "GAP". One meaning is equivalent to the word "HOLE", while another meaning refers to the word "DIFFERENCE" (Cambridge Advance Learner's Dictionary, 3th Ed.). Meaning that, the "GAP" refers to the emptiness or difference between something. In this context, "GAP" refers to the insufficiency or shortage of something. The final term comes to define is "Employability Skill". Employability skill refers to all employment-related descriptors which cover broader scope and longer-term capacity to develop career and dynamite the prosperity of industry (Curtis and McKenzie, 2001), and all skills needed by individual to meet the demand of workplace and foster work performance and outcomes (Bates and Phelan, 2005). According to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEST 2011), a lot key competencies have been used to address employability skills, for example "non-technical skills (generic skills, essential skills), soft skills, key competencies, transferable skills, enterprise skills and life skills. While Lourie Field (2001) defined Employability Skills as all capacity and competency not only to meet job requirements, but also to develop the enterprises in order to achieve the ultimate goal in business transaction.

Above all, the operational concept of this study is to explore the gap between business management education and employability skills of graduates to meet the employment criteria among bank and micro-finance institutes.

### 2.2. Business Management and Employability skills for Industry

Drawn upon the work of Professor Deniel Wren, Campling et al. (2008) claimed that theory and practice of management was undertaken since the 5000BC of the Sumerians' government and commerce, the Egyptian pyramids construction, the Venice's business in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Li, Wong & Wang (2005) claimed that business and management education is the pivotal discipline to articulate theory, knowledge and skills that can determine the success of business organizations and government agencies. Campling et al. (2008) told us five theories of management discipline.

The classical management approaches encompasses three fundamental management theories: Scientific Management by Frederick W Taylor (1856-1915) & his colleagues Frank (1868-1924) and Lillian Gilbreth (1878-1972); Administrative principles by Henry Fayol (1841-1925) & Mary Parker Follett (1868-1933); Bureaucratic Organization by Max Weber (1864-1920). The classical theory of management emphasizes on logical and reason as the opportunity to achieve the work outcomes and the growth of industry. The behavioral approaches to management focus on human behavior to please work environment, to react to work constraints and to fulfill human needs. The management in behavioral approaches comprises four theories, for example, theory X and theory Y by Douglas McGregor (1960), Hawthorne Studies by Elton Studies (1880-1949), theory of human needs by Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), and theory of personality and organization by Chris Argyris (1923). Quantitative approaches to management emphasizes on the scientific methods to manage industry. It comprises of management science and quantitative analysis today that uses mathematical models such as mathematical forecasting, inventory modeling, linear programming, queuing theory and stimulation to deal with management problems. The theory of modern approaches to management is the new breed of the classical, human resource, and quantitative domains. Chester Barnard (1938) the founder of the modern theory emphasizes on the system thinking and contingency thinking in modern management. This theory assumes that no one best way of management for all business organizations. It claimed that behavior of human is sophisticated and subjective, neither the management practice. It can be rightly applied with one group of employees, situations and organization, but inappropriately used with others. Thus, management practice must match the demands of workplace or *vis-a-vis*.

In general, theory and practice of management disciple attempts to develop employability skills to meet the demands of industry because the growth of industry in the age of knowledge economy needs employees with pool of skills (Campling et al. 2008, Bates & Phelan 2002). Staniec & Poland (2011) cited a few vital skills for business management from Robert L Katz (1974) , for example, technical, human and conceptual skills while Griffin (2002) proposed diagnostic skills; Antoszkiewics (2007) proposed analytical skills and entrepreneurial skills; and Olum (2004) added design skills to management skills. Besides, Staniec & Poland go on to claim that people whose works in management areas have to possess other skills such as communication skills, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and innovative skills. To develop these skills, researcher emphasized that it gives clear role to business schools to have clear vision statement, standardize curriculum, provide relevant and current subject areas, use quality teachers and effective teaching methodology, and engage learning activities with industry (Mamun & Mohamad 2009).

### **2.3. Business Management Education and Employability Skills for Global Industry**

Both theory and practice of management education exists alongside with the emergence of industry. In general, scholars recognize that Wharton Business School is the benchmark success of business education at university (Colbey et al. 2011). It was mentioned that Philadelphia Quaker and Joseph Wharton contributed \$100,000 to the University of Pennsylvania to establish the Wharton School of Finance and Economics in 1881 (Colby et al. 2011). However, rapid growth, changes and challenges of business environment and industry have caused evolution of business management discipline (Arain & Tipu 2008). Previous references in management discipline can be based on scholars like Frederick W Taylor (1856-1915); Frank (1868-1924); Lillian Gilbreth (1878-1972); Henry Fayol (1841-1925) & Mary Parker Follett (1868-1933); Max Weber (1864-1920). Meanwhile, there are some foundations to support the school of business education, for example, Ford Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Laura Spellman Foundation, Sage Foundation, Gate Foundation and Skoll Foundation (Khuran et al 2011). The purpose of these foundations is to develop business management skills and competencies for industry. As a result, there are previous scholars have created management skills, for example, Robert L Katz 1974); (Griffin 2002); (Antoszkiewics 2007); (Olum 2004), American Management Association (2000). In addition, a large of number of articles mentioned on current issues and challenges of management education and management skills for industry, for example, Arain & Tipu (2007); Donald Nordberg (2008); AACSB (2002); Mamun & Mohamad (2009); Furray & Goodnight (2010); Phan, Siegel & Wright (2009); Ghoshal (2005); Predo & Moore (2008); Arbaugh et al (2010); Khuran & Spender (2011) and among other scholars.

The previous studies revealed that the influence of global issues and impacts bring business education to a new legacy. It becomes a global drive complying with technology, demographics and social needs to explore the problems, opportunities, challenges, and advancement for industry in developed nations (Global Foundation for Management Education 2008). By contrast, management education becomes a demanding factor for employment market and social communities in order to generate economic condition in the emerging economic nations since it cannot produce sufficient human capital to match the fast movement of business environment (Arain & Tipu 2007; Anda S, Assistant Prof., College of Applied Science). Therefore, scholars commended that management

education institutions must reform educational goal, course contents, teaching methods and learning assessment and educational outcomes to develop the right employability skills for industry. The same situation goes to Cambodia where education, economy and industry have just been reemerged from several decades of war-torn and social turbulence.

#### 2.4. Historical Landscape of Business Management Education and Employability Skills for Cambodian Industry (1863-1980)

One scholar claimed that since the fall of Angkor in 1431 until after the fall of Khmer Rouge 1980s, there were massive destruction and crisis of Cambodian schooling system and economy (Dy 2004). Education shifted from traditional education to modern European style, from modern European style to with no public education system, and from with no education to modern education as nowadays. In addition, there are mere historical accounts to address business management education at Cambodian higher education institutions and skills for industry although some scholars claimed that Cambodia had already built two universities since the Angkor Empire to articulate knowledge and skills to people.

It is generally noted that Cambodian education in the past carried out by Wats (Pagoda), and Buddhist monks as school teachers (kru); educational philosophy was influenced by religious cosmology and curriculum contents were not effective to articulate Cambodian youth's skill that can meet the modern society (Ayres 2000; Bilodeu et al. 1955). Until the French Protectorate (1863-1954), the first modern school established by French officer, Ferryolles in 1873 in Phnom Penh, and shortly after in other provinces such as Kompot, Kompong Cham and Kratie. In addition, French administration modernized Cambodian education from traditional style to European system, expanded and incorporated community-pagoda schools to government schools, encouraged school girls to participate in learning, and trained teachers to be professional (Fergusson & Masson 2006). Since then, there was the birth of business education in Cambodia higher education. In 1893, the first higher education institution, the College du Protectorat was founded, and followed by the Ecole pratique d'Industrie (later known as College Technique in 1903) (Bilodeu et al 1955; Clayton 2000) and the Ecole d' Administration Cambodgience in 1917 (in 1948 change the name to the the Institut national d'etudes juridiques et tconomiques (National Institute of Legal and Economic Studies) that nowadays called the Royal University of Rule and Economics (RULE) (Ayres 2000; Bilodeu 1955; Clayton 2000; Fergusson & Masson 2006). The French had envisaged two ideologies to Cambodia as well as to other colonial territories across Indochina: (1) civilizing mission (*mission civilisatrice*) and economic development (*mise en valeur*), and (2) "superior civilization"—western government, rational administration, education, medicine, morals, capitalist economics (Furlough 2005). Therefore, the French attempted to build permanent education in Cambodia as part of a plan to control Indochina. Since then, Cambodia higher education was expanded and absorbed students across the region, and by 1920s, Tulley (2005) claimed that that was the period of economic boom due to the expansion of public work, health and education, especially because of the large-scale industry on rubber plantation and natural resource exports such as rice, fish and fish products, livestock, rubber, maize, pepper, cardamom, sugar, soy beans, tobacco, cotton and coffee. Also, it was known as the birth of industrial sector since the first industry the rubber plantation was established in 1942 (Sophal Ear (1995) quoted from Prud'homme (p 86)).

However, Tulley (2005) goes to argue that the prosperity in 1920s did not last long because the France did not have goodwill to really develop Cambodian education, nor to promote Cambodian industry. Scholars like (Clayton 1999; Bilodeu 1955; Ayres 2000) criticized that the main purpose of French was to only strengthen its administrative system as education mainly offered to boys and elite family to become the French civil servants. Another criticism was that French did not build any industry in Cambodia like other colonial countries. As quoted from Prud'homme (1969: 13) in Sophal Ear (1995:36):

*...France did not do anything to develop industry in Cambodia nor even to preserve the existing and evolving craft industry. ...The French neglected to boost Cambodian economy....*

The 9<sup>th</sup> November 1953 marked the independence day of Cambodia from 90-year French colonization, the country continued to implement the European Education styles, the Franco-Cambodian system that ruled by King Norodom Shihanouk (1953-1970). However, the political stability of Cambodia was under siege because of the civil war, Vietnam war and American bombardment in the Eastern parts of the country. Besides, Cambodia was repeatedly threatened by her neighbors: Vietnam and Thailand. Cited Gordon & Cyr (1969), summarized that "*...from the fear of Phnom Penh...Cambodia's neighbors wish to demolish this country from the world. The statement is directly made to Vietnam and Thailand...that seek all circumstances to take over the Khmer nation....*" For that, Shihanouk sought to maintain the French administration in the country. For this reason, Cambodian education system was still influenced by the genesis of French system, and was greatly expanded, especially the great development of higher education began in the 1960s (International Institute for Education

Planning 2011). It was reported that from the 1960-1970, a number of higher education institutions had been erected across Cambodia, for example, Royal University of Phnom Penh (1960), the Technical University (1964), the Buddhist University (1963), the University of Fine Arts (1966), the University of Agronomic Science (1966), the University of Kompong Cham (1965), the University of Battambang (1968) and the University of Takeo-Kampot (1969) (Tan Kim Houn (1974) cited in Fergusson & Masson 2008).

Besides, it was observed that university enrolment had substantially increased from 1480 in 1960-61 to 3708 in 1964-65, and by 3565 in 1969-70 (Fergusson & Masson 2008), and the Cambodian education curricula had been reformed with the assistance from French and Russian government (Clayton 2000). Fergusson & Masson go on to emphasize that the French-Russian assistance on the curricula reform was to promote students' knowledge and skills for industries and commerce. It is also noted that, after the independence, Cambodia built the second industries such as cement plant, jute, textile and cotton mills, sawmills and paper and plywood factories and oil refinery (Tulley 2005). Drawing upon the report of French economist Remy Prud'homme claimed that the industries increased from over 1100 in 1956 to estimated 2700 in 1965.

Unfortunately, Cambodia began to fall into political upheaval during the World War II and Cold War as education was always a topic behind the political propaganda between political parties (Clayton 2000). Shortly thereafter, Shihanouk's education curriculum could not produce graduates with pool of skills to meet the demands of employment market. Clayton highlighted three reasons behind this fail: (1) lack of resources and budget to develop quality education and achievement; (2) the existence of unattainment and dissatisfaction among students toward employability, and (3) the interference of political influence on education system (Clayton 2000). For this reason, it provoked educational crisis that posed a protest from intellectual people until there was a coup d'état led by Lon Nol backed by the United States in 1970 (William 2009). Between 1970 and 1975, Cambodia returned to severely political unrest and war. Monarchism was abolished in military coup, and the country led by Lon Nol who was supported by the United States. Dy (2004) claimed that this was the time of degrading education and economy. Corruption widely existed; civil war was being widespread; schools were destroyed; and teachers fled to join the army. Another factor to backdrop Cambodian's education and economy into turmoil was the United States' bombardment that destroyed schools and infrastructures. Evidence can be testified through the claim of Fergusson and Masson (2008) that the American bombardment completely destroyed Takeo-Kompot Universities and partially damaged University of Kompong Cham. Worse than this, economic crisis and inflation occurred due to backdrop of exports, financial deficits, shortages in resources and work skills, and industrial competition among neighboring countries, especially Vietnam (Tulley 2005). In April, 1975, the government of Lon Nol was vanished by Khmer Rouge, and from then, it is known that the dark age of Cambodian.

Khmer Rouge under the name of Democratic Kampuchea took over Cambodia on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1975, and ended on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1979. By then, people were removed people from Phnom Penh with the excuse to escape from the American bombs. However, there is a burgeoning debate among scholars about educational philosophy of this regime. Fergusson & Masson (2008) concluded that previous education system was completely devastated as Pol Pot formulated eight policies: (1) *Remove people to the work camps (peddy-fields)*; (2) *No markets and industries*; (3) *Demolish previous government system and currency*; (4) *No religious practice*; (5) *Kill all Lon Nol's government officers*; (6) *Live and eat as community*; (7) *Excel Vietnamese from Cambodia*, and (8) *Send army to the border, especially Vietnam border* (Tulley 2005). For this, Ayres (2006) emphasized that Khmer Rouge tried to abolish everything from Cambodian society because of no monetary use, no business transactions, no public transportations, no physical infrastructure constructions, no power supplies, no industries and no formal education. From this, it is quite clear to assume that there was neither education, nor industry existed in Khmer Rouge because scholars always exclude formal curriculum of this regime from their discussions (International Institute of Education Planning 2011). Fortunately, on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1975, the regime was ousted from power by the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (Ayres 1999), and the Cambodian education reemerged with the assistance from Russia, European countries, Vietnam and followed by the United States. Today, it takes almost three decades for Cambodia to restructure, develop and standardize education system and human capital.

## **2.5. Current Landscape of Business Management Education and Employability Requirements for Cambodian Industry (1980-present)**

Shortly after the fall of DK, all levels of education system were restored and developed. In the meantime, higher education institutions were reopened such as the Medical Institute in 1979, the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Higher Technical Institute in 1981, the Economics Institute in 1984), and the Agricultural Institute in 1985 (Clayton 1999). Between 1983 and 1989, there 2,650 Cambodian graduates from the Soviet Union, East Germany, Vietnam, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Cuba. A year later, there were 977 doctors, dentists,

or pharmacists, 2,196 senior secondary teachers, 1,481 foreign language specialists, 474 technical engineers, 400 economists, and 184 agricultural engineers (Clayton 1999).

It has been noted that Cambodia higher education institutions between 1980s and 1990s did not really aim to enhance knowledge and employability skills to meet the demands of labor market. In turn, the educational philosophy and curricula contents attempt to instill communism ideology, to articulate the idea of political issues and interests, and to brainwash people' thinking. Until 2000, Duggan (1997) claimed that Cambodia higher education was accounted in the history as quality education has been improved; curriculum has been reformed and updated; teachers and teaching methods have been developed; quality assurance committee have been created; and educational providers have been closely engaged with industry. According to the recent report of MoEYS (2011), there are 91 higher education institutions including public and private in Cambodia, and there are 981 (5.6% female) doctoral candidates, 12, 887 (estimated 18.18% female) master students, 173, 274 (40.95% female) bachelor's degree and 20,719 (31.49% female) associate degree. In addition, by that time, 29,008 students (about 38.91% female) had already graduated and 53.42% of them were offered scholarship grants from the government.

However, researchers have observed that business education have absorbed the majority of enrolment at university level. According to MoEYS (2009) revealed that 65,734 university entrants registered in business education, especially large enrolment in accounting, finance and management (World Bank 2012). This number if compared to other fields is accounted for 50% of the national enrolment. Also, it found that the major of business management absorbed the highest enrolment at 13% of the total enrolment at university. Today, there are some prestigious universities offer business programs, especially the major of business management education. The prominent example is the National University of Management (Phnom Penh) and University of Management and Economics (Battambang). However, this study chose only University of Management and Economics (UME) to pilot the problem of business management curriculum and employability skills of graduates for industry, included bank and MFI.

## 2.6. University of Management and Economics (UME)

University of Management and Economics (UME) in Battambang was first established in 1998 as the Battambang Higher Education Centre (BHEC), and transformed to be the Institute of Management and Economics (IME) in 2000. Due to the large growing number of students, the institute was developed to be the University of Management and Economics under the sub-decree No. 25៣១៧.០៧ issued on 07th March 2006 by Royal Cambodian Government. Nowadays, the university comprises of six faculties: Faculty of Management and Tourism, Faculty of Arts, Humanity and Foreign language, Faculty of Law and Economics Science, Faculty of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Faculty of Architecture and Engineering. Each faculty offers level of programs: Associate's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree and Doctorate Degree. However, this study chooses only the Faculty of Management and Tourism to be investigated.

## 2.7. Faculty of Management and Tourism

Faculty of Management and Tourism aims to articulate the knowledge and skill of management and tourism through a four-year study program in order to meet the demands of business, government, and non-business/non-government sectors. All fields of studies are to develop professional and vocational skills through practical and experiential learning. The main aim of the faculty is to enhance wide-range of knowledge and skills of business domains that are in the need of local, national and global employment market. The purpose of the faculty is to teach theory and practice of business, to develop human capital responsive to the demands of labor market, to articulate critical and analytical thinking skills, to enhance creative and innovative skills, and to develop a lifelong learning to students. Dean implements the plans set by the university management council and then delegates the tasks head the head of each department. The faculty consists of five departments: Management, Accounting and Finance, Bank and Finance, Marketing, and Tourism. The Management Department provides programs: General management, Human resource management, Project management, International business Management. Students who wish to study at UME must have a certificate of Baccalaureate II or equivalent certificate; take the entrance-exam, have good grade from high school exam. Students who transfer from HEIs must complete all courses required by the university, and those who hold the associate degree or high diploma or certificate of 12th grade, can be allowed in year II or III depends on their qualifications. The curriculum for bachelor degree consists of four years equivalent to 132 credits: foundation year (30 credits), second year 36 credits, third year in field 36 credits, and fourth year in field 30 credits. Faculty as well as the UME has used the following assessment method to evaluate student's learning: *on-going assessment (class attendance, quiz and homework) 25%, mid-term 25%, and final exam 50%*.



### 3. Research Methods

The study aims to pilot the problem of business management education at University of Management and Economics (UME) and Employability Requirements among Banks and Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs) in Battambang, Cambodia. The total respondents for this study are 20, included (1 curriculum designer, 17 graduate employees, and 2 industries). Qualitative Interview is used to collect data from the respondents. The interview was conducted in separated groups with university, employees, and industries. The interview questions were designed with semi-structure that can allow interviewer to depend information while interviewing. Qualitative data analysis was employed: recoding text and interpreting the data.

### 4. Findings

#### 4.1. Perspective from University

##### 4.1.1. Demographic Information

According to the interview, University of Management and Economics is a private university that has been operated over 11 years, developed from the institute to university. Current numbers of undergraduates are over 800, estimated 600 of them enrolled in business-related fields. Last year, between 500-800 graduates, estimated 300-600 of them graduated from faculty of business. The majority of them work with non-government organizations, financial services (bank, micro-finance institution, loan agency). Also, it has been noted that many of graduates from business management have been employed by the information technology such as computer, telephone and telephone line. It was also emphasized that most graduates are employed in the position of office staffs.

##### 4.1.2. Curriculum

The goal of business management is to teach students about business in order to develop human resources in line with the government development policy to foster the growth of economy and poverty reduction. The objectives of the program were formulated through discussion with industries, board managers, ministries and research teams. Also, it is necessary to gain feedback from employment market. The faculty set three objectives: cognitive objective (to obtain enough knowledge and skills of business management for their future careers which is responsive to the demands of industries), effective objective (to gain excellent result not only in academic performance but also work performance) and behavioral objective (to develop the sense of work ethics and nationalism). The research revealed that approximately 70%-80% of curriculum meets the needs of students and industries. They could be the outcome the university initiatives by inviting relevant stakeholders such as government agencies, private industries, NGOs to attend the workshop on the creation of curricula contents. The workshop was conducted to discuss about the current needs of industries, and how to develop the curriculum compatible to that needs. The participants was grouped, accordingly, industries, NGOs, and Government Agencies to discuss and present about what they needs and what curriculum should be. In addition, guest speakers from the industries are also invited to give lecture or case by case teaching.

Teaching methods used are varying depending on subjects. Sometimes, teachers/lecturers give lecture as the teacher-centered method. Sometimes, teachers/lecturers use case teaching, group discussion, whole class discussion and field work. The evaluation of teacher and their teaching has been carried out through observation from senior lecturers and assessment committee. Also, the university surveys the feedback about teachers and their teaching through undergraduates. The final assessment will be done by the assessment committee of the university. The assessment method is used as the requirement of the university in line the regulation of the ministry of education and the accreditation committee of Cambodia.

##### 4.1.3. Employability Skills

There are two more important skills to add to the program: language skills and team work because it is the most necessary requirements by the industry. In addition, IT Skills is also one of the most important needs for industries.

##### 4.1.4. Linkage between university and industry

Normally, industries don't have enough time to consult with the university. In addition, the industries don't open opportunities for university undergraduates to study from them as they are afraid of competition from business environment so they all keep all important information about the company. The most important of all, industries don't provide enough vacancy job if compare with the number of fresh graduates. The industries' satisfaction is at least 70% to 90%. The information was gained through the follow-up research with the industries that used our products (graduates).

According to the interview with the university, a suggestion that the industries should pay more participation with the university through providing further information about what they needs, and about work performance of business management graduate employees. The university needs more internship programs that can help undergraduates to learn and develop knowledge and skills for the real work. In addition, they should open more time to training and opportunities to training undergraduates about the real work system in their companies. Undergraduates need more encouragement from family, university and society to achieve excellent academic result so that they obtain enough ability and capacity for industry. In turn, they have to develop communication skills so that they have good relationship between classmates, university and workplace. Especially, after they graduates and get employed, they must stay in touch with university.

## **4.2. Perspective from Industry**

### **4.2.1. Demographic Information**

The data from the interview revealed that Bank and Micro-Finance Institute are the large size industry with over 10-year operation. The main focus of their business is to provide financial service to customers. Nowadays, they have hired over 100 employees with over 20 staffs of one branch. More than 10 of them are fresh graduates and more than 6 are graduated from major of business. They have been working with the industry over 6 months. In general, they are offered the position of office staff or assistant because they don't have enough experience and skills to obtain higher post. The salary is 200-250 US dollars based on the policy (salary scale) that is compatible to the current living expenses and profit of the bank. Also, it is a salary standard in Cambodia for graduates.

### **4.2.2. Employability Requirements**

The results from the interview told us that the most important skills sought by banks when recruiting business graduates are the basic skills for business function and analytical skills. Similarly, the most important skills the MFIs seek when recruiting business graduates are the basic skills for business function and analytical skills, but it is somehow difficult to find among graduates. Communication skill is another difficult skill to find among banks and MFIs, followed basic skill for business function which is second difficult to find.

To close the skills gaps Banks and MFIs conducted training at their main office training facilities which usually takes place one month. During training, employees are not paid. The training program was created with the discussion from stakeholders such as universities and training institutes (IAV, AEDC and HR). The training is conducted to develop the insufficient skills and familiarize new employees so that they feel confidence with the industry. The training is conducted at the main office in Phnom Penh. The training program was created with the discussion from stakeholders such as universities and training institutes (IAV, AEDC and HR). In addition, the aforementioned skills, the industry are also searching for someone who has research skills that he/she can help the industry to find information and create real scenario that can be the best example. Other skills such as computing skills, accounting skills, problem solving skills are also needed. On average, both banks and MFIs feel satisfied at 50% level with regard to skills requirements among undergraduates.

Through this interview, the industry suggested that the universities should mainstream the curriculum to improve more skills related to foreign language (English), IT and the abovementioned skills. They have to teach undergraduate the real lessons about business organization to personalize them to work environment. Undergraduates should learn more about IT tools and its system related to business function. In addition, they should learn to shape their attitude for work. From experience, the industry found that graduates have only 20% to 30% work attitude meet the satisfaction of the industry. Likewise, they have to develop communication skills and their willingness of work. The industry claimed that graduates have only 40-50% communication skills to the expectation of employers. In addition, the industry further complain that university should redesign business education curriculum that mainly focus on developing specific skills such as communication skills, basic skills for business function, self-independence. The same to undergraduates should develop the suggested skills for employment market.

## **4.3. Perspective from Graduate Employees**

### **4.3.1. Demographic Information**

Findings from this interview revealed that the ages of employees at Bank and MFI are between 20-25 years. Most of them started working before graduating because they need to earn both experience and money as they feel that, in the current situation, insufficient experience might be very difficult to get employed. They all expected to become the assistant or the office staffs after graduating because they don't have enough skills and experience to hold higher position. All of them prefer working in province to capital of Phnom Penh because of job availability and less competition, and living expense is cheaper. The most important thing is convenient for

them because they can live with family. While few of them said they first did not get the job as expected, but a few months later they tried to apply for other job so they get the expected job.

#### 4.3.2. Curriculum and Employability Requirements of Industry

The study found that the faculty members of business education achieved only 50% - 70% of the goals required by the industry. This is due to lack of knowledge and experience among faculty members in the field they taught. Moreover, some of the curricula contents are not compatible to the current needs of industry.

Some respondents said the goal of faculty meet only 20% -30% to the need of the industry. While other said they both have the same goal but the problem results from students. University provides the compatible curriculum of business management but graduates themselves have very low skills and knowledge. While other respondents said that teachers don't have enough knowledge and experience in teaching. Most of them are young and fresh graduates. They sometimes don't understand what they are explaining. The graduate employees also complain that business management program doesn't provide time and opportunity to practice which is the most important activity to promote their skills that relevant to work with an industry. Both banks and MFIs employees reveals that there some mismatch skills and gap especially in IT, communication and analytical. To close these gaps they take their own initiative to attend training and other related workshops.

The study found the suggestions from the employees that the university should recruited professional teachers/lecturers to teach undergraduates program because some teachers/lecturers don't have enough experience in teaching. They don't have enough knowledge relevant to the current needs of labour market. They don't provide enough handout and learning materials. In addition, they don't provide enough time to practice. The university should cooperate closely with the industry to have more internship program so that students are able to learn the real work knowledge and skills. The same goes to the industry. The industry should open more opportunity for students to learn more about the industry. The industry should provide more internship program to university. The industry should have more training program for undergraduates to gain real knowledge and skills so that after they graduate they have obtained enough ability and capacity to work for the industry. In short, the university and industry should have good relationship in term of improving academia and employability skills.

In addition, business graduate workers emphasized that the university should update the curriculum integrating with practical learning activities so that students can practice the real work through applying the knowledge and skills gained from the subject areas. The university should study the employment market in order to create the compatible curriculum to develop skills for labour market. The faculty of business education should not only teach students the knowledge to work, but also teach them the knowledge to open their own business (entrepreneurship knowledge and skills/knowledge innovation). The curriculum of business education should aim to articulate skills to undergraduate while the industry should open more cooperation with university. The cooperation should be carried out to train undergraduates, to share feedback, exchange lecturers and professional staffs to give a presentation and to update the information in the marketplace system. In short, we think that university and industry should create committee to deal with this issue.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This pilot study shows that *gap* exist between management education curriculum and employability requirements of bank and MFIs especially upon productive skills of graduates. However, it can be argued that the answers of all respondents are not in consensus as they see things differently from different aspects. It is clear the university claimed that curriculum of management education is compatible, effective and efficient that can satisfy, at least 80%-90%, with the industry. In addition, graduates emphasized that curriculum of management education meet the needs of industry, but question remained with educational delivery as teachers/lecturers are not qualified. The same answers go to industry to say that curriculum is compatible, but productive skills of students are not qualified that is because of educational providers offered general subject, rather that specific subject areas to develop specific skills. This finding is consistent to Ford (2006) who claimed that the description of higher education in Cambodia is as tricky as the blinds to describe an elephant. As stated earlier, curriculum of management education is effective and efficient, but the problem is skill deficiency of graduates. Contrast to the perspectives of business graduate employees and industry, university claimed that curriculum of management can develop 70%-80% skills demanded by the industry. While industries thought graduates obtained skills between (30%-50%). The bank and MFI claimed that the most difficult skills to find among graduates are work attitude, analytical skills and communication skills while university argued that language, team work and IT skills are the most pivotal skills to articulate to undergraduates. While business graduate employees claimed that they don't have analytical skills, communication skills and critical thinking

skills. They further claimed that curriculum should help develop entrepreneurship skills so that after graduating they are able to open their own business. This finding relatively shows the same results of Ford (2006), Sandra D'Amico (2009), UNDP (2011), CAMFEBA (2008); ILO (2009); and USAID (2006) who claimed that university graduates do not have sufficient skills for industry.

The study did reveals a key issue underlies with work skills of graduates. As mentioned previously, the industry satisfied only 30%-50% of graduates' skills. Especially, they have to provide training program to develop work skills to fresh graduate workers. However, the Royal Government of Cambodia as well as the employment market do not have qualification standard for fresh graduates to enter the job market (ADB 2009).

The first implication from this study revealed that curriculum of management education at University of Management and Economics (UME) is effective and efficient to develop work skills, but only for the entry-level position such as office staff. This implication is consistent to the previous study, for example, the Global Foundation for Management Education (GFME) (2008). The GFME claimed undergraduate program for management education aims at preparing undergraduates for entry-level position for industry. Also, it found that the business program of UME is equivalent to the full-time program of other countries (France, three to four years), Licenciado en Administracion de Empresas (Mexico, four to five years), Bachelor of Science (Netherlands, three years), Bachelor of Business Administration (United States, four years), and Laurea (Italy, three years). However, it was found that management education at University of Management and Economics was overwhelmingly adapted from management education models and theories of modern countries such as the United States, Australia and Japan...etc. The subject areas are general and overlapped, and teachers still use traditional teaching method, lack of practical experience and research skills. To deal with this case, it was suggested by Ranganath to use Activity-Based Learning (ABL) which is a successful model for business education as it can enhance students work skills through structuring learning to activity that will be applied with industry. While other researchers suggested to integrate management curriculum with technology to develop students' creative and innovative thinking so that they will become an entrepreneurs (Phan, Siegel & Wright 2009; Arbaugh et al. 2010).

The second implication of this study is paralleled to the study of Ananda S. Assistant Prof. at College of Applied Science, Arian and Tipu (2007), AACSB (2002). Ananda recommended that business school have to develop business education program such as administrative structure, curricula content, teaching and learning assessment to meet the global demand. However, the study revealed that management education at Cambodian higher education is far behind the international and regional standard because the curriculum still focuses on the theory-based teaching which is not practical. Therefore, the study suggests that university should integrate management education program with interdisciplinary subjects relevant to the current needs of industry.

Third implication of this study revealed that skill gap still becomes the critical issue of concern in Cambodia. This finding is similar to the results of reports from the UNDP (2011); CAMFEBA (2008); ILO (2009); Sandra D'Amico (2009); and USAID (2006). These findings claimed that deficit skills are hindering Cambodia youth from entering local, regional and global job market. Therefore, it is important to have strong cooperation between government agencies, educational providers and industries. In addition, AACSB (2002) suggested that internationalizing business curriculum is a must to prepare undergraduates for global market.

To sum up, the study suggested that to close the gap of management education, graduates' skills and employment standard of industry, we need to develop a new model of management education. The model should integrate three stakeholders into management education. University through the faculty of business and management must update curriculum, pedagogy and learning approaches responsive to the ever-change market in globalization; students have to be well aware of employability requirements, develop managerial, analytical, communication, leadership and strategic skills compatible with the current requirement of employment market, while industry have to gear up their cooperation and supports through providing fund, internship program, jobs, and training to students.

However, the results from this pilot study was drawn upon a small sample size, a single design of data collection, data analysis, therefore, limitations of the study must be acknowledged. The results from the study based on the qualitative test on a small sample size. Larger sample size and sophisticated design should be carried out to ensure validity and reliability. Moreover, a single data analysis was solely used due to a limited resource and scope of study, which might create bias interpretation. Within this context, future research should consider the use of more effective design, larger participants and multi data analysis to avoid any system bias of data translation. Therefore, the further research might be timely conducted to further explore the focus issue with the suggestions provided.

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