

# Key Strategies to Improve the Quality of PhD Programs in Cambodia

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## Abstract

Given the limited quality of PhD programs in Cambodia, this article aims to discuss key strategies to enhance the quality of PhD training as a means to strengthen the country's human capital. It begins by providing a brief background of Cambodia's development vision and highlighting new developments as well as persistent challenges in the education sector. The article then provides an overview of the current state of PhD training in the country before elaborating on issues concerning the limited quality. To address the issues, three key strategies are proposed: (a) improving the quality of PhD supervision, (b) strengthening the research ecosystem and funding mechanisms, and (c) enhancing support systems for PhD students. The article argues that improving the quality of PhD education in Cambodia requires coordinated action and effort from all stakeholders, including the government, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, development partners, higher education institutions, and the private sector. Moreover, promoting the quality of PhD programs should be treated as a national priority to support Cambodia's long-term development goals. The article concludes by offering suggestions for future research on this critical topic.

**Keywords:** PhD training; PhD programs; PhD education; strategies; Cambodia

## Introduction

Emerging from a turbulent past, Cambodia is now striving to strengthen its public and private sectors, including its education system. While significant progress in both quantitative and qualitative aspects has been made in the education sector, the quality of postgraduate education, particularly doctoral programs, remains a critical concern (Thun, 2021, 2025). Some scholars have highlighted the dual issues of PhD inflation and a lack of PhD holders in Cambodian higher education (Thun, 2021), while others have discussed a lack of research engagement and productivity among Cambodian academics (Eam, 2015; Heng et al., 2022, 2023a). These are the critical issues that need to be taken into serious account by concerned stakeholders in Cambodia, particularly in the context of a global knowledge-based economy and globalization, in which intellectual capabilities as well as the production, dissemination, and use of knowledge play a crucial role in driving socioeconomic development and competitiveness (Heng, 2023; Powell & Snellman, 2004; World Bank, 2007).

No doubt, robust PhD programs are vital for fostering and advancing research, innovation, and intellectual capital essential for Cambodia's national development. As Hong and Heng (2025) argued, holding advanced degrees, especially PhDs, is professionally and economically beneficial, and in the Cambodian context, "PhD education holds

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considerable significance for individuals, including women, as it offers pathways for personal and professional growth while also contributing to the broader development of the nation” (p. 138). However, there are persistent challenges that need to be addressed in order to pave the way for high-quality postgraduate education needed to drive Cambodia’s national development and realize its aspirations to become a knowledge-based society and achieve the long-term goal of becoming a high-income country, as envisioned by the Cambodian government ([Royal Government of Cambodia \[RGC\], 2023](#)).

[Heng and Sol \(2022a\)](#) have argued that “education is the key to making Cambodia great again” (p. 13). They noted that in the knowledge-based economy context, “knowledge is power. It is the engine of economic growth, the catalyst for innovation and transformation, and the hope for a sustainable future” (p. 13). Thus, it is imperative to enhance the quality of the education system, particularly higher education, which is widely considered the engine of knowledge production and socioeconomic development ([Breznitz 2014; Heng, 2023](#)).

In this article, three strategies are put forward for relevant policymakers and practitioners to enhance the quality of PhD training in Cambodia. To contextualize these strategies, the article first provides a brief overview of the Cambodian context, with particular focus on the country’s development vision as well as the recent developments and challenges facing its education sector, both the general and higher education subsectors. This is followed by a brief background of PhD training and a discussion of key issues concerning the limited quality of PhD education in the country. These contextual insights serve as a rationale for the proposed strategies to improve PhD training in Cambodia. The article concludes with suggestions for future research on this important topic.

### **Cambodia’s development vision**

After decades of conflict and instability, Cambodia has made commendable progress in rebuilding and reintegrating itself into the regional and international community. For example, it joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1999 and the World Trade Organization in 2003. Thanks to its peace and political stability over the last few decades, Cambodia’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth averaged 7.6% between 2006 and 2015 and was projected to be 5.8% and 6.0% in 2025 and 2029, respectively ([International Monetary Fund, 2024](#)). Cambodia’s GDP per capita increased from US\$250 in 1993 to around US\$1,500 in 2020 ([Heng & Sol, 2022a](#)) and reached US\$2,636 in 2024 ([World Bank, 2025](#)). Cambodia became a lower-middle-income country in 2015 ([World Bank, 2021a](#)) and aims to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income economy by 2050 ([RGC, 2023](#)).

To achieve its development vision, Cambodia has emphasized the need to strengthen its human capital. The Cambodian government, together with concerned stakeholders such as development partners and donor agencies (e.g., the World Bank), has recognized the strong need to enhance human capital in driving Cambodia’s socioeconomic development. This is reflected in key national policy documents, such as the Policy on Higher Education Vision 2030 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport [[MoEYS](#)], 2014), the Cambodian Higher Education Roadmap 2030 and Beyond ([MoEYS, 2017](#)), the Education Strategic Plan 2024-2028 ([MoEYS, 2024b](#)), the National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018 ([RGC, 2019](#)), the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Equity and Employment (Phase IV) ([RGC, 2018](#)), and the Pentagonal Strategy for Growth, Employability, Equity and Sustainability (Phase I) ([RGC, 2023](#)). This increasing focus on developing human capital is in line with the global trend toward human capital development in the context of a global knowledge-based economy ([Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001; World Bank, 2019](#)).

In its Pentagonal Strategy (Phase I), for example, the Royal Government of Cambodia laid out five key strategies to achieve Cambodia's Vision 2050, which is to become a high-income country (RGC, 2023). These pentagonal strategies focus on (a) human capital development; (b) economic diversification and competitiveness enhancement; (c) development of the private sector and employment; (d) resilient, sustainable, and inclusive development; and (e) development of the digital economy and society. Each of these key strategies consists of five sub-strategies designed to achieve the pentagonal strategies (RGC, 2023). In the first key strategy, which places an emphasis on human capital development, there are five sub-strategies, or foci, forming the five sides of a pentagon. These sub-strategies, summarized in Table 1, include "1) enhancement of the quality of education, sports, science, and technology; 2) technical skills training; 3) improvement of people's health and well-being; 4) strengthening of social protection and food systems; and 5) strengthening of the quality of citizenship of a highly civilized society with morality, equity, and inclusiveness" (RGC, 2023, p. 24).

**Table 1.** *Strategy and sub-strategies for human capital development*

Strategy	Sub-strategy
Human capital development	1. Enhancement of the quality of education, sports, science, and technology
	2. Technical skills training
	3. Improvement of people's health and well-being
	4. Strengthening of social protection and food systems
	5. Strengthening of the quality of citizenship of a highly civilized society with morality, equity, and inclusiveness

Source: RGC (2023, p. 24)

As stated in the Pentagonal Strategy, human capital development is essential for economic growth and sustainable development:

The development of human capital is indispensable for promoting sustainable and resilient economic diversification and economic growth. High quality and healthy human capital are strong assets for the nation in increasing economic values, promoting cultural values, and developing new ideas to ensure long-term sustained growth, and dynamic socio-economic development. Therefore, investment in human capital development is critical in responding to the growing needs of the national socio-economic development. (RGC, 2023, p. 41)

This grand policy statement suggests a strong need to develop human capital in Cambodia. In the current context of a knowledge-based economy, driven by the rapid and ever-changing technological advancements, human capital development has become indispensable, requiring undivided attention and sustained efforts to promote human resource capacity (Heng, 2023). In line with this sentiment, the role of higher education attainment, particularly postgraduate education, has become increasingly critical in equipping individuals with advanced knowledge and skills, including research skills, as well as other essential skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed to drive socioeconomic development and improve national competitiveness (Chankseliani et al., 2021; Hong & Heng, 2025; Krstić, 2021).

### **Development and challenges in the Cambodian education sector**

Within the broader context of peace and development, the education sector, both general and higher education subsectors, has received considerable attention from the Cambodian government. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS)

has, for instance, made considerable efforts to introduce reforms to the education system. In general education, a notable reform to high school exit examinations was introduced in 2014, which has effectively curtailed exam cheating among students (Bredenberg, 2022; Donaher & Wu, 2020). There is also the introduction of a New Generation School model, commonly known as NGS, which has significantly improved the quality of general education in the country (Nhem, 2023; Nhem & Kobakhidze, 2025). There are also other projects and initiatives introduced to improve the general education system; for example, projects such as the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) and the General Education Improvement Project (GEIP) have been implemented (Heng & Sol, 2022a; World Bank, 2022). Although limited research has examined the impact of these projects and initiatives, there are positive developments and improvements observed in the general education subsector, particularly in terms of school operations, learning facilities, quality of teachers and school leaders, and quality of education in general (World Bank, 2023). Notwithstanding these ongoing efforts, many challenges remain in the subsector, particularly in terms of inadequate teacher supply, insufficient operational funding for schools, and limited professional development opportunities for teachers (Heng & Sol, 2022a).

In higher education, there are also notable developments. As Heng (2024) noted, despite the various challenges affecting the development of the higher education subsector in Cambodia, there has been “some remarkable progress in Cambodian higher education in recent decades” (p. 1597). Key progress that can be observed includes a substantial increase in the number of higher education institutions (HEIs) and student enrollment, more research activities and output, more research-focused platforms such as research conferences and forums, more local academic journals, and a generally better research ecosystem (see also Heng & Sol, 2021, 2024). Projects such as the

Higher Education Improvement Project (HEIP) and the Second Higher Education Improvement Project (HEIP2) have also been implemented to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and research, as well as enhance institutional and sectoral governance in the higher education subsector (Heng & Sol, 2022a; World Bank, 2021b). However, Cambodian higher education continues to face key challenges related to skills mismatches, limited research output, and fragmented sectoral governance (Heng & Sol, 2022a; Un & Sok, 2018).

Overall, despite notable developments, there are persistent challenges facing both the general and higher education subsectors (see Heng et al., 2022, 2023c; McNamara & Hayden, 2022; MoEYS, 2024a). Therefore, while the above-mentioned efforts and initiatives to improve the overall education system in Cambodia deserve commendation and support for sustainability and ongoing improvement, more efforts, strong commitment, and genuine political will are needed to further improve the education system in the country. Such efforts and commitment are even much needed in the context of higher education considering the many issues facing the subsector. As argued by Ban and Heng (2023), Cambodian higher education “has somehow failed to fulfill one of its main duties, that is, producing high-quality graduates for the evolving industrial needs” (p. 53). Sok and Bunry (2023) also emphasized the need to address several critical challenges facing Cambodian higher education before meaningful and significant developments can be achieved.

### Overview of PhD training in Cambodia

According to the Sub-decree on PhD training (RGC, 2010), there are three types of PhD degrees in Cambodia: PhD, professional PhD, and honorary PhD degrees. PhD degrees are the highest degrees awarded to individuals who have conducted scientific research that creates new knowledge or practices. Professional degrees are for individuals who have engaged in their professional work and



have advanced knowledge based on their work and experience. Honorary PhD degrees are conferred upon individuals with outstanding achievements that contribute significantly to society and humanity. There are, however, two types of PhD training programs: PhD (research-based PhD) and professional PhD (practice-based PhD) (MoEYS, 2012). In terms of supervision, the Sub-decree identifies two types of PhD supervisors: the principal supervisor and the associate supervisor or co-supervisor (RGC, 2010). Each PhD student must be supervised by one principal supervisor who is a full-time faculty member with sufficient research and teaching experiences. Each principal supervisor cannot supervise more than nine PhD students at any given time.

PhD studies in Cambodia can be pursued on either a full-time or part-time basis. Full-time PhD studies can take from three to six years, while part-time PhD studies can take up to eight years (MoEYS, 2012). The minimum requirements for research-based and professional PhD programs differ, particularly in terms of the number of coursework students need to take and the number of credits for their PhD theses, with the research-based pathway requiring a more substantial thesis. The minimum requirements for both types of PhD training programs are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Minimum requirements for research-based and professional PhD programs*

Minimum requirement		Number of credits for research-based PhD programs	Number of credits for professional PhD programs
Coursework	Additional course*	6	6
	PhD-level courses	6	15

Thesis writing and defense	Orientation courses and examinations	9	-
	Professional experience-based report	-	6
	Defense of a detailed research proposal**	3	3
	Publication of an article in a national or international journal***	6	6
	Presentation at a relevant research conference	3	3
	Conducting a seminar	3	3
	PhD thesis****	18	12
Total		54	54

Source: MoEYS (2012)

\* The total number of courses required to earn 6 credits is not specified, but one course typically equals 3 credits.

\*\* The committee for the detailed PhD proposal defense must consist of five members, chaired by the principal supervisor. Other supervisors serve as committee members, along with two other members who have research experience relevant to the PhD thesis topic.

\*\*\* The number of articles required to earn 6 credits is not specified. As a result, some Cambodian HEIs require PhD students to publish one article, while others require two articles. Some HEIs require their PhD students to publish either one article in an international journal or two articles in local journals to earn 6 credits.

\*\*\*\* PhD students must successfully complete both a mock PhD thesis defense and a final PhD thesis defense to graduate. Following the mock thesis defense, HEIs must prepare and submit relevant

documents to MoEYS to seek approval for the final thesis defense. The mock thesis defense committee must consist of seven members, including three external examiners who are not part of the supervisory team. Two of the external examiners must come from other HEIs. The final thesis defense committee must also consist of seven members, including one committee chair, one secretary, three independent examiners, the principal supervisor, and one additional committee member who is not the associate or co-supervisor and has no close relationships with the PhD candidate. This committee must be formally approved by MoEYS based on a request submitted by the HEIs.

### **The limited quality of PhD training in Cambodia**

Within the Cambodian higher education context, a critical issue that has recently drawn considerable attention is the limited quality of PhD training. Some researchers have argued that PhD education in Cambodia is relatively underdeveloped and controversial (Thun, 2021, 2025). For example, there is an inflation of unqualified PhD holders in the country, as many government officials, especially senior ones, as well as businesspeople have become PhD holders, often without going through rigorous PhD training (Thun, 2025). There are also “irregularities concerning school admissions, the poor quality of training and assessment, and the operations of fake diploma mills,” (Thun, 2025, p. 9). Although Thun’s (2025) research draws mainly on personal experiences and secondary data, it provides valuable insights into the challenges facing PhD training in Cambodia, which warrants future research examining the provision of PhD programs and quality of PhD training in the country.

A report by the British Council (2020) noted that most PhD students in Cambodia “can only commit to part-time study, meaning it takes an average of 6-8 years to complete a PhD in Cambodia” (p. 17). The report added that the research capacity of Cambodian universities is limited due to “reliance

on part-time faculty, part-time PhD students, as well as lack of government funding for research” (p. 18). In fact, the limited quality of PhD training in Cambodia was raised by former Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, who was quoted saying that “[w]hen there are too many PhD holders, we have to address this matter. I have said before that we need to look at how many students each tutor has. And are the tutors fully qualified to teach the students? This is something we must investigate” (Ry, 2019, para. 3). He emphasized that if Cambodia “is to develop and advance in all sectors, it starts with human resources, especially at the post-graduate level, because they are a core part of society. So, if the core part of society just has a title or a degree but without quality, what will our society become?” (Ry, 2019, para. 16).

The limited quality of PhD training in Cambodia is a critical issue that needs to be urgently addressed, as weak doctoral programs will continue to hamper Cambodia’s ability to produce highly skilled researchers and professionals, thereby undermining its competitiveness in the global knowledge economy, both in the short- and long-terms (Heng, 2022). Thus, it is essential to tackle the pressing issues that hinder the development of the quality of PhD training in Cambodia. In what follows, this article proposes three key strategies to introduce positive change to the current PhD education landscape in Cambodian higher education.

### **Strategies to improve the quality of PhD programs in Cambodia**

#### ***Improving the quality of PhD supervision***

First, to improve PhD training in Cambodia, it is fundamental to enhance the quality of PhD supervision. This means improving the quality of lecturers or professors who teach PhD-level courses and supervise PhD students. There are challenges to implementing this strategy, as many Cambodian universities rely heavily on tuition fees for operational survival (Mak et al., 2019). There is little incentive for them to invest in faculty development

via effective faculty recruitment, ongoing professional development, and support for research. However, as the situation has gradually improved, there is hope for addressing this issue. For example, MoEYS has recently introduced a directive outlining the need to improve the quality of PhD training in Cambodia (MoEYS, 2025). In the directive, nine key points are emphasized, one of which concerns PhD lecturers, supervisors, and supervision. For instance, one of the key points is stated as follows:

- Lecturers [who teach in the PhD programs] must have PhD degrees, teaching experience, and publications in academic journals.
- Supervisors must have PhD degrees, have publications in academic journals, and have experience as supervisors.
- Co-supervisors can be from other institutions, are practitioners with expertise and experience aligned with PhD students' research topics and must have PhD degrees.
- Each PhD student must be supervised by at least two supervisors (one of the supervisors can be a practitioner from other institutions who has expertise and experience aligned with PhD students' research topics). (p. 2)

The above directive is part of the broader efforts by MoEYS to promote research and the quality of postgraduate education in Cambodia. It offers a valuable starting point for Cambodian HEIs to recruit qualified faculty members for teaching in PhD programs and ensure the quality of doctoral education in Cambodia. In particular, it provides a renewed hope for meaningful improvements in the quality of PhD training in Cambodia. As Heng et al. (2023b) noted, in recent years, there have been considerable efforts put forward by different stakeholders, particularly MoEYS and HEIs, to promote a vibrant research ecosystem in Cambodian higher education; however, significant challenges remain, requiring greater efforts, sustained commitment, and meaningful stakeholder collaboration to improve the quality of postgraduate education and university research in Cambodia.

Sok and Bunry (2021) have argued that “Cambodia is known for developing pretty comprehensive policies, which are not implemented fully” (p. 206). There is also a lack of focus on quality and relevance, with weak quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms (Sok & Bunry, 2023). In this sense, to ensure the positive impact of the newly introduced directive that aims to improve the quality of PhD training in Cambodian higher education, it is critical to put it into immediate practice and rigorously enforce its implementation. Without specific strategies or mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of the new directive and other policies, it is unlikely that significant positive change will occur, leaving the subsector in a state of stagnation, constrained by persistent issues of limited quality and relevance.

### ***Strengthening research ecosystems and funding mechanisms***

Second, it is vital to strengthen Cambodia's Second, it is vital to strengthen Cambodia's research ecosystem and funding mechanisms. While this strategy is widely discussed in the academic literature, particularly about higher education contexts in developing countries (Fussy, 2018; Heng, 2024; Heng & Sol, 2022b), it is complex and takes time to be achieved. With limited resources at both national and institutional levels and a lack of a national funding model for higher education (Sok & Bury, 2023), it is challenging to improve the research ecosystem in Cambodian higher education. However, everything has its beginning. There is a need to shift the mindset of policymakers and academic leaders to ensure they see pathways for positive change or transformation. Most importantly, they need to understand that meaningful change is feasible and that investing in research is the way forward.

With continued support from the government and development partners, Cambodian HEIs will be able to continue to improve their research laboratories, libraries, and access to academic databases. Researchers such as Heng et al.

(2023b) have proposed several strategies to improve the research ecosystem in Cambodia by focusing on establishing Centers of Excellence for teaching and research, implementing professorial ranking systems, incentivizing research activities and outputs, and improving the quality of local academic journals, among other strategies. These ideas are just the tip of the iceberg. Much more needs to be done, particularly regarding the development of sustainable funding mechanisms to support research and innovation.

At present, MoEYS and relevant ministries are considering a new funding model to support research in Cambodian higher education by taking an example of an innovative financing mechanism, called Skills Development Fund, which has been piloted by the Ministry of Economy and Finance to support skills development among Cambodian citizens (Skills Development Fund, n.d.). While the development and implementation of this funding model remain to be seen, it is certain that promoting research and improving the quality of PhD programs in Cambodia require collective efforts and collaboration from all stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, development partners, and the private sector, to build a conducive and sustainable research environment in Cambodia (Heng, 2020; Heng & Sol, 2021). As Heng and Heng (2023) noted, promoting research in Cambodian higher education requires a clear vision, well-defined research policies, and a focused and sustained financial commitment. In addition, it is essential to consider a range of factors (e.g., research-based academic promotion, research funding, research incentives, and research training) that encourage research activities, increase interest in research, and foster a sustained commitment to research, all of which require substantial time, effort, and strong commitment to achieve (Heng & Heng, 2023).

### ***Enhancing support systems for PhD students***

Third, it is critical to provide and enhance doctoral student support systems. In Cambodia, many, if not all, PhD students are working full-time while undertaking their PhD studies. Consequently, according to the author's observation and experience teaching and supervising PhD students, most students who pursue PhD studies have little time to commit to research, resulting in many of them facing unclear research pathways, academic isolation, and mental health issues, which often contribute to prolonged study periods or dropouts. As previously mentioned, most PhD students cannot commit to research on a full-time basis (British Council, 2020). This results in their limited research engagement during their PhD studies. To improve this situation and provide adequate support to PhD students, universities need to establish structured doctoral training programs that support students from the beginning of their doctoral journeys. The training programs should be provided on a regular basis and should include workshops on research methodology, academic writing, research project management, supervisor-supervisee relationship management, and publication skills and strategies.

Experiences from various contexts in supporting research and PhD students, such as those reported by Caliskan and Holley (2017), Chaló et al. (2023), Denman et al. (2018), Fraser (2009), and Manabe et al. (2018), to mention a few, may be worth considering, as they offer valuable insights for the development of effective doctoral support programs. For example, Fraser (2009) discussed a model for developing research training programs in Vietnam through a partnership between RMIT University in Australia and Vietnamese HEIs. To ensure the success of such programs, several important aspects and issues need to be considered, including the involvement of key stakeholders (e.g., pro-vice chancellors or vice-rectors for research, research officers or coordinators, faculty deans or department heads, and academic staff), the provision of research



fellowship programs, English-language training, research methodology training, and effective candidature management (Fraser, 2009). Specifically, the following suggestions may be considered. First, the research training programs should begin with workshops to identify training needs and areas of focus. Then, staff involvement activities (e.g., meetings) are needed to build trust and acceptance. Next, research fellowship programs should be offered to create research engagement opportunities. English-language training is also essential to support students to improve their academic language skills. In addition, research methods courses should be provided, covering key areas such as research design, literature review, statistical analysis, academic writing and conference presentation skills, and thesis examination processes. Last but not least, support for candidature management is vital, particularly in addressing issues related to enrollment, research project management, and supervisee-supervisor relationships (Fraser, 2009).

Chaló et al. (2023) suggested a three-stage PhD training program, comprising (a) initial training aimed at helping students “meet the minimum standards of knowledge and skills required for their doctoral studies” (p. 5); (b) assessment of needs to help supervisors and students identify specific knowledge and skills students need for their PhD studies; and (c) tailored training designed to provide individualized training plans and guidance to develop students’ competencies necessary for them to successfully navigate their doctoral journey. Such support programs or initiatives can be effective in building students’ knowledge, skills, and confidence essential for completing their PhD studies. Moreover, these support programs will help students develop into independent and competent researchers who can contribute meaningfully to their respective fields and to knowledge production about and from Cambodia after the completion of their PhD.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, enhancing the quality of PhD education in Cambodia requires sustained and concerted efforts from all stakeholders, particularly the governments, MoEYS, and HEIs. Promoting the quality of PhD training must be treated as a national priority to support Cambodia’s long-term development vision. As the country aspires to become a knowledge-based society, strengthening doctoral programs will be critical to realizing such aspirations. With sustained commitment from policymakers, development partners, academic institutions, and the private sector, Cambodia will be better positioned to cultivate a vibrant research culture, produce highly skilled researchers, and play a more meaningful role in global knowledge production. Through multi-stakeholder engagement, strategic collaboration, strong and sustained commitment, and research-oriented academic leadership, Cambodia will be able to establish a stronger foundation for a new generation of researchers, innovators, and intellectuals who will play a fundamental role in ensuring social innovation, sustainable development, and a prosperous future.

Considering the limited research investigating the issues concerning the quality of PhD programs and training in Cambodia, this article proposes a few directions for future research. First, it is critical to examine the challenges Cambodian PhD students face in navigating their PhD journeys. Second, research into the coping strategies Cambodian students employ to manage the challenges in their PhD studies should be conducted to provide valuable insights into this phenomenon. Third, it is important to investigate how the quality of PhD programs in Cambodia can be enhanced in a practical and effective way so that the country can produce more PhD-trained individuals needed to drive socioeconomic development and innovation. Finally, research is needed to explore how to support Cambodian PhD students to publish in top-tier journals, especially those indexed in Scopus or Web of Science databases. Such research will

shed light on the necessary support mechanisms required to enable Cambodian PhD students to produce new knowledge to contribute meaningfully to global scholarship, increase the academic profiles of Cambodian universities, and strengthen Cambodia's visibility on the international stage.

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