



Best practice of academic programme transformation in ASEAN and beyond and lessons for Cambodia

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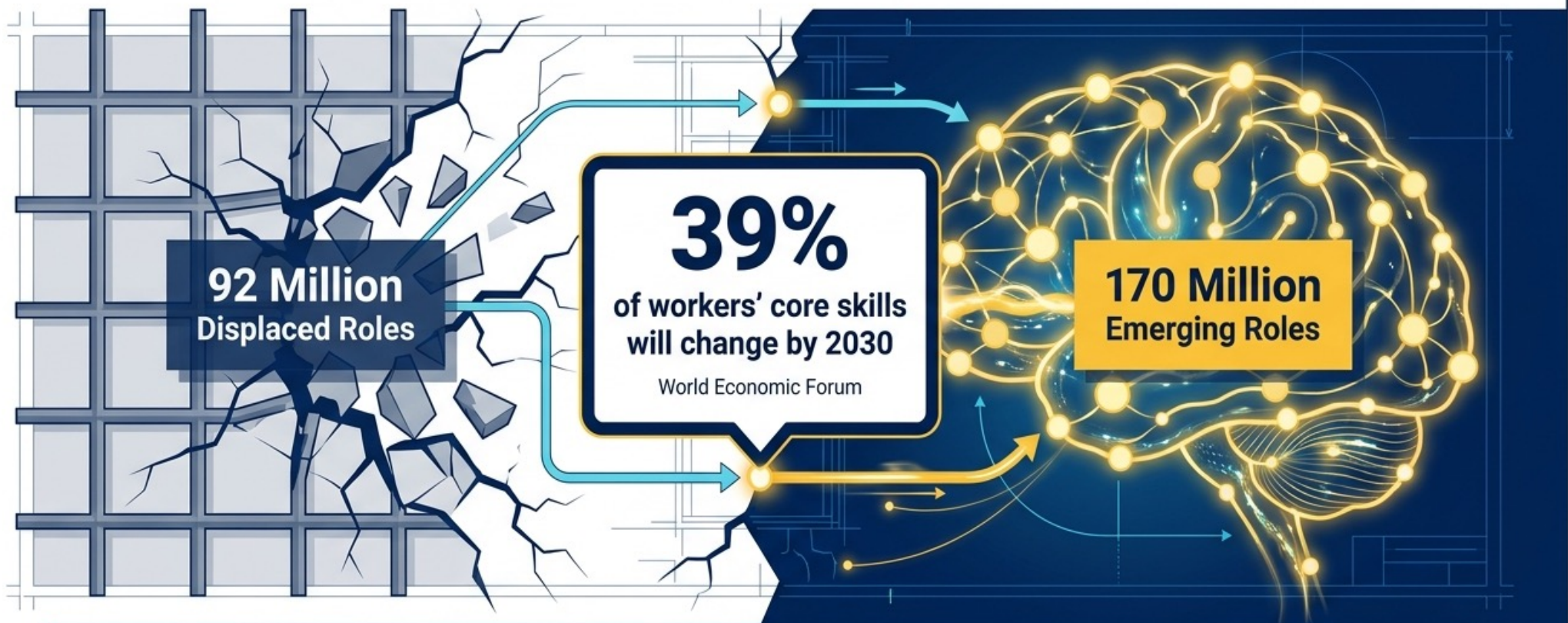
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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Higher education can no longer prepare students only for existing jobs.

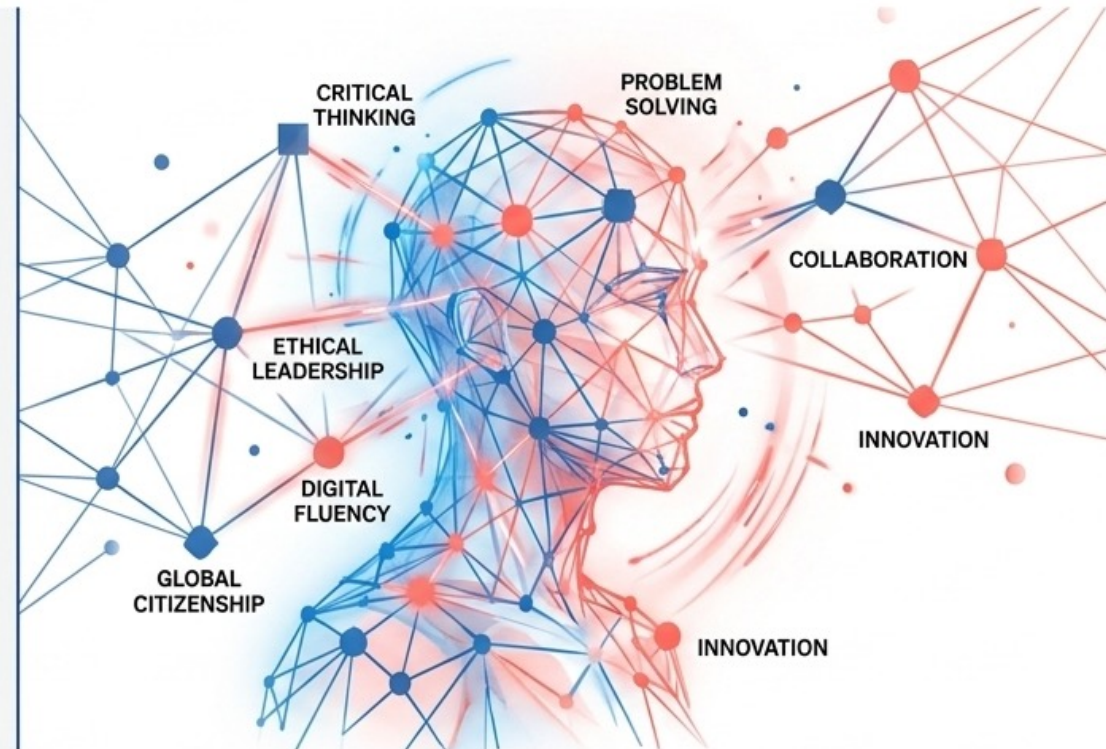
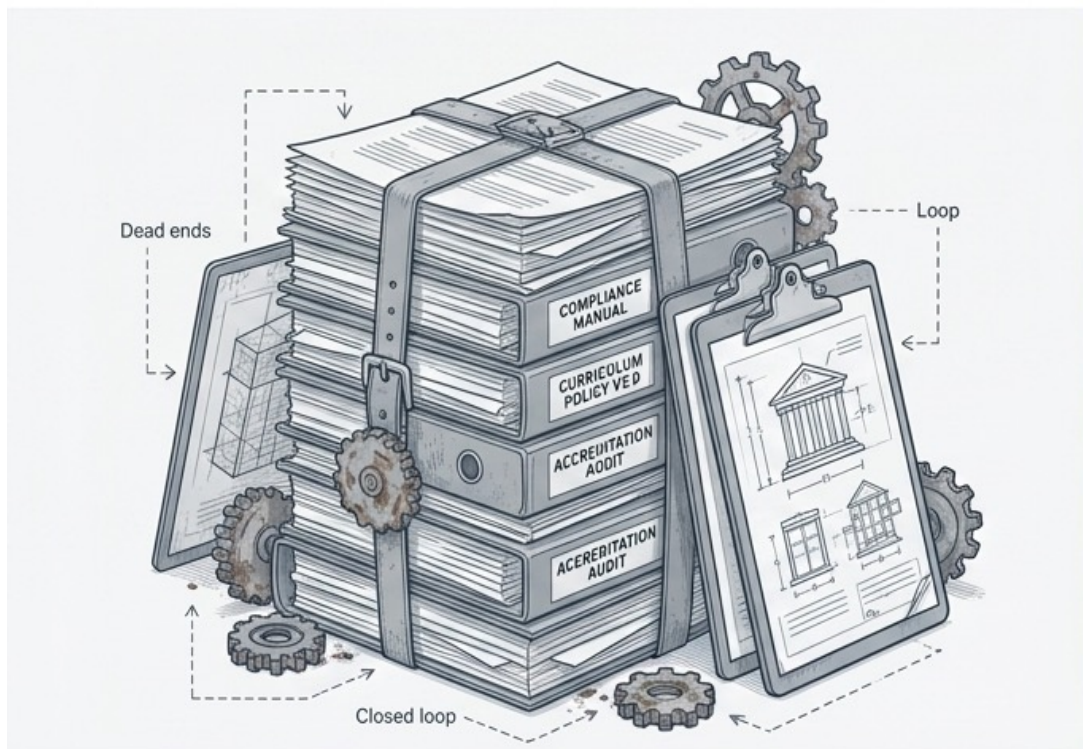


We must prepare graduates for changing jobs, emerging roles, and problems without clear solutions.



The Central Provocation

“A curriculum is not transformed when the document changes
—it is transformed when the graduate changes.”



The True Measure
of Transformation

Programme transformation is not about rewriting documents or surviving an accreditation audit. It is fundamentally about changing what students experience, learn, and can do.

Success is measured by a graduate's ability to contribute meaningfully to the economy and society.



Programme transformation is an engine for national and regional competitiveness.

FutureFit Graduates: Visible, Recognized, Competitive.

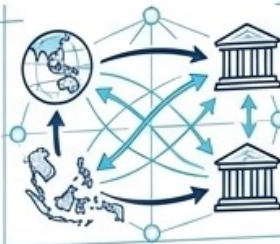
National Ambition

Cambodia 2050 High-Income Status (World Bank). Current foundation: 128,000+ students supported, 67 new academic programmes established.



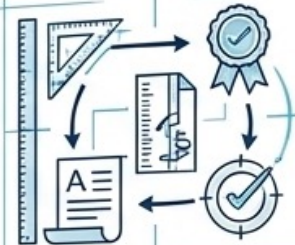
Regional Mobility

Integration via the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) and the ASEAN Higher Education Space 2025.



Quality Assurance

Alignment with AUN-QA Standards to drive structured, continuous improvement.





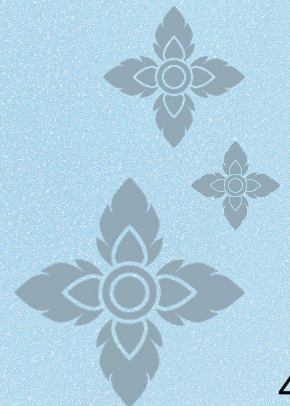
From Inputs to Outcomes— The OBE Paradigm Shift

Outcome-Based Education is not a compliance exercise but a focused inquiry into institutional purpose, driven by five questions that enable transformation.

Strategic Significance

Answering these questions aligns Cambodia with the AQRF and AUN-QA 4.0, ensuring qualifications are comparable and visible globally.

- 01 What should our graduates be able to do?**
Define the Graduate Profile to meet national and labour-market needs.
- 02 How will they learn it?**
Focus on activities that enable learning and engagement.
- 03 How will they demonstrate it?**
Assess application of knowledge through authentic tasks.
- 04 How will we know the standard has been achieved?**
Use clear, transparent performance criteria and rubrics.
- 05 How will we improve when evidence tells us to?**
Make the system self-correcting and focused on continuous growth.





The ASEAN Convergence Ecosystem

ASEAN is already moving toward outcome-oriented harmonisation. FEF-for-OBE is a strategic bridge to regional trust.

AUN-QA Version 4.0 (Quality Assurance)

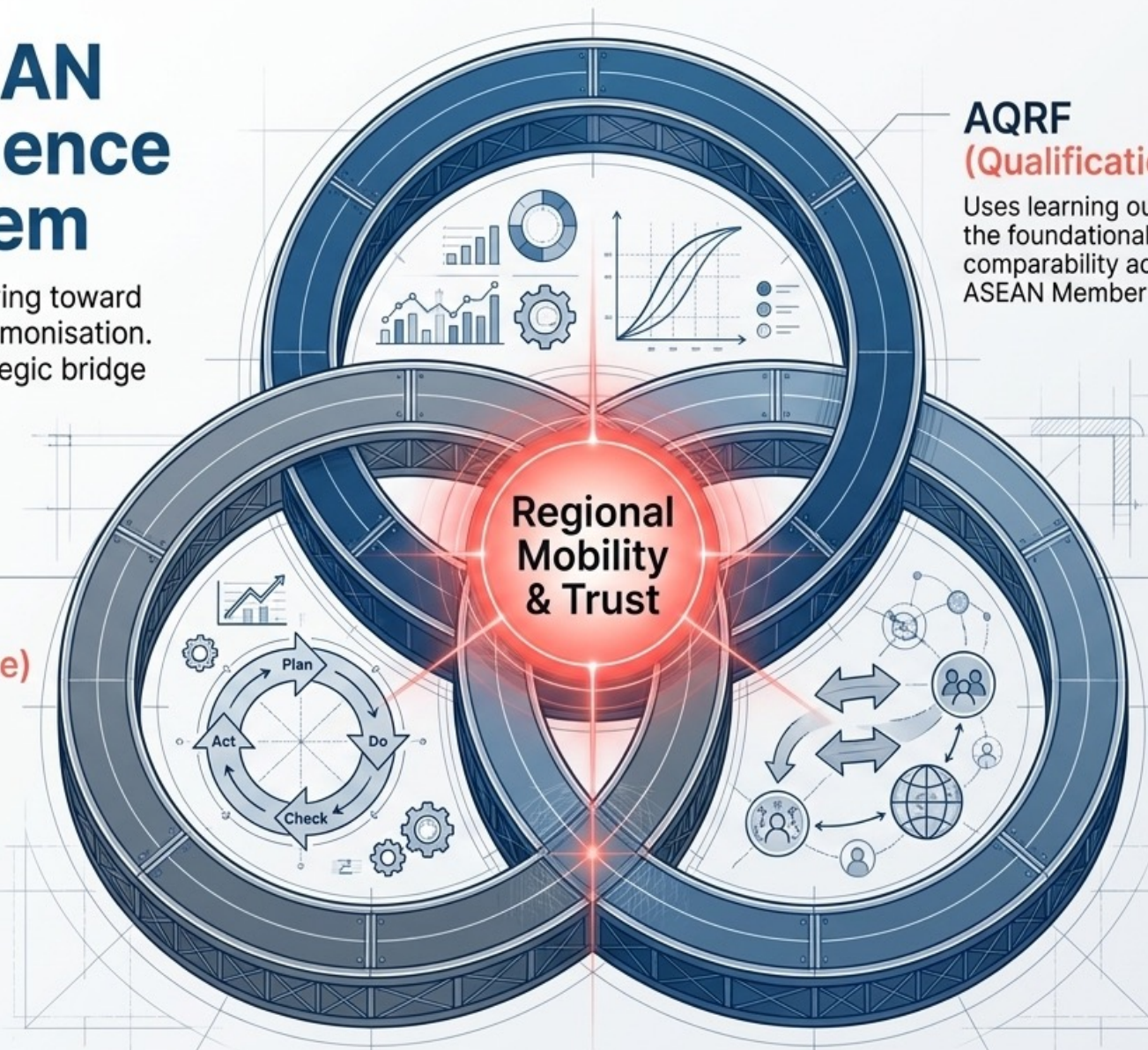
Embeds the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, grounding programme assessment in expected learning outcomes.

AQRF (Qualifications)

Uses learning outcomes as the foundational metric for comparability across all ASEAN Member States.

ASEAN Higher Education Space 2025 (Mobility)

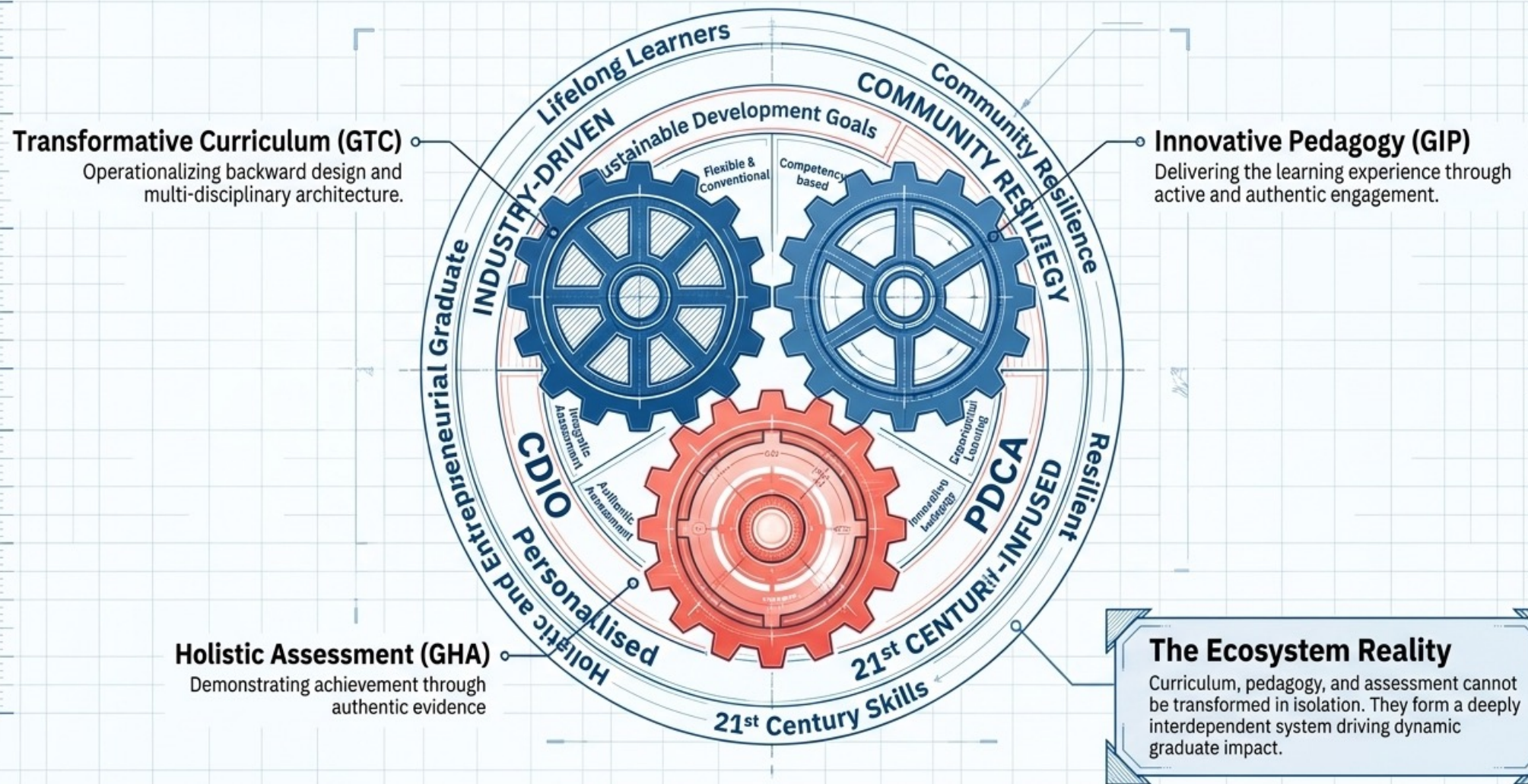
Emphasizes quality, credit transfer, internationalization, and intra-ASEAN student mobility.





The Architecture of Impact: FEF-for-OBE Synthesis

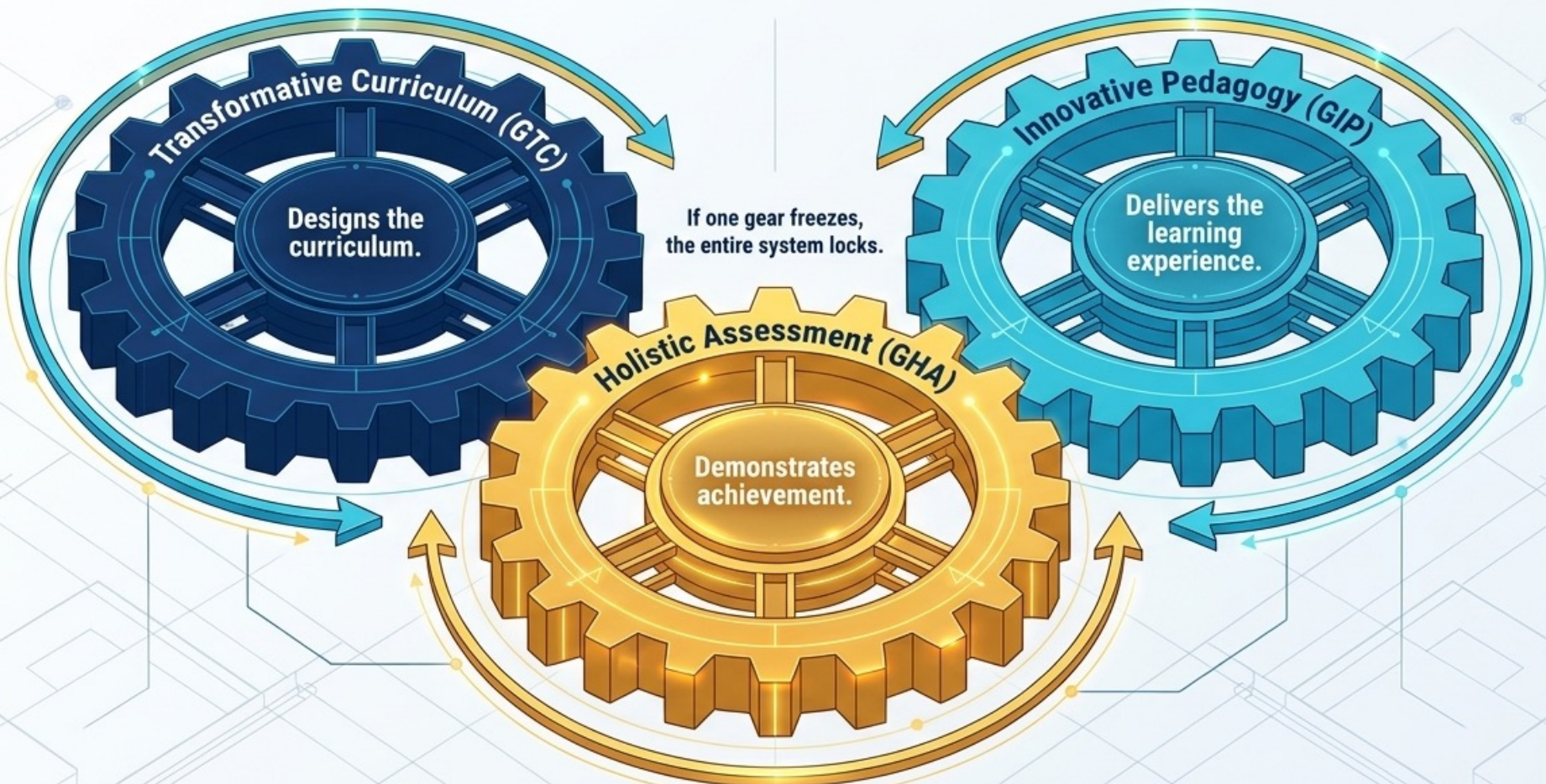
A multi-tiered framework designed to operationalize global best practices into three interconnected engines





The Three Engines of Transformation cannot operate in isolation.

You cannot change a curriculum without synchronously changing how it is taught and assessed.



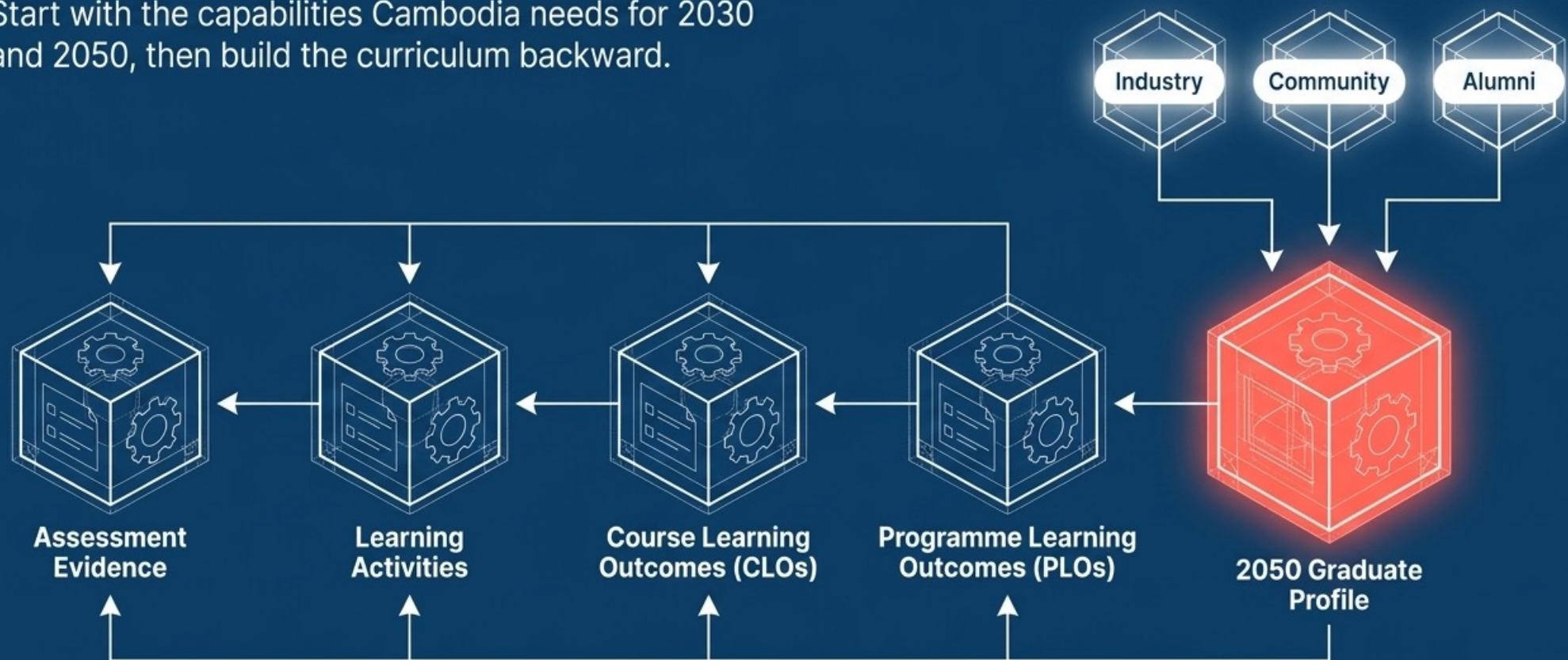


Best Practices 1 & 2: Reverse Engineering the Graduate

Start with the capabilities Cambodia needs for 2030 and 2050, then build the curriculum backward.

Active Stakeholder Shaping

Industry, community, and professional bodies must actively inform curriculum decisions, not just offer symbolic consultation.



Begin with the Graduate

Strong OBE transformation begins by asking what kind of graduate Cambodia needs for 2030 and 2050. Rather than starting with existing syllabi and incrementally updating them, institutions must design programmes backward from a clear vision of graduate capability.

Key Principle

Every single activity must serve the ultimate outcome. Activities that do not contribute to graduate capability should be eliminated.



The Backward Design Process

- 1 Graduate Profile (Foundation)** 
Define the kind of graduate needed based on national priorities, labour market analysis, and stakeholder consultation.
- 2 Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs)** 
Translate the graduate vision into programme-level outcomes specifying what graduates should be able to do.
- 3 Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)** 
Break down PLOs into course-level outcomes that specify learning at each stage of the programme.
- 4 Learning Activities** 
Design specific activities that enable students to develop the competencies specified in CLOs.
- 5 Assessment Evidence** 
Create assessment methods that allow students to demonstrate achievement of CLOs and PLOs.

Stakeholder Intelligence

Stakeholder engagement cannot be symbolic or performative. It must actively inform curriculum decisions and ensure relevance to real-world needs.

The Risk of Isolation

Without active stakeholder engagement, programmes risk producing graduates with skills misaligned to labour market needs, missing emerging opportunities, and losing credibility with employers and communities.



Industry & Employers

Provide insights into current and emerging skill requirements and career pathways.

Professional Bodies

Establish standards and credentials relevant to specific professional fields.

Current Students

Offer crucial perspectives on the learning experience and engagement levels.

Community & Society

Represent societal needs and ensure programmes address broader development priorities.

Alumni & Graduates

Provide feedback on programme relevance based on actual career experience.

Government Agencies

Represent national development priorities and policy directions.

Engagement Mechanisms

Advisory Committees

Regular Consultation Cycles

Co-design of Curriculum

Internship Partnerships

Continuous Feedback Loops

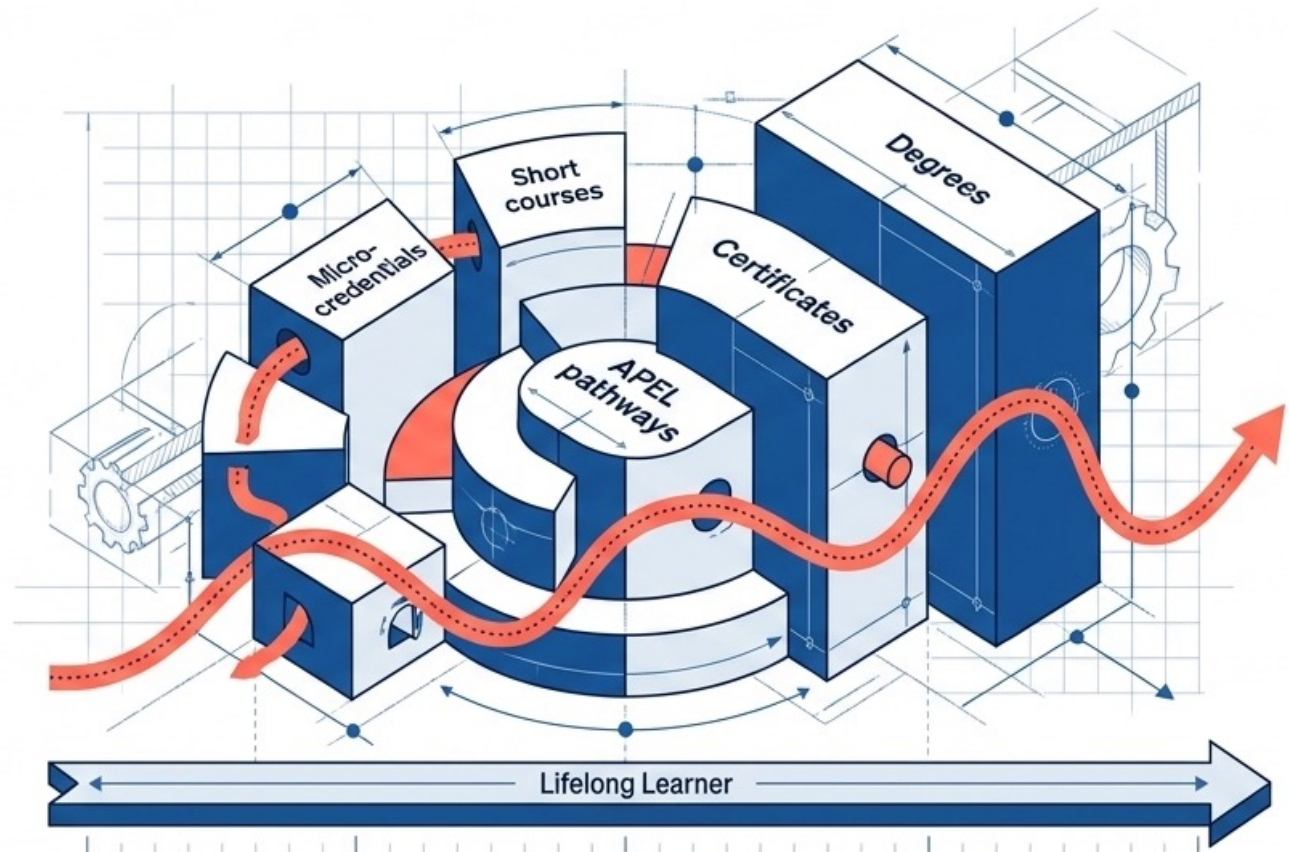


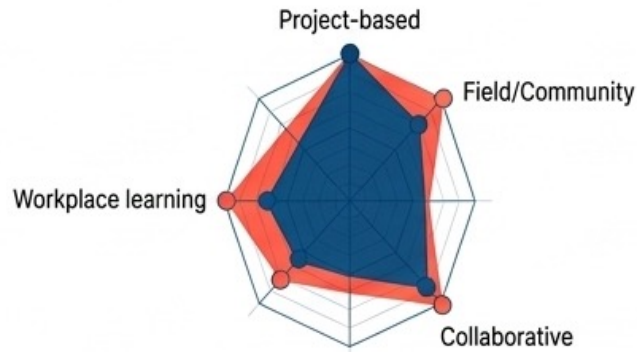
Best Practice 3: Quality-Assured Flexibility

Future-ready programmes require multi-disciplinary integration and stackable pathways.

Modernize Curriculum Architecture

- Rigid structures cannot adapt to rapid market changes.
- Quality-assured flexibility allows for stackability, electives, and interdisciplinary exposure without weakening standards.
- Pathways must accommodate micro-credentials, work-based learning, and recognition of prior learning (APEL).





Best Practices 4 & 5: Authentic Pedagogy and Holistic Assessment

OBE fails if pedagogy and assessment remain unchanged. Complex outcomes require complex evidence.



Activate Learning (Active Doing > Passive Listening)

Students do not become future-ready by listening to future-readiness lectures.

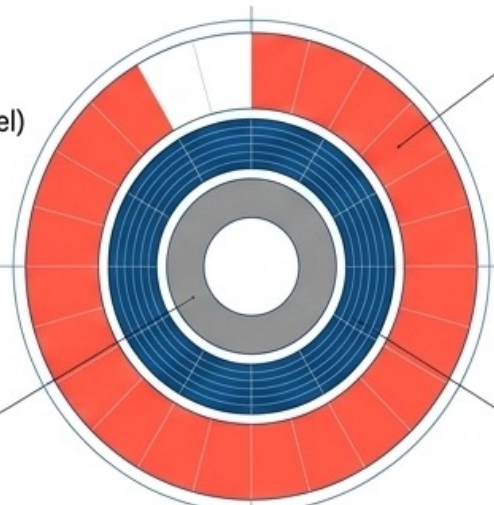
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Capabilities are built through project-based, lab-based, and work-integrated learning.

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Assess Holistically (The Evidence Wheel)

Insufficient:
Passive recall,
multiple-choice exams.

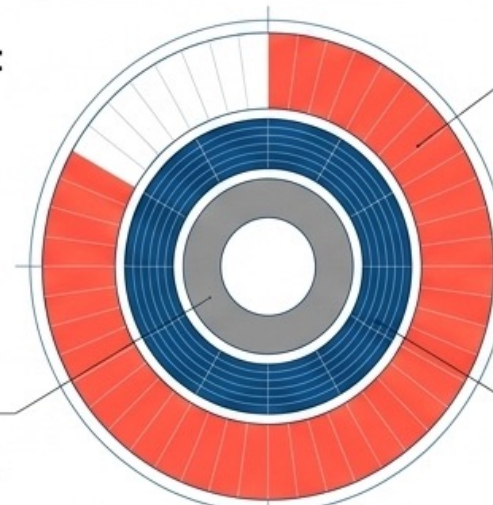


Authentic:
Capstones,
portfolios, clinical
demonstrations,
performance tasks.

Developing:
Scenarios, reflections,
detailed rubrics.

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Activate Learning

Students Develop Competencies Through Doing, Not Listening. Complex competencies are not developed through passive reception of content delivered in lectures. They are built through active engagement with authentic tasks that mirror real-world challenges graduates will face.

UNESCO Evidence

UNESCO emphasizes that digital tools are enablers of active learning, not just delivery mechanisms for passive content. Authentic tasks that mirror real-world challenges increase student motivation, improve knowledge retention, and enhance transfer of learning to new contexts.

Active Learning Approaches



Experiential Learning

Direct engagement with materials, tools, and processes. Learning through trial, error, and reflection.



Service Learning

Students apply knowledge to address community needs, developing civic responsibility.



Technology-Enhanced

Digital tools enable collaboration across distance and time, developing digital literacy.



Project-Based Learning

Students tackle authentic challenges from industry or community in interdisciplinary teams.



Research-Infused Teaching

Integration of research into curriculum, engaging students with current knowledge frontiers.



Peer Learning & Mentoring

Students learn from each other, developing communication and leadership skills.



Make Assessment Holistic and Authentic

If we want to know what a student can actually do, traditional exams are insufficient. We need authentic evidence of learning through multiple methods that mirror the tasks graduates will face in real-world contexts.



Rubrics & Standards

Clear criteria and transparent standards that ensure consistency in evaluation across assessors.



E-Portfolios

Documentation of learning over time, showing evidence of growth and capability development.



Capstone Projects

Integration of learning across the programme, demonstrating readiness for professional practice.



Performance Tasks

Observation of actual performance in realistic contexts, providing immediate feedback.



Reflective Evidence

Self-assessment that develops metacognitive awareness and preparation for lifelong learning.



Real-World Scenarios

Assessment embedded in authentic contexts where students solve problems they will face professionally.



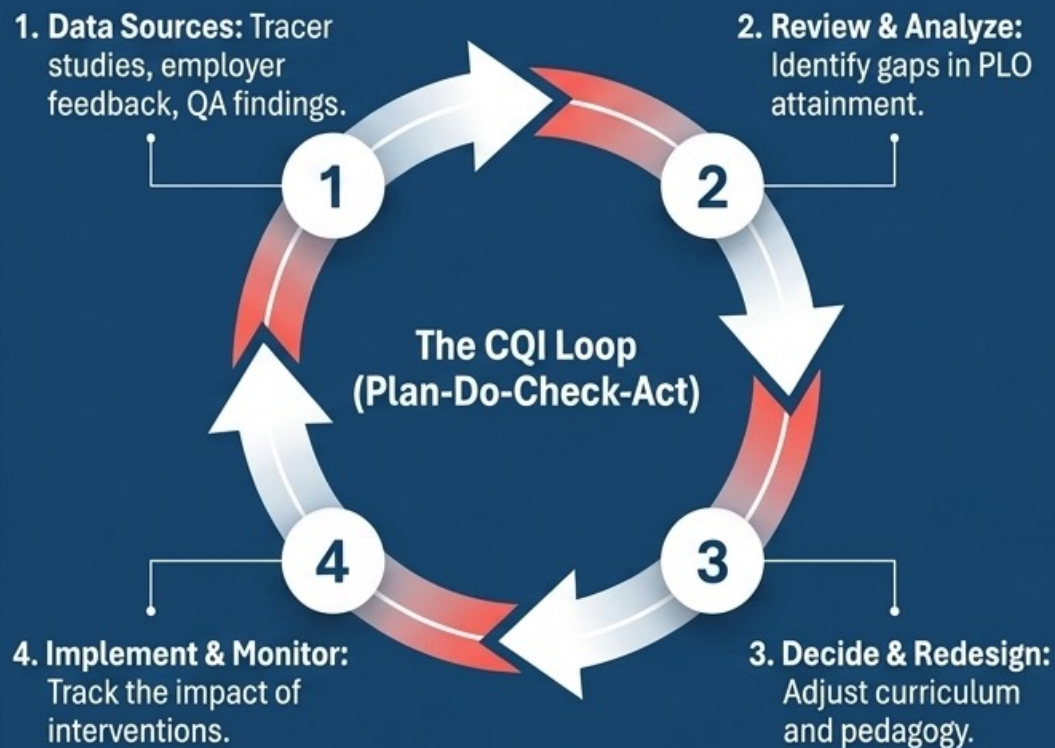
Key Principles

- ✓ Assessment must mirror tasks graduates will face in the real world.
- ✓ Multiple forms of evidence provide richer understanding of learning than single-method assessment.
- ✓ Authentic assessment motivates students and increases relevance.
- ✓ Assessment should be integrated into learning, not separate from it.



Best Practice 6: Evidence-Led Continuous Improvement

Data collection is meaningless without closing the loop. Assessment is the proof of OBE.



The Malaysia Case Study: Outcomes Intelligence Matters

Reform accelerated when policy, QA, and employability intelligence aligned.

Shift from inputs to outcomes and industry alignment resulted in robust graduate labour-force participation and a **3.2% graduate unemployment rate** (DOSM 2024).



Building the Human Infrastructure

Frameworks don't implement themselves—people do. The DGHE–OBE Team is the heartbeat of this transformation. Success requires a commitment to continuous coaching, mentoring, and the establishment of genuine partnerships with the community.

★ Key Success Factors

- Capacity building must be treated as a continuous journey, not a one-time event.
- Support must be responsive to institutional context and specific needs.
- Trainers, mentors, and academic managers determine whether FEF becomes a living practice.
- Recognition and reward of effort motivates continued commitment.

DGHE–OBE Team Focus Areas



Mastery of FEF

Deep understanding of FEF architecture and ability to guide institutions in implementation.



Constructive Alignment

Auditing alignment between outcomes, activities, and assessment to ensure fidelity to principles.



Coaching & Mentoring

Moving beyond one-off training to sustained, responsive support for programme teams.



Project Modules

Creation of practical tools, templates, and case studies adapted to the Cambodian context.



Future Trainers

Developing capacity of institutional leaders to train others and build sustainable capacity.



Community of Practice

Establishing regular forums for sharing learning, challenges, and peer-to-peer support.



Leadership Call to Action: The Next 18 Months

Concrete imperatives for rectors, deans, and programme leaders.

1. Protect Model Programmes



Make them visible demonstration sites.

Quick Win: Cross-institution peer-learning clinics within 90 days.

2. Build Transformation Academies



Convert DGHE-OBE teams into standing academies.

Quick Win: Certify first trainers in 6 months.

3. Standardize Assessment Quality



Run moderation and rubric calibration.

Quick Win: Produce one assessment evidence pack per model.

4. Make Tracer Studies Decision-Relevant



Use data to revise PLOs and electives.

Quick Win: Publish a tracer dashboard for senate review.

5. Converge FEF, IQA, and AUN-QA



Integrate evidence preparation to eliminate redundant audits.

Quick Win: Prepare one integrated self-assessment report in 12 months.

6. Expand Authentic Learning



Add one credit-bearing industry/community experience to every model programme.

Quick Win: Implement within one academic year.



Start Small, Think Big

Transformation doesn't happen overnight. Begin with manageable steps that build momentum, demonstrate value, and create a foundation for system-wide change.



1

Review

Assess current programme alignment with industry needs and identify critical gaps in graduate competencies.



2

Redesign

Update one core module using FEF principles, focusing on active learning and authentic assessment.



3

Collect

Implement the redesigned module and gather concrete evidence of student learning and engagement.



4

Improve

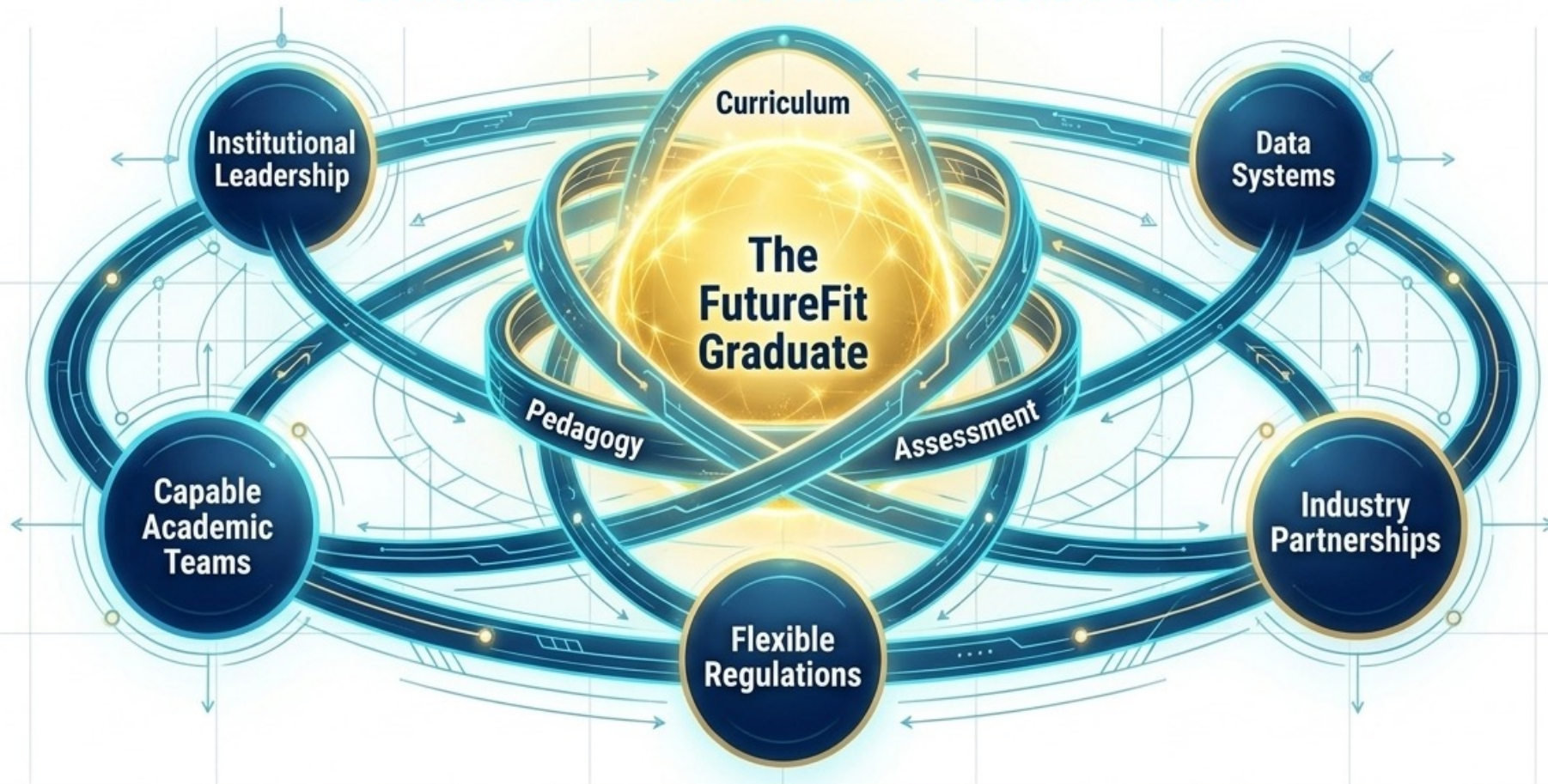
Analyze the collected data to refine teaching methods, adjust assessments, and scale the approach.

🚩 The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single, well-aligned step.



The Transformation Ecosystem.

Frameworks do not implement themselves. Pedagogical frameworks collapse without an institutional environment to sustain them.





“

*Transformation is not a destination; it is a continuous journey of becoming **FutureFit**.*

Let us build a higher education system where every graduate is prepared not just for the jobs of today, but equipped with the competencies to solve the challenges of tomorrow.



Thank You.