

# Didactical Thinking and Post-conflict Dilemmas in Cambodian History Teaching

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*This Master's Thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.*

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## Preface

*Cambodian history is very interesting and intriguing, because it involves extreme differences. The Khmer empire was once the most influential empire in Southeast Asia, and when manoeuvring around in Cambodia, it is easy to see that the old temples represent a memory of past greatness and national pride. On the other hand, Cambodia has also experienced genocide unimaginable for most people, which represent the other extreme. Studying history and didactical processes in a country with this level of diversity have given me an enormous respect for their suffering and idealism when wanting to learn from the past in order to develop the nation.*

*A theme of this nature is not a natural selection for a Norwegian MA-student in history. The idea was forged when teaching English and History at a Cambodian Teacher-Training College, as a part of my teacher education at University of Agder. It quickly became apparent that the students were not being taught this topic of Democratic Kampuchea in schools. Towards the end of my stay, I was fortunate enough to have lunch with His Excellence Mr. Im Sethy, who is Minister of Education, Youth and Sport. During our discussion, he informed me of recent developments including the topic of Democratic Kampuchea into Cambodian schools. Based on this information, a seed was planted.*

*There are many people who have helped me with this project, and it would not have been possibly to complete it without them.*

*First and foremost I want to thank my primary scientific supervisor, Professor May-Brith Ohman Nielsen for seeing possibilities in my idea. Through the whole project you have helped me with your invaluable expertise both scientifically, but also as a motivator. Our discussions have been really helpful.*

*I also wish to thank my co-supervisor Kjetil Grødum from Stiftelsen Arkivet for discussions and advice on Cambodia related issues. Your experience from doing field-study in Cambodia was very valuable for me.*

*The field-study would not have been possible without receiving financial support, and I therefore wish to thank HIFO for taking an interest in my project and generously granting me funds for the travel.*

*For allowing me to study didactical processes from a closer perspective, I wish to thank DC-Cam for facilitating and helping me during my stay in Cambodia.*

*I also want to thank the Sarath family for receiving me with open arms in Phnom Penh, and in particular I want to thank Miss Mary Sarath, who gave invaluable help in navigating the unknown waters that Phnom Penh were to me.*

*Last but not least, I want to thank my family for being very supportive during the whole process.*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This introductory chapter firstly presents the theme and positioning of the thesis. The next step is to introduce the scientific state of the art before expressing the purpose of this thesis and formulated questions. Answering these questions will depend on applying relevant theories, which are introduced immediately after the purpose of this study. It will then introduce certain terminology that will circulate through the text, before introducing the source material and the methodological approaches towards them. The introductory chapter leaves limited space for the historical and contemporary context in which this study will exist, but this is thoroughly described in chapter two.

### **1.1 Theme and positioning**

This master thesis is in the historical field of didactics. It seeks to investigate the didactical aspects of conveying sensitive and controversial historical topics in the nation of Cambodia. Didactics in history is the meeting point between history and its users. It is not only history in itself which is important; it is also how it is planned, organized and finally implemented. The topic of ‘Democratic Kampuchea’ was originally conveyed in a politically charged and propagandistic manner, before eventually being removed from classrooms for the sake of reconciliation. Propagandistic teaching before omitting this topic has resulted in a raising concern that the Khmer Rouge genocide will be reduced to a folktale. This concern has appeared simultaneously as the Tribunal trials against former Khmer Rouge leaders began searching for judicial evidence and documentation of past atrocities.

‘The Documentation Center of Cambodia’ is an independent research institution dedicated to seeking the truth.<sup>1</sup> DC-CAM has two main objectives. “The first is to record and preserve the history of the Khmer Rouge regime for future generations. The second is to compile and organize information that can serve as potential evidence in a legal accounting for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. These objectives represent our promotion of memory and justice, both of which are critical foundations for the rule of law and genuine national reconciliation in Cambodia”.<sup>2</sup>

Their ‘Genocide Education project’ is trying to address the lack of knowledge among the younger generation of Cambodians about past atrocities. This project has culminated in a textbook intended for Cambodian upper secondary education: *A History of Democratic*

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<sup>1</sup> Stated on their website: [www.dccam.org](http://www.dccam.org)

<sup>2</sup> Stated on their website: <http://www.d.dccam.org/About/History/Histories.htm>

*Kampuchea (1975-1979)*. It is written by Khamboly Dy and it is based on numerous primary sources provided by the Documentation Center of Cambodia. It is an independent effort in the sense that it is funded by international contributions, but the textbook has been thoroughly reviewed and possibly edited by the Ministry of Education before getting their formal endorsement. *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* was published in numerous languages, including English, in 2007. The textbook is now emerging as the key to adding the controversial and sensitive issues of ‘Democratic Kampuchea’ into the national curriculum in history.

How a country deals with controversial and sensitive issues from the past, has drawn the attention of a variety of scholars from different academic disciplines, but their focus has mainly been on the Tribunal trial itself. The attempt to include the topic of ‘Democratic Kampuchea’ to national history curriculum provides a unique possibility to research didactical thinking and processes in remarkable circumstances.

## 1.2 Scientific State of the Art

In 2012, Professor Emeritus, Sirkka Ahonen conducted a study on how post conflict societies deal with history. The study introduces three cases of a national community struggling to come to terms with a difficult past. She discusses the cases of Finland, South-Africa and Bosnia Herzegovina, before doing a comparison between them.<sup>3</sup> This is the most current study of this kind, but it is restricted to other places in the world.

In 2004, Suzannah Linton published the book *Reconciliation in Cambodia*. Vital for her investigation was a survey on national reconciliation, which she conducted in 2002. The respondents placed tremendous importance upon education as a way to repair some of the ills of Cambodian society.<sup>4</sup> In the responses, education came up repeatedly as being vital for the attainment of a reconciled Cambodia. Education is seen as key for changing society through the teaching of moral values and civic virtues, crucial for teaching the lessons of the past and preventing recurrence of such horrors, and for publicising an established and reliable version of Cambodia’s history so that future generations will not forget.<sup>5</sup> The figures from the various surveys were consistent. Most Cambodians recognized that education plays a vital role in national reconciliation, and that there must be concerted an effort at education not just in relation to any trials, but to memorialise the experience of Cambodians in the Democratic

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<sup>3</sup> Ahonen: 11

<sup>4</sup> Linton 2004: 191

<sup>5</sup> Linton 2004: 191

Kampuchea era, create an accurate historical record of the past, educate the public of all generations so as to make better political and personal choices, and to prevent such situations from ever arising again in Cambodia.<sup>6</sup>

Current research with a similar field of interest is a PhD dissertation conducted by Kjetil Grødum. The dissertation is called ‘Transitional Justice’ and it investigates challenges in dealing with past atrocities in societies that have experienced a period of violence. To describe ‘Transitional Justice’, Grødum performs a case-study of the ongoing processes around the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in Cambodia. According to Grødum, “Tribunals, truth commissions, memorial sites and memorial days are examples of ways in which post-conflict societies are formally dealing with the past. What these processes have in common is the use of narratives and storytelling representing the past, as an instrument to promote historical reflection and consciousness”.<sup>7</sup> Grødum writes that ‘The Genocide Education Project’ was established just recently and that he has been able to follow it from a distance himself.<sup>8</sup> It is from that angle this master thesis seeks to complement scientific state of the art.

### 1.3 Thesis questions and statement

The ‘Genocide education project’ provides a historical record that intends to not only fill the present knowledge gap about this period, but also promote reconciliation and prevent it from happening again.

The main purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the project and answer the following question: *What are the aims of the ‘Genocide Education Project’ and by what means are they fulfilled?* In order to operationalize the primary research question, this thesis has also formulated the following secondary questions:

1. Which didactical considerations have been made on how to convey history and what purpose does this project have for society?
2. What features does the reconciliation strategies recognized in this project have?
3. How is the concept of truth treated in sensitive and controversial issues?
4. How do they address the competence of teachers and what are the desired skills for students?

In order to answer these questions properly it will make use of relevant theory and sources described in more detail in the next subchapters.

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<sup>6</sup> Linton 2004: 222

<sup>7</sup> Grødum: Abstract

<sup>8</sup> Grødum: 109

## 1.4 Theories and models

From a didactical angle this thesis will be a study of the meeting point between history and its users and how this meeting is facilitated in Cambodian schools. The theoretical approach to this study will make use of both *general* and *specific* theory.

### 1.4.1 General theory

The use of history is crucial in the context of Cambodia. It is not only the past, the present or the future in itself which is interesting. It is how this is planned, organized and implemented which is important. The use of history is tied up to institutions and the processes in which it appears. Processes in a didactical perspective, relates to the space in which history is presented, how it is organized and who the users of history are.<sup>9</sup>

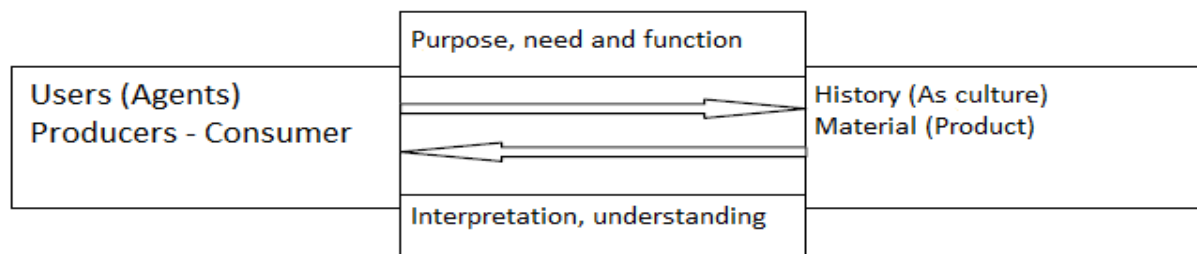


Fig 1 (Stugu 2008: 15)

The figure above shows a two-way relationship between producers (consumers) and product (material). It visualizes a process which on one side shows what desirable purpose, need or function that history has. On the other side it shows the interpretation and understanding caused by the process itself. The use of history means a use of receptive and productive features, as it is articulated in the term *shaped by history, and shapers of history*.

Human beings have a historical nature. We are historical on an individual as well as on a collective level. How we understand history and how the past acts in the present, are relevant processes in ideology, culture and politics.<sup>10</sup> As individuals we rely on experience when affirming our identity, when seeking clues to our potential, when forming an impression of others and when seeking indication of future possibilities. In a sense, our memory serves as a databank which is ultimately our platform for interpretation and understanding.<sup>11</sup> *Individual memory* is based on our horizon of experience, and it shapes our patterns and personal identity. The same thing applies to a *collective memory*. As John Tosh puts it, “For any social grouping to have a collective identity there has to be a shared interpretation of the events and

<sup>9</sup> Bøe 2002: 18

<sup>10</sup> Ongstad/Ohman Nielsen 2006: 146

<sup>11</sup> Tosh 2010: 1



experiences that have formed the group over time.”<sup>12</sup> The case with Khmer Rouge genocide, is that such a shared interpretation of events and experiences has until now not existed. The new textbook may serve as that historical record and shared interpretation of these particular events and experiences, which will eventually form a collective memory. The nature of the desired collective memory emerges as a crucial question, both academically and practically. Simultaneously, a shared interpretation of events and experiences reveals a problem for academic history. Dealing with a sensitive issue such as the Khmer Rouge genocide, forces the question of how the concept of truth is treated in historical presentations.

According to the Norwegian historian Ingar Kaldal, a presentation of history can never claim to be called the truth. It can claim to give a correct picture, but never to be the ‘truth’. There are several factors to determine the credibility of historical presentations. Some of them relate to external factors outside the presentation itself, while some relates to internal aspects of the presentation. *Correspondence theory* focuses on whether the historical presentation actually corresponds with what it is supposed to present. This means that the reconstruction of history should match the past and make it as similar as possible. This theory can be traced back to Leopold von Ranke, but the demand for “history as it really was” has been modified. The presentation is now to reflect what the sources reveal after critical interpretation.<sup>13</sup> *Correlation theory* deals with the fact that many presentations are not made as a result of primary sources. Correlation truth is based upon how the presentation is positioning itself compared to other credible presentations. A presentation is therefore more credible if it does not differ from other credible presentations. At the same time, this does not exclude the need for critical questioning. According to Kaldal, the concept of truth is too important for the opinion of the majority to decide.<sup>14</sup> *Coherence theory* relates to internal factors in a presentation and whether it agrees with itself. Being coherent does not equal being true, but lack of coherence will result in lack of credibility. *Theory of objectivity* is a response to the fact that all presentations are influenced by perspective, angle, language and narration. Truth demands objectivity, which therefore adds credibility to a presentation of history.

The textbook provides a good example of how both the concept of truth and controversial issues are treated. For instance, the actual number of people who perished during the genocide is disputed. It is not uncommon to operate with a figure between 1,5 and

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<sup>12</sup> Tosh 2010: 3

<sup>13</sup> Kaldal: 146-149

<sup>14</sup> Kaldal: 149-150

2 million people. The textbook puts it this way to express how many people perished: “Under DK, perhaps as many as 500,000 people were executed for crimes against the revolution and state...Having been evacuated to faraway forests or fields, they were killed after they made mistakes or angered their superiors”<sup>15</sup> This shows that providing a number on such a delicate matter is problematic.

In Western societies, scholars are researching the correlation between what history teachers learn and how they actually teach. In 2010, Mikael Berg published his analysis of history teachers’ understanding of the school subject history. This revealed that there was a connection between the teachers’ biography and their general understanding of the school subject. The analysis pointed out that teachers relate in different ways to history as science, history as identity and history from an ideological viewpoint.<sup>16</sup>

Didactical competence among teachers is a key element in conveying history. Some of the problems faced in Berg’s analysis are probably faced in Cambodia as well, only on a bigger scale. Arguably, the Swedish teachers in Berg’s analysis had a desirable amount of training, while Cambodian history teachers in general have a less excessive education.

#### 1.4.2 Specific theory

The general theory serves an important purpose for this thesis, but in order to operate at a more analytical level, certain more specific theory has to be introduced.

##### 1.4.2.1 Robert Stradling’s controversial and sensitive issues

The Khmer Rouge genocide falls into a category of *controversial* and *sensitive* issues. Controversial and sensitive issues are by no means unique to Cambodia. They are also an important aspect of 20<sup>th</sup> century European history. Robert Stradling has written a book called *Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> –Century European history*. He argues that if history teaching is to help students understand the present and how we got to where we are now, then teaching about controversial and sensitive issues is inescapable. The question is not whether we should teach them or not, but how should we teach them.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Khamboly Dy: 46

<sup>16</sup> Berg 2010: 161

<sup>17</sup> Stradling 2001: 99

Sometimes these issues divide groups or whole societies or neighbouring countries. Such disputes may concern; what happened, why it happened, who started it, who was right, who has the best case to argue and who has been most selective with the evidence.<sup>18</sup>

Stradling points out that there is coherence between sensitive and controversial, meaning that controversial issues which are socially divisive or divide nations are usually also sensitive.

*“They upset or disturb people’s sensitivities; they call on people’s loyalties; they arouse people prejudices. In such circumstances they can become sensitive for the teacher also, since some parents, their children, some politicians or pressure groups being to question whether the issue should be taught or whether a particular teacher should be allowed to continue teaching it”*<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, all sensitive issues are not necessarily controversial in the sense of reflecting contemporary social and political divisions in society or between nations. They are sensitive because they relate to a time in a country’s past which is particularly painful, tragic or humiliating. The issues are sensitive in a sense that referring to them might renew old wounds and bring back painful memories.<sup>20</sup>

Controversial issues are useful for helping students to understand the fundamental nature of history as a discipline. It can give a better understanding of how almost every historical events and development is open to different interpretations. Stradling points out that it is possible to teach students certain processing skills and ways of looking at historical controversy. These skills are universal for history as a subject and thus applicable for different topics as well. In essence, these skills involve critical analysis of the evidence and how it has been interpreted, asking a series of analytical questions and analysing the language used.<sup>21</sup>

Stradling’s theory of controversial and sensitive issues is very useful in the context of investigating the didactical aspect of Cambodian history teaching. In addition to theorizing controversial and sensitive issues, Stradling also emphasizes the role of the teacher in this very setting. Teaching controversial and sensitive issues leaves a lot of responsibility on the history teacher.

#### 1.4.2.2 Benjamin Bloom’s taxonomy

The analytical skills that Stradling describes can be recognized in pedagogical theory relevant to cognitive processes, which teaching is ultimately about.

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<sup>18</sup> Stradling 2001: 99

<sup>19</sup> Stradling 2001: 99

<sup>20</sup> Stradling 2001: 100

<sup>21</sup> Stradling 2001: 100

A well known categorization of knowledge is *Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy* from 1956. It is designed to build on scientific and objective knowledge about the learning process. Since its introduction in 1956 criticized and revised on numerous occasions<sup>22</sup>, but for the purpose of this thesis, there is not need for a major pedagogical investigation. The original theory from 1956 serves adequately for its purpose of discovering at what taxonomical skills teaching about Democratic Kampuchea should promote. It has six different levels in the shape of a pyramid, where the bottom is the lowest taxonomical level.<sup>23</sup>

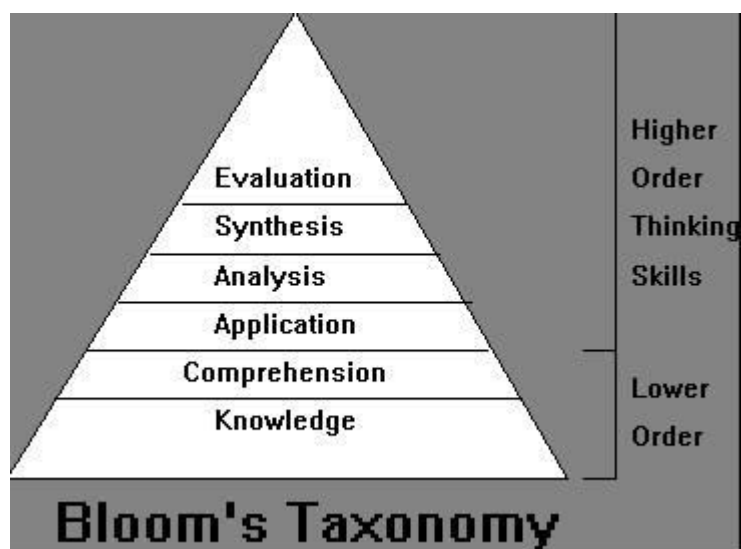


Fig (Bloom's taxonomy from 1956 – visualized at this webpage -

<http://www.educationforum.co.uk/ha/bloom.htm>)

1. Knowledge: arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce state.
2. Comprehension: classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate,
3. Application: apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.
4. Analysis: analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.
5. Synthesis: arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write.

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<sup>22</sup> Hattie: 29

<sup>23</sup> Imsen – Lærernes verden: 234

6. Evaluation: appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose compare, defend estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate.<sup>24</sup>

Stradling argues that, if the students get into higher cognitive processes, then it can give a better understanding of how almost every historical events and development is open to different interpretations.<sup>25</sup> In this context, Bloom's taxonomy is a measuring device illustrating the different cognitive levels.

#### 1.4.2.3 "Historical truth" : Paul Ricoeur's historical observations, explanations and narratives

Kaldal uses objectivity is a criterion for truth in historical presentations. All presentations are influenced by perspective, angle, language and narration. In order to get deeper into the concept of objectivity, theories discussed by Paul Ricour will provide a more detailed and specific approach to this truth criteria.

According to Paul Ricoeur, we expect history to have a certain objectivity which is proper to it. Societies rectify and arrange their past.<sup>26</sup> "Grasping the past in and through its documentary traces is an observation in the strong sense of the word – for to observe never means the mere recording of a brute fact"<sup>27</sup> Reconstructing an event, a number of events or a situation in basis of documents is to elaborate an objective behaviour of a particular type which cannot be doubted.<sup>28</sup> This raises the trace to the dignity of a meaningful document and raises the past itself to the dignity of a historical fact.<sup>29</sup> Ricoeur continues that objectivity is a work of methodological activity and that "the scientific fact is what science makes in making itself"<sup>30</sup> The historical facts are a methodological platform in which to build further analysis.

When further describing analysis, he states that the objectivity of history consists in the ambition to elaborate factual sequences on the level of a historical understanding.<sup>31</sup> There is no explanation without the constitution of several phenomena such as: social, political, economical, cultural etc. Historical synthesis exists only because history is first of all an analysis and because the historian tries to find the relationship between the phenomena he has distinguished. He argues that we should insist on the necessity of understanding wholes and

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.educationforum.co.uk/ha/bloom.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Stradling: 100

<sup>26</sup> Ricoeur - History and truth: 22

<sup>27</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 23

<sup>28</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 23

<sup>29</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 23

<sup>30</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 23

<sup>31</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 24

the organic bonds which transcend all causality.<sup>32</sup> Generally speaking explaining is to answer the question “why” through a variety of the connector “because”.<sup>33</sup>

Ricoeur points out that specific narratives can be analyzed in terms of the “episodic” and “configurational” dimensions. The first of these can be grounded in chronology and the temporal order and characterizes the story insofar as it is made up of these events.<sup>34</sup> Ricoeur’s second “configurational” dimension involves assembly of a series of historical events into a narrative, which entails in the act that it “grasps together” the detailed actions or incidents in the story<sup>35</sup>

#### 1.4.2.4 Historical distance

The topic of Democratic Kampuchea brings along sensitive and controversial issues with high contemporary political and emotional importance, and the connection between objectivity and political neutrality makes it difficult to make a clear distinction. In Seixas book *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*; Historical distance is not treated simply as the passing of time, but rather a consideration made on account that every history has to take on the task of positioning its audience in relation to a past. The distance is therefore not given, but constructed, and the range of distance creation is quite broad. It can involve proximity or immediacy as well as remoteness or detachment.<sup>36</sup> Questions regarding distance should direct themselves to history’s ideological impact as well as to its emotional force, to its cognitive assumptions as well as its formal arrangements.<sup>37</sup> Every form of historical representation must position its audience in some relationship of closeness to or distance from the events and experiences it describes.<sup>38</sup> Historical distance includes political as well as emotional engagement and is the consequence of cognitive choices as well as formal and aesthetic ones.<sup>39</sup>

#### 1.5 Terminology.

The most important terminology used in the thesis is *myths and reconciliation*. These terms have many theoretical features, and need further explanation as to how they will be applied on a regular basis.

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<sup>32</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 24

<sup>33</sup> Ricoeur – Memory, history, forgetting: 182

<sup>34</sup> Paul Ricoeur – Time and narrative: 66

<sup>35</sup> Paul Ricoeur – Time and narrative: 66

<sup>36</sup> Seixas: 89

<sup>37</sup> Seixas: 92

<sup>38</sup> Seixas:95

<sup>39</sup> Seixas: 95

### 1.5.1 Social memory and historical narratives

In his book *Historie I bruk*, Stugu discusses the concept of myths appearing in social memory. Accordingly, they give explanations on how important phenomena and existence in the present have occurred and developed over time.<sup>40</sup> Generations and groups have different knowledge and perceptions on the past, consequently our background and experience will heavily influence how we interpret present circumstances.<sup>41</sup> Myths are public interpretations that gather people and mobilize them to act.<sup>42</sup>

According to Paul Ricoeur, the dialectic between memory and history becomes more obvious when history is brought in as a critical authority that is able to consolidate and to articulate collective and individual memory but also correct it or even contradict it.<sup>43</sup>

In order to understand the critical relationship between history and memory, he introduces the linguistic medium of narrative, which both memory and history share.

Ricoeur argues that there is an epistemological status between what might be called *memory narratives* (Individual or collective) and *historical narratives*.<sup>44</sup>

Memory narratives circulate in conversation and belong to everyday discourse, carrying the potential of being myths. Consequently, memory narratives are not subject to critical second thoughts. Criticism is accordingly not raised up to the level of an authority standing above the living exchange of memory.<sup>45</sup>

This does, however, happen in the case of historical narratives. Historical narratives break with the discourse of memory on different levels. First and most obviously, they do so in the process of establishing the facts. Secondly, historians search for explanations. On the one hand they search for causes, and other hand they search for the motives and justifications out of which deeds arose. The historian first makes an assumption, and next asks himself what the probable course of historical events would have been, as compared to what actually happened. Ricoeur names this process “singular causal imputation”, and argues that it highlights the divergence between historical explanation and the uncontrolled explanations of ordinary conversation.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Stugu: 39

<sup>41</sup> Stugu: 27

<sup>42</sup> Stugu: 41

<sup>43</sup> Paul Ricoeur's Article in Rüsen's – Meaning and Representation in History 2008: 11

<sup>44</sup> Paul Ricoeur's Article in Rüsen's – Meaning and Representation in History 2008: 11

<sup>45</sup> Paul Ricoeur's Article in Rüsen's – Meaning and Representation in History 2008: 12

<sup>46</sup> Paul Ricoeur's Article in Rüsen's – Meaning and Representation in History 2008: 12

On this note memory and history are antithesis, because memory has no scientifically provable truth value, whereas history as a science is subjective to truth criteria.<sup>47</sup> In this thesis, myths will subsequently be treated in such a way that they occur in social memory and therefore serve as an antithesis to a historical narrative.

### 1.5.2 Reconciliation

The atrocities experienced in Cambodia are not unique in history. Massacre and violence have occurred on numerous occasions and the 20<sup>th</sup> century is no exception. In a global context, the world witnessed genocides on many different stages. Armenia, Germany, Rwanda, South Africa and Cambodia are some of them. The genocides committed in these countries have resulted in the massacre of millions of people. Ernesto Verdeja is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He argues that, it is remarkable to witness the numerous recent efforts at publicly engaging past atrocities. This often happens through new legal mechanisms, but also through a multiplicity of other political and social strategies. The aim is to reconcile former enemies while simultaneously addressing accountability, truth telling and the concerns of the victims.<sup>48</sup>

Verdeja emphasize that in some countries, complex and difficult engagements with the past have resulted in remarkable transformations of society. He claims that South Africa, Argentina, Chile and a united Germany, are all significantly more democratic than before. Meanwhile, in at other places such as Cambodia and Rwanda, peace and stability are the most that can be hoped for in the near term.<sup>49</sup> These societies are confronted with a large quantity of complicated questions: How should perpetrators, victims and bystanders be faced? What is the proper balance between punishment and forgiveness? How much memory is too much, and when is it too little? What does it mean to be reconciled with the past and with each other, and how should this be achieved? What, in other words, are the stakes in reconciling? According to Verdeja, these and similar concerns occupy a central place in societies emerging from massive violence. Verdeja recognizes the complexity of reconciliation, stating that it is a multileveled process with multiple moral claims that are often in competition with each other. Rather than posit a model equating reconciliation with social harmony or as a condition of minimal peace without exploration of past injustices, Verdeja outlines a conception that emphasizes the importance of shared notions of moral respect and tolerance among erstwhile

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<sup>47</sup> Ahonen: 13

<sup>48</sup> Verdeja 2009: 1

<sup>49</sup> Verdeja 2009: 2



adversaries as a realistic and morally defensible idea of what we should expect in transitional societies.

*“Reconciliation refers to a condition of mutual respect among former enemies, which requires the reciprocal recognition of moral worth and dignity of others. It is achieved when previous, conflict-era identities no longer operate as the primary cleavages in politics, and thus citizens acquire new identities that cut across those earlier fault lines.”*<sup>50</sup>

This coming together can be personal, communal, political or nationwide. Its meaning can depend on who it applies to and who or what is supposed to need reconciliation. According to Linton 2004, Reconciliation in countries facing political and social processes following the end of a repressive era has become very much a holy grail in the field of international relations, peace building, democratisation, conflict resolution and transitional justice. No two countries have the same experience of achieving reconciliation after conflict, although lessons and ideas may be learnt by the paths taken by others. Individual perceptions of what this term is, what it means for citizens and how to get there, do not necessarily concur with what the state understands it to be.<sup>51</sup>

The term reconciliation appears on so many occasions throughout the source material, that it is not plausible to interpret its individual meaning. On this note, the thesis will operate with the term as a wide individual perception of simply reducing tensions, whether it is between individuals in Cambodia, different groups in Cambodia or between Cambodia and other nations.

## 1.6 Sources and methodology

The Documentation Center of Cambodia cooperates with scholars from across the globe and English is the normal language of communication. The official material available to Cambodian teachers and students in Khmer language is also available in English.

The process of implementing the topic ‘Democratic Kampuchea’ to the curriculum is still at an early stage. Subsequently, any attempts of measuring student achievement on a national level will be premature. The thesis will accordingly exclude measurements on the receiving side of history and consequently focus on the conveying side and the didactical thinking behind it. A didactical perspective means addressing the different aspects of the past, present and the future. This leaves the constraint of time somewhat indefinite. Meaning that the

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<sup>50</sup> Verdeja 2009: 3

<sup>51</sup> Linton 2004: 67

subject matter is from the Khmer Rouge genocide during 1975-79, but the investigation itself will concentrate on the period of implementing it to Cambodian classrooms.

#### 1.6.1 Secondary literature of particular importance

In order to have a sufficient empirical background, this thesis relies on information discussed by scholars familiar to Cambodian history. Most notable is David Chandler, who in addition to being an emeritus Professor of history at Monash University, is also heavily involved in the 'Genocide Education Project'. He has given scientific advice to much of the source material and he also frequently gives guest lectures for DC-Cam. His book *A history of Cambodia* is regarded as the standard work in the field, and it is therefore an important empirical background to this thesis.

Another important piece of literature is Evan Gottesmann's *Cambodia After The Khmer Rouge*. This book focuses more on the politics of nation building after 1979, and is perceived by Chandler to be "a fair-minded study which lifts the curtain to reveal a secretive, enigmatic regime and deepens our understanding of a crucial decade in Cambodian history, as well as our understanding of Cambodian politics ever since."<sup>52</sup>

#### 1.6.2 The textbook: A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)

The textbook is the cornerstone of the 'Genocide Education Project'. It was published in 2007 and is the first historical record of the events to be written by a Cambodian. The first major analysis will be of the new textbook and this thesis has devoted an individual chapter for this. The textbook's foreword is written by the Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, Mr. Youk Chhang. Admittedly, he writes that teaching about this bleak period of history for a new generation may run the risk of re-opening old wounds for the survivors of Democratic Kampuchea. Many Cambodians have tried to put their memories of the regime behind them and attempted to move on. Youk Chhang argues that they cannot progress – much less reconcile with themselves and others – until they have confronted the past and understood both what happened and why it happened. Only with this understanding can they truly heal.<sup>53</sup>

The theoretical approaches to: objectivity in narration, memory, reconciliation and teaching sensitive and controversial issues will therefore be a key tool in the textbook analysis. The council of Europe with Stradling as the driving force provides a methodological approach to

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<sup>52</sup> Back cover of Gottesmann

<sup>53</sup> Dy – A history of Democratic Kampuchea: foreword

how textbooks in history could be analyzed. The methodological approach gives a checklist of questions to ask while evaluating textbooks. These questions are divided into three main categories:

1. Questions designed to evaluate the content and pedagogy of history textbooks.
2. Questions which focuses on the essential qualities of textbooks that are likely to be applicable regardless of the country which they are published and used, the content covered, or the age and ability ranges of the students for whom they are written.
3. Questions which focus on the factors external to the process of writing, publishing and use of textbooks. The context in which a textbook is written, published, marketed, purchased and used in classrooms is critically important.<sup>54</sup>

These questions serve as to give a general impression of the textbook, but they are not applicable for an in-depth analysis. In order to get deeper into the historical presentation, this thesis will first analyze the taxonomical potential of “historical truths” given at a sentence level using Bloom’s taxonomy. Secondly it will apply Ricour’s theories of objectivity in historical narratives, before analyzing the narratives for their taxonomical potential. Contextualising and analysing the material in relevant theory seeks to reveal not only didactical dilemmas, but also the aims and means of conveying this history.

### 1.6.3 Teacher’s Guidebook

This material is introduced as a supplement to the textbook. The Teacher’s guidebook represents a variety of pedagogical and didactical approaches on how to teach the subject matter. It is also published by DC-Cam, but with a two year gap. The guidebook and its methodology seek to educate both teachers and students, because it is desired that the teachers adapt this book into their own teaching. It introduces a methodology that contrasts traditional Cambodian teaching, but its student-centred approach to teaching has a bigger potential of developing higher cognitive skills for the students. The thesis has devoted a chapter to this particular piece of material.

The methodological approach will follow a similar trajectory as the textbook analysis, applying Bloom’s taxonomy to identify the cognitive features of conveying the topic of Democratic Kampuchea, before discussing them in terms of historical distance.

### 1.6.4 Reports from Teacher-training workshops

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<sup>54</sup> Stradling 2001: 257-263

The new textbook was published in 2007 and there is an ongoing process of educating Cambodian history teachers, which will hopefully make adaptation to the new material smoother for them. The Documentation Center of Cambodia arranges specially purposed work-shops that local history teachers attend. These works-shops have been and are still arranged nationwide with funding from international organizations. DC-Cam writes reports from every province that gives detailed information of what they did and they also include an evaluation of that particular workshop. At present time there are more than fifty reports from different provinces all across Cambodia. These reports are written in English and serve as sources of information on how they deal with teacher competence. These documents represent several potential problems for the thesis. First and foremost because most of them are written by the same group of people who orchestrates the ‘genocide education project’. Preferably, they should have been written by external individuals. Secondly, because of how the workshops are financed, it is important to keep in mind that these documents not necessarily give the correct picture. They are nevertheless an important part of the ‘Genocide Education Project’ and provide some valuable information on didactical considerations and how they address the competence of teachers, and can not be therefore not be ignored.

#### 1.6.5 Qualitative interviews with teachers and DC-Cam staff

Meeting and interviewing teachers is important in order to reveal their perception of the ‘genocide education project’, and whether they feel that they cope with the new expectations of them in conveying history. This will help to illuminate both challenges in coping with this new approach to teaching and also personal hesitation on the subject matter. The issues can be conceived as very sensitive depending on their past experiences. Because of the sensitivity concerning these interviews, the transcriptions remain confidential for all except the examiners, who can access these by contacting the examination office at University of Agder.

#### 1.6.6 The progression of the thesis

An important feature of this thesis is that it does not give a considerable historical background in the introductory chapter. The reason for this is that it would simply make the chapter too excessive. Therefore the second chapter is to serve as a context for further discussions. In order to deal with the sheer amount of information in a satisfactory manner, the thesis has a source orientated progression, initially treating them separately. This concurs with the chronology in time, in which the different source material appeared. The textbook was

published first, and then the teacher's guidebook, then they arranged workshops, and finally the field study for this particular investigation.

## **Chapter 2: Cambodian circumstances since 1979**

Cambodian society since 1979 has encountered numerous problems and challenges. The purpose of this chapter is to create both a historical context for the 'Genocide Education Project', and also shed some light on the society in which the 'Genocide Education Project' has to operate on a daily basis. The project is just one of many orchestrated by DC-Cam, which has functioned as an independent research organization for the last 16 years.<sup>55</sup> Since the 'Genocide Education Project' is an ongoing process, much of the source material available for this thesis has to be seen in light of contemporary Cambodia. Many aspects of Cambodian society were unknown before engaging in the field study discussed in chapter 6, so this chapter will also give a necessary background for many of the methodological challenges encountered there.

### 2.1 Brief historical overview

In 1975, the Khmer Rouge declared victory after a five year period of civil war in Cambodia. Khmer Rouge's official name was the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). CPK created the state of Democratic Kampuchea.<sup>56</sup> Until January 1979, the Khmer Rouge regime committed some of the most brutal acts of crime against humanity in modern history. Estimates vary, but the most prominent scholar on Cambodian history, Dr. David Chandler, estimates that during the lifetime of Democratic Kampuchea, nearly two million people – or one in four- perished.<sup>57</sup>

When Vietnamese forces fought its way into Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge fled westwards and re-established bases close to the border of Thailand. In 1982 the Khmer Rouge formed a coalition with Prince Sihanouk and non-communist leader Son Sann, to create an opposing government to the Vietnamese. The legitimacy of this coalition was reinforced by being acknowledged by the UN to be the legitimate government of Cambodia, thus occupying Cambodia's seat in UN General Assembly until 1990.<sup>58</sup> The Khmer Rouge continued to exist until 1999, causing an unstable environment for peace and reconciliation.

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<sup>55</sup> For a thorough description of DC-Cam's history and mission, their website provides a lot of information: <http://www.d.dccam.org/About/History/Histories.htm>

<sup>56</sup> Grørdum: 79

<sup>57</sup> David Chandler – A history of Cambodia: 259

<sup>58</sup> Grørdum: 80

### 2.1.1 Resistance to Vietnamese presence in Cambodia

When Democratic Kampuchea fell, the Vietnamese installed a new government called the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). At district and provincial levels, PRK exerted centralized control, but made no effort to collect taxes or to conscript young men for military service. They re-opened schools throughout 1979 and currency was reintroduced in 1980.<sup>59</sup> According to Chandler, PRK introduced a certain amount of personal freedom for most Cambodians, and PRK's unrevolutionary caution was a sharp contrast to the experiences during Democratic Kampuchea. PRK's existence was supported by Vietnam and the Soviet-bloc, with many high-ranking officials and regional cadres who had else served happily enough in Democratic Kampuchea.<sup>60</sup>

The officials of PRK refused to distance themselves from Marxism-Leninism or One-party rule. Instead, they tried to demonize the "genocidal Pol Pot- Ieng Sary clique, blaming two people for the atrocities during Democratic Kampuchea, rather than the socialist policies of the Communist Party of Kampuchea.<sup>61</sup> Simultaneously, Democratic Kampuchea's leadership continued its existence in exile, supported by both China and USA, who gave them the seat in UN's General Assembly, in order to punish Vietnam for invading Cambodia.<sup>62</sup>

Coexistence of a Vietnamese installed government and fractions of the Khmer Rouge within the same country, created large domestic problems. One of them was the amount of landmines laid along Khmer rouge dominated areas, which continue to maim Cambodians even today.<sup>63</sup> According to Chandler, it was difficult for any Cambodian government to forge an alliance with Vietnam before 1979. The friendship established between Sihanouk and the Vietnamese Communists collapsed when Lon Nol overthrew Sihanouk. Both Lon Nol and Pol Pot conducted numerous military campaigns against Vietnam. When Vietnam invaded Cambodia in the end of 1978, they imposed a protectorate similar in some ways to French colonialism and the 1830s.<sup>64</sup>

The relationship between the different Southeast-Asian countries needs to be seen in light of the geopolitical situation in a cold-war context. During the presidency of Richard Nixon, Soviet-Sino relationship took a turn for the worse.<sup>65</sup> According to former US National

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<sup>59</sup> David Chandler – A history of Cambodia: 279

<sup>60</sup> David Chandler – A history of Cambodia: 280

<sup>61</sup> David Chandler – A history of Cambodia: 280

<sup>62</sup> David Chandler – A history of Cambodia: 281

<sup>63</sup> David Chandler – A history of Cambodia: 284

<sup>64</sup> David Chandler – A history of Cambodia: 296

<sup>65</sup> Kissinger – Diplomacy: 722

Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, America's diplomatic opening towards China made the Soviet Union faced challenges on two fronts. He claims that the US used China as leverage against the Soviet-Union and the other way around. Diplomatic tension between America and Sino-Soviet became more relaxed, while there were still tension among China and Soviet.<sup>66</sup> America withdrew from Vietnam, while the Soviet continued to support them and China on the other hand had closer ties to Cambodia. According to Gottesmann, in 1981 the West blamed the Vietnamese occupation for the ongoing conflict in Cambodia, and they were calling for an international conference.<sup>67</sup> Hanoi and Phnom Penh preferred a regional approach involving direct negotiations between Thailand and PRK. Gottesmann states that the Vietnamese and Cambodians knew that such negotiations would require Thailand to recognize the legitimacy of PRK, but this prospect was rejected by China.<sup>68</sup> A standoff emerged and intensified when Vietnamese army units were crossing into Thai territory. The trespass hardened Thai opposition to the Vietnamese occupation and brought the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) closer to the Chinese.<sup>69</sup> Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia and PRK's global diplomatic situation was suffering, and the UN General Assembly voted to continue to seat the exiled regime of Democratic Kampuchea.<sup>70</sup> According to Gottesmann, the eventual resolution of the Cambodia problem was proposed by China and ASEAN, and it included a withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, followed by UN-sponsored election. This was, however, not an acceptable solution for the Vietnamese, and they claimed that the establishment of PRK as irreversible and rejected multiparty elections. They argued that its troops were necessary to prevent the "Chinese threat", and could not be removed until the Khmer Rouge were disarmed, which again was unacceptable to the Chinese.<sup>71</sup>

### 2.1.2 Education after 1979

During the years of Democratic Kampuchea, education was perceived as a problem rather than a resource. One group especially targeted was the teachers, and many of them were killed. After the fall of Democratic Kampuchea, the PRK was quick to re-establish the school system, but this does not mean that the educational problem was fixed. In his book *Anatomy of a Crisis*, David Ayres argues that even though there were policy programs which appeared

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<sup>66</sup> Kissinger – Diplomacy: 730

<sup>67</sup> Gottesmann: 115

<sup>68</sup> Gottesmann: 115

<sup>69</sup> Gottesmann: 115

<sup>70</sup> Gottesmann: 115

<sup>71</sup> Gottesmann: 115

to address Cambodian educational problems, they were not fully realized in practice.<sup>72</sup> Educational policies developed by the Ministry of Education, in consultation with international advisors, were implemented only where they did not conflict the political imperatives of those in control of the apparatuses of state.<sup>73</sup> Instead of being the key to human resource development, formal education was a tool utilized, and often abused, in the interest of building a Cambodian state.<sup>74</sup>

### 2.1.3 Purpose of history: Legitimizing Vietnamese presence in Cambodia?

In an article written by Dr. May-Brith Ohman Nielsen, who is the primary supervisor to this thesis, she argues that the nature of history is indeed very political in the sense that political projects and political rhetoric often seem to use history in the purpose of presenting point of views.<sup>75</sup> The use of history is tied up to institutions in society and the processes in which they appear,<sup>76</sup> and these processes can appear in schools, museums and mass-media.<sup>77</sup>

One of the first things the Vietnamese forces discovered when seizing Phnom Penh in 1979, was the notorious prison S-21 also described as Toul Sleng, which was used as torture and interrogation centre during Democratic Kampuchea where thousands of people were killed.<sup>78</sup> Vietnamese soldiers captured photographs of murdered prisoners when they entered the compound for the first time. Additionally, they discovered torture instruments and a hastily abandoned archive.<sup>79</sup> Sensing the historical importance and propaganda value, the Vietnamese closed off the site, cleaned it up, and began examining the archives.<sup>80</sup> The prison centre was transformed into a museum of genocide arranged the past in a manner suitable to fit the requirements of PRK. The constructed history of S-21 denied the leaders of Democratic Kampuchea any socialist credentials, and encouraged visitors to make seductive connections between them and Nazi-Germany.<sup>81</sup> This is perfectly in line with the attempts to demonize the “genocidal Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique” mentioned earlier, thus stating differences between Vietnam and Democratic Kampuchea. Demonizing the Khmer Rouge paints a picture of the Vietnamese as liberators from previous cruelty.

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<sup>72</sup> David Ayres- Anatomy of a Crisis: 182

<sup>73</sup> David Ayres- Anatomy of a Crisis: 182

<sup>74</sup> David Ayres- Anatomy of a Crisis: 182

<sup>75</sup> Ongstad, Sigmund. (2006). *Fag og didaktikk i lærerutdanning: kunnskap i grenseland* – May-Brith Ohman Nielsen’s article: p 17

<sup>76</sup> Jan Bjarne Bøe – Bildene av fortiden: 3

<sup>77</sup> Stugu: 124

<sup>78</sup> David Chandler – Voices of s-21: preface viii

<sup>79</sup> David Chandler – Voices of s-21: preface viii

<sup>80</sup> David Chandler – Voices of s-21: 4

<sup>81</sup> David Chandler – Voices of s-21: 5



The propaganda was not limited to museums and monuments. With the reestablishment of Cambodian schools, history lessons also provided a possibility of conveying history for a political purpose.

#### 2.1.4 Teaching the history of DK before the 'Genocide Education Project'

According to Khamboly Dy, Cambodian school children were taught about the Khmer Rouge genocide in a manner that could provoke anger, hatred and revenged during the 1980s. This was because of the politically charged context, which desired legitimisation of Vietnamese presence, subsequently reducing history education to propaganda.<sup>82</sup> When peace was restored in 1993, the issue of KR genocide was removed from curriculum for the sake of reconciliation and political stability.<sup>83</sup> This topic was indented to re-enter curriculum, but in 2002 the Cambodian government removed the whole section concerning modern Cambodian history from textbooks. As a result of an intra-conflict between the two main political parties over the issue of the 1993 election, the following omissions went all the way back to 1953 and the independence from France.<sup>84</sup>

According to Khamboly Dy, the suffering of Cambodian people under the Khmer Rouge has been reduced to a folktale, especially for young Cambodians who were born after the regime collapsed.<sup>85</sup> In reading textbook published in 1979 by PRK, the following sentence appear :”Pol Pot-Ieng cliques killed more than 3 million people and completely destroyed every thing in Cambodia. We are absolutely furious and strongly struggle against these atrocities.”<sup>86</sup>

According to Dy, these textbooks included pictures showing the Khmer Rouge cutting out people’s organs, the cruel tortures at Tuol Sleng prison and killings that are too violent for young learners to grasp.<sup>87</sup>

According to Gottesman, Cambodia’s new leaders and their Vietnamese patrons were pointing in a direction of an imagined history of revolutionary glory, while most Cambodians imagined a past that included neither communism nor Vietnamese invasion.<sup>88</sup>

The flux of different political opinions and explanations of history, combined with the lack of a nuanced historical record taught in schools, has given a fertile ground for myths to appear in Cambodian society. These myths are hard to document scientifically, but some of them

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<sup>82</sup> Khamboly Dy – Teaching genocide in Cambodia: 1

<sup>83</sup> Khamboly Dy – Teaching genocide in Cambodia: 1

<sup>84</sup> Khamboly Dy – Teaching genocide in Cambodia: 2

<sup>85</sup> Khamboly Dy – Teaching genocide in Cambodia: 1

<sup>86</sup> Khamboly Dy – Teaching genocide in Cambodia: 7-8

<sup>87</sup> Khamboly Dy – Teaching genocide in Cambodia: 8

<sup>88</sup> Gottesmann: 34

revolve upon the brutal nature of the atrocities, and some people cannot accept that Cambodians did this to each other; subsequently they are looking for alternative explanations. Khmer Rouge's close connection to China, makes many people believe that the actual political power behind Democratic Kampuchea were the Chinese.

Gottesmann speaks of a general perception among Cambodians that the economic and political agenda of the Vietnamese meant trading Cambodian natural resources, permitting Vietnamese immigration, and shielding ethnic Vietnamese from the jurisdiction of Cambodian officials.<sup>89</sup> The notion of being exploited as a nation, combined with KR-rhetoric blaming the Vietnamese for the atrocities, could explain a general suspicion towards Vietnamese presence in Cambodia.

## 2.2 Issues concerning contemporary Cambodia

Due to the existence of several political factions with their own agenda and ambition, an important issue from 1979 until now has been avoiding civil war. With regards to stability, present day Cambodia is more balanced as compared to the previous four decades. There are obvious problems in Cambodian society, but authoritarian rule have diminished opposing political parties ability from being a considerable opponent, thus reducing the risk for civil war. Until the time Pol Pot died and the rest of the organization collapsed, Cambodian government tried to make Khmer Rouge members defect, and many of them did. Khmer Rouge members were co-opted into other political factions in Cambodia, and some of them made peace with the Cambodian People's Party.<sup>90</sup>

When the two leading figures of Khmer Rouge, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, defected in 1998, Prime Minister Hun Sen said: "Let's dig a hole and bury the past and look to the future"<sup>91</sup> When the senior leaders had defected, the Prime Minister expressed a desire to forget about the past. According to Grørdum, Observers have claimed that Hun Sen only used the threat of prosecution as a tool to defeat the remaining leaders, and the strategy was in fact efficient in ending the violent resistance.<sup>92</sup>

When integrating former perpetrators into Cambodian society, to live side-by-side with former victims, this raises a challenge for any post-conflict society. A difficult question is how to deal with accountability for the atrocities experienced. According to Linton, reconciliation during the 1990s was a "buzzword" that masked the continuing struggle for

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<sup>89</sup> Gottesmann: 159

<sup>90</sup> Gottesmann: 354

<sup>91</sup> Linton: 84

<sup>92</sup> Grørdum: 86

power between Cambodian political elite, while the UN stressed justice as being paramount in dealing with legal challenges of accountability for the crimes committed.<sup>93</sup>

### 2.2.1 The Khmer Rouge Tribunal

With the exception of Comrade Duch, who was chief of Tuol Sleng prison, no officials of the Khmer Rouge regime have ever been held legally responsible for the brutal crimes committed between 1975 and 1975.

Initiatives to create a Tribunal started in 1997, but UN and the Cambodian government did not sign an agreement before 2003, when they established the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)<sup>94</sup>. Efforts by foreign institutions to expedite this establishment had, according to Grørdum, failed due to political and strategic considerations.<sup>95</sup> The first hearings of the ECCC were held in January 2008. This time gap is because of a variety of challenges, which constantly delayed the process. A strategy for the defence team has been to delay the court hearings as long as possible, and there have also been allegations of corruption and disagreements on funding.<sup>96</sup>

The tribunal consists of Cambodian and international judges, prosecutors and investigators. Their task is to investigate and put remaining Khmer Rouge leaders on trial. The indicted leaders are few in numbers and getting very old, so there is a sense of urgency in giving them a sentence before they die of natural causes. In March 2013, Ieng Sary died of natural causes, thus not making it possible to give a judgement.

The Khmer Rouge tribunal is a very complicated and delicate process, which is very important in terms of ascribing guilt and victimhood. The tribunal has many reconciliatory features, and is widely researched by international experts on transitional justice. The Tribunal relevance to this thesis is that it puts the topic Democratic Kampuchea on the agenda in current Cambodia, subsequently functioning as a door-opener for genocide education. An important aspect of the Tribunal trial is the need for credible documentation. This documentation process will be further discussed in with regards to DC-Cams textbook in chapter 3.

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<sup>93</sup> Linton: 13

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/keyevents>

<sup>95</sup> Grørdum: 84

<sup>96</sup> Grørdum: 84

### 2.2.1 Corruption and Human Rights abuses in Cambodia

The Paris agreements of October 1991 was supposed to bring an end to the post-Khmer Rouge era civil war between the Vietnamese installed government, led since 1985 by Hun Sen, and the US and Chinese-backed resistance forces, led military by the Khmer Rouge and politically by Prince Norodom Sihanouk.<sup>97</sup> Despite the human rights provisions of the Paris Agreements, the human rights protections in Cambodia's 1993 constitution, and Cambodia's accession to the main international human rights treaties, almost no progress has been made in tackling impunity over the past two decades. Instead, perpetrators have been protected and promoted,<sup>98</sup> and simultaneously, killings, torture, illegal land confiscation, and other abuses of power occur on a regular basis across the country. Since the Paris agreements, more than 300 people have been killed in politically motivated attacks.<sup>99</sup>

Serious abuses and repression continue while corruption characterizes the economy, political opposition parties and free media have been suppressed and NGOs face regular threats and constant pressure. Accountability for senior officials committing these crimes does not exist.<sup>100</sup> The developments since the Paris agreements have happened during the authoritarian leadership of incumbent Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has filled this position for 27 years. With his violent tendencies, Hun Sen is the leader of CPP (Cambodian People's Party), which has remained in power since the end of Democratic Kampuchea in 1979.<sup>101</sup> This party has a communist origin, but has more or less adapted the principals of capitalist economy. The extensive security network down to village level has, however, remained since CPP came to power in 1979.<sup>102</sup>

The CPP and Hun Sen have shown no intentions of developing a genuine democracy or allowing the political pluralism envisioned by the Paris agreements. Cambodia is progressing in the direction of reverting to a one-party state.<sup>103</sup>

The courts and justice system are controlled by Hun Sen and the CPP. Most judges and prosecutors are CPP members who implement party directives. Party members are expected to place party loyalty above official responsibilities.<sup>104</sup>

The most prominent political opponent to Hun Sen and CPP is Sam Rainsy. In the 1990s Rainsy demanded acceleration of reforms and he began staging regular demonstrations over

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<sup>97</sup> HRW report: 2

<sup>98</sup> HRW report: 3

<sup>99</sup> HRW report: 3

<sup>100</sup> HRW report: 5

<sup>101</sup> HRW report: 5

<sup>102</sup> HRW report: 6

<sup>103</sup> HRW report: 6

<sup>104</sup> HRW report: 12

labour rights, corruption, illegal logging, the environment and political pluralism. The creation of Cambodia's first independent labour unions in January 1997 led to many strikes and demonstrations. Rainsy seemed to be present at all of them, and each was met with a heavy police presence that raised tensions. Despite the fact that the government controlled the army, police, the courts and the media, and that the constitution guarantees freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, they nevertheless declared rallies to be illegal.<sup>105</sup>

On March 30<sup>th</sup> a demonstration, formally approved by Ministry of Interior, ended in grenades and carnage resulting in at least 16 dead people and more than 150 with injuries. The main target of this attack was Sam Rainsy, but he survived. After the first grenade exploded, Rainsy's bodyguard threw himself on top of his leader subsequently taking the hits from the following grenades. Rainsy escaped with a minor leg injury, but his bodyguard died at the scene.<sup>106</sup> The attack took place at a time of extreme political tension. Rainsy's political party was seen as a threat in national elections scheduled for the following year. For more than a year, he and his party members had been the subject of attacks and threats from CPP officials and agents.<sup>107</sup> The attack was well-planned with members of the personal bodyguard unit of Hun Sen, Brigade 70, deployed in full riot gear at the rally. In a speech on the afternoon of the attacks, Hun Sen suggested that his political opponents had orchestrated the attack in order to put the blame on CPP. Instead of launching a serious investigation, he called for the arrest of Sam Rainsy. He was, however, forced to drop this plan due to resistance within CPP and also from the international outrage that followed.<sup>108</sup>

Because of an injury sustained by an American citizen, the FBI undertook into the grenade attacks. They concluded that the Cambodian government was responsible for the attacks. The Chief investigator was, however, ordered out of the country by US officials before he could complete his investigation. Rather than identifying and prosecuting the people who ordered and carried out the grenade attack, the Cambodian government has since handed out high-level promotions to two people linked by the FBI to the attack.<sup>109</sup>

The attack and murder attempt on Sam Rainsy is just one of numerous episodes where the Cambodian government has abused human rights. Inevitably these incidents make an impression on the Cambodian population. In July 1997, Hun Sen launched what the United Nations described as a *coup d'état* against First Prime Minister Ranariddh and his Funcinpec

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<sup>105</sup> HRW report: 35

<sup>106</sup> HRW report: 36

<sup>107</sup> HRW report: 36

<sup>108</sup> HRW report: 36

<sup>109</sup> HRW report: 37

party. Following this coup d'état, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia, Thomas Hammarberg stated his concern about the atmosphere of fear and intimidation which prevailed in Cambodia. He argued that few people believe that it is safe to express their views publicly.<sup>110</sup>

Killings, kidnapping and other grave human rights abuses sent opposition politicians and activists into exile in fear for their lives.<sup>111</sup> With their safety guaranteed by UN, Japan and the United States, many of them returned to participate in elections in July 1998. The elections were violent and fundamentally flawed, resulting in Hun Sen and CPP gaining a majority in National Assembly and Hun Sen was named sole prime minister. He has ruled virtually unchallenged within his party or by opposition ever since.<sup>112</sup>

Year after year donors have proposed, and the Cambodian government has agreed to, significant reforms, such as measures to promote the professionalization of the police and independence of prosecutors and judges. Yet the justice system remains a deeply and unwaveringly politicized institution, with senior officials being political appointees whose primary allegiance is to the prime minister and the ruling CPP.<sup>113</sup>

Wealth accumulates in the hands of officials, generals, and a few businesspeople. The relationship between government ministers and big business has grown closer, simultaneously as low-level corruption exists. According to Gottesmann, there have been numerous efforts by foreign donors and multilateral lending institutions to promote administrative reform, but the bureaucracy is still heavily stuck in nepotism and patronage.<sup>114</sup>

### **Chapter 3: Analysis of A History of Democratic Kampuchea.**

In this chapter the thesis evaluates and analyzes the textbook, which the 'Genocide Education Project' evolves around. The chapter aims to give a general impression and discover "historical truths" in the teaching material, before analyzing these for their taxonomical potential using *Bloom's taxonomy*. The purpose of this is to examine both the general taxonomical potential, but also if there are any contrasts between different "historical truths" with regards to abstract thinking. In order to do so, it will first give a general description, before applying theory of *historical distance* to make a distinction between *sensitive and controversial issues*.

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<sup>110</sup> HRW report: 39

<sup>111</sup> HRW report: 46

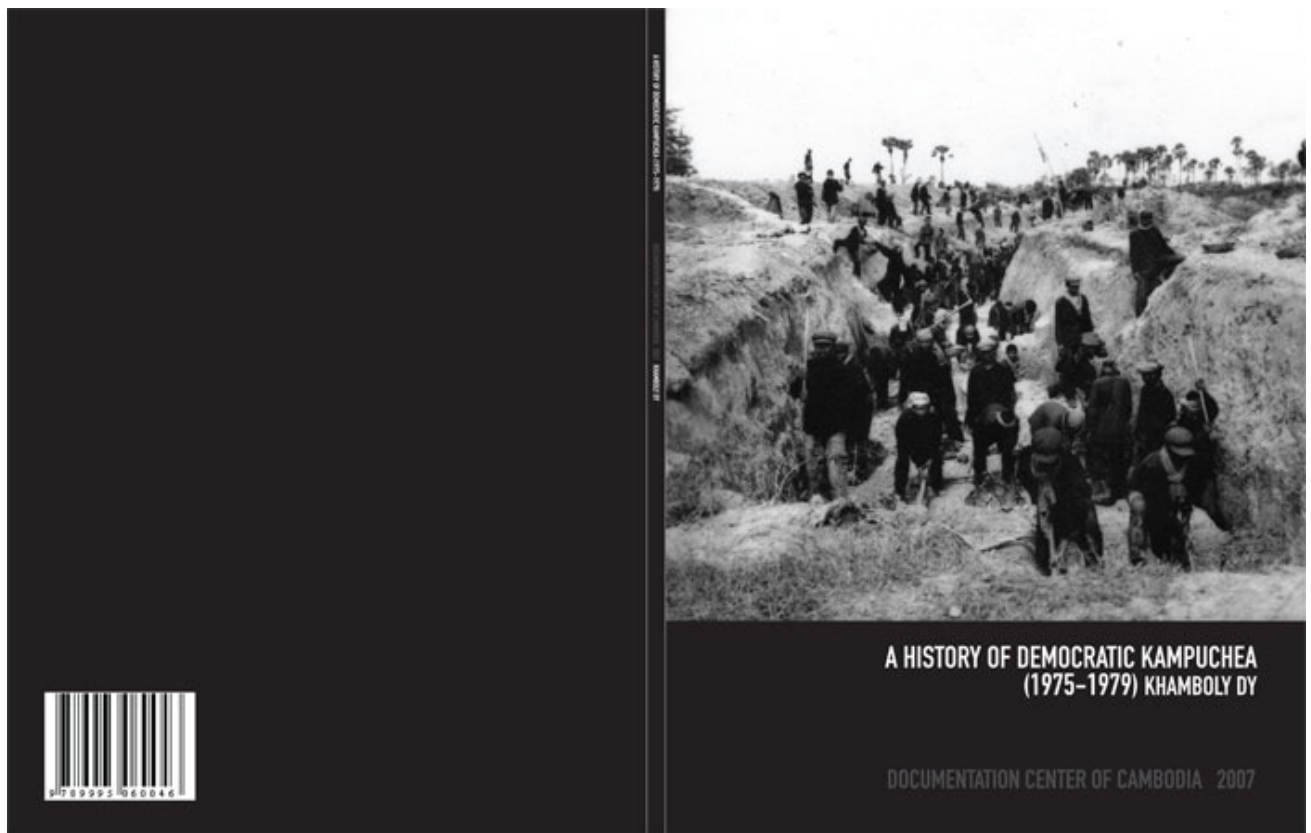
<sup>112</sup> HRW report: 47

<sup>113</sup> HRW report: 64

<sup>114</sup> Gottesmann: 357

The taxonomical potential will first be investigated at a sentence level, before connecting sentence into a *historical narrative* to compare and illuminate taxonomical differences. With regards to the primary thesis question, the textbook can be perceived as a mean of fulfilling any aims of the 'Genocide Education Project'. Establishing it as a mean needs further discussion of its properties, and this is where secondary thesis question operates.

### 3.1 A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)



(Picture of the DC-Cam's textbook<sup>115</sup>)

In order to make an initial distinction, *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* is not a regular history textbook in the sense that general history textbooks usually cover a wide array of different topics. This textbook's very existence is an attempt to address the fact that this topic has been omitted from the *National textbook*, which is the one Cambodian schools use on a daily basis. It was published in 2007 aiming to penetrate into Cambodian High School classrooms. Since then, the textbook has been distributed to a large amount of students, but it is rarely used active in high school.

<sup>115</sup> DC-Cam website: [http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/DK\\_Book/English.htm](http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/DK_Book/English.htm)

Despite the temporary setback of not being used actively in school, the people at DC-Cam still see a positive outcome of their endeavours.<sup>116</sup> The 2011 edition of the National textbook for year nine has included approximately 6 pages regarding this topic, while the national textbook for year twelve have included 16 pages. Students will only learn about Democratic Kampuchea in their ninth and twelfth year in school.

The chapter concerning Democratic Kampuchea for year 12 in the National textbook is more or less copied directly from DC-Cam's textbook.<sup>117</sup>

The author's academic background does not come from history. Mr. Dy holds a B.A degree in English from Royal University of Phnom Penh and a B.A degree in Business administration from the National Institute of Management. He graduated with a M.S degree in Global Affairs from Rutgers University in 2009, and is currently pursuing a PhD there.<sup>118</sup> The textbook is, however, the first such text written by a Cambodian, and numerous international scholars have worked closely with the project. Including Professor David Chandler and Professor Frank Chalk, who are both regarded as experts on respectively Cambodian history and genocide studies.

### 3.1.1 General description of textbook

In his book, *Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> –century European history* Stradling points out that a textbook in history should be perceived as public property.<sup>119</sup> The history being taught in school is not just an agreement between the academic historian, the teacher, the textbook writer and the publisher. History as a school subject is to a much farther extent subject to people trying to influence it, compared to for instance mathematics, geography or language. Politicians, pressure groups, ethnic and language minorities, and parents in general feel that they have a right to influence curriculum in history.<sup>120</sup> On this note, history textbooks are public property for different groups within a country, but the content of textbooks can also raise concerns in neighbouring countries. Concerns may raise over explicit and implicit messages and also assumptions transmitted by the text. In addition to what has been included and omitted, the illustrations, source material as well as teaching styles can also be subject to public concern.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> DC-Cam staff interviews

<sup>117</sup> Dy interview

<sup>118</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 73

<sup>119</sup> Stradling: 257

<sup>120</sup> Stradling: 257

<sup>121</sup> Stradling: 257



There is a need for an analytical framework when evaluating textbooks, and in *Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> –century European history* Stradling provides such an analytical tool or line of questions to ask. This analytical framework is not intended to answer whether the textbook is good or not, but rather defining some core principles, in which, further discussions can be stimulated.<sup>122</sup> The purpose of this thesis is not to evaluate in terms of whether it is good or bad. Didactics in history seeks to rather render and reflect upon the didactical considerations made on how to convey history. The textbook is a result of an enormous amount of considerations to be made, and the following analysis will therefore provide material and information to be discussed in relation with the thesis questions.

As part of his analytical framework, Stradling constructs four main categories with a number of questions. Category one deals with *extrinsic factors* that may impact the book. Questions to ascertain when the book appeared on the market, the price and robustness, whether it is aimed at a certain group of students, and to what extent the textbook will need to be complimented with alternative resources.<sup>123</sup> Category two includes an evaluation of textbook *content*. This part deals with coverage, sequencing and the curriculum, space allocation, the incorporation of multiple-perspectives, cultural and regional identity, and omissions.<sup>124</sup> The third category identifies *intrinsic qualities* in history textbooks. This includes questions on evaluating textbook pitch, whether the text relies on reductionism and the possibilities of identifying author bias in the text.<sup>125</sup> The fourth category emphasises the textbook's *pedagogical value*, meaning to what extent the textbook includes: questions on students' prior skills and knowledge, whether the textbook encourages memorization or skill development, use of charts and pictures, explication of historical concepts in the text, and how it facilitates comparative thinking.<sup>126</sup>

#### 3.1.1.1 Extrinsic factors

The textbook was printed and published for the first time in 2007. It has been through an editorial and reviewing process before being approved for use in Cambodian schools. It was done in cooperation with both national and international historians who are experts on Cambodian history.<sup>127</sup> The process of editing and reviewing was done in order to meet the

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<sup>122</sup> Nicholls: 6

<sup>123</sup> Nicholls: 6

<sup>124</sup> Nicholls: 6

<sup>125</sup> Nicholls: 6

<sup>126</sup> Nicholls: 6

<sup>127</sup> Dy – A history of DK: Mentioned by Dy in the acknowledgement part of the textbook.

high demands of the Cambodian Ministry of Education.<sup>128</sup> This forces an important question regarding possible censorship in a de facto authoritarian society. Dy was somewhat reluctant or vague when providing a definite answer to what was excluded and included in the reviewing process, subsequently just indicating that the material went back and forth to the Ministry of Education a couple of times.<sup>129</sup> DC-Cam staff members did, however, mention that some terminology was subject for discussion. Most important was whether the end of Khmer Rouge was because of a Vietnamese “invasion” or “liberation”.<sup>130</sup> In his book *A History of Cambodia*, Professor Chandler uses the word invasion, while the textbook has avoided using either of these terms when describing the fall of Khmer Rouge.<sup>131</sup>

In the foreword, Mr Youk Chang, the Director of Documentation Center of Cambodia, states the following:

“Writing about this bleak period of history for a new generation may run the risk of re-opening old wounds for the survivors of Democratic Kampuchea. Many Cambodians have tried to put their memories of the regime behind them and move on. But we cannot progress – much less reconcile with ourselves and others – until we have confronted the past and understand both what happened and why it happened. Only with this understanding can we truly begin to heal”<sup>132</sup>

The confrontation with a bleak history that this textbook provides is by no means unique at the time it was written. It happened simultaneously as the commencement of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, which attempts to provide accountability for past atrocities. This means that the textbook is following current developments in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge Tribunal is putting former Khmer Rouge leader on trial for crimes against humanity. An important consideration to made is how far down the branch of former Khmer Rouge officer such a tribunal should investigate. So far they have only pursued the highest ranking members plus the leader of Toul Sleng prison, and it is still uncertain how many who will be put on trial. The textbook provides testimonies from survivors of the Khmer Rouge period. All of these testimonies are made by people who are still alive today. This is unlikely a coincidence and could be based on a thought that time witnesses serve as a more credible information source of information compared to someone who has deceased.

The physical appearance of the textbook represents a major upgrade from regular Cambodian textbooks. First of all, the publisher has chosen to print it in an A-4 format. It is

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<sup>128</sup> Interview with DY

<sup>129</sup> Interview with DY

<sup>130</sup> DC-Cam staff 1

<sup>131</sup> Chandler: 278

<sup>132</sup> DY: Foreword

unknown whether this format will improve the durability of the book. This does, however, make the pictures easier to look at. They are big and clear, allowing readers to see more details in them. The most important physical appearance is the actual material it is made of, which is thick glossy paper. Compared to traditional Cambodian textbooks, this will likely provide greater durability, but at the same time inevitably increasing the production cost. Another factor that increases the production costs are the fact that the textbooks are printed in colour. Financially, this does not necessarily play an important role, as the publication and distribution is funded by external participants.<sup>133</sup> There are, however, some pedagogical aspects of having a textbook printed in colours. These will be further investigated in the part concerning pedagogical approaches.

An important issue with the textbook is the sheer size of it in terms of number of pages, which counts to a total of 73 in the English version. It is intended to penetrate into a high school history curriculum as a completely new topic, and since 2007 there has been a gradual process of implementing it. The main argument for not using it instantly has been that there is too much information and that there is not enough time. This is a valid argument, because it would mean turning upside-down on both the curriculum and also the strong textbook tradition. Adapting to the current history curriculum is not necessarily the most important objective of DC-Cam, but rather an attempt to change it. The achievements so far with regards to changing the history subject, has resulted in a 2011 edition of the National Textbook with parts copied from Dy's textbook and taught to students in year 9 and 12.<sup>134</sup> This is within the target age articulated in the foreword of Dy's textbook<sup>135</sup>, but at the same time taught from a different textbook. Dy's textbook is perceived as having a too excessive content and therefore difficult to use practically in Cambodian classrooms.

### 3.1.1.2 Content

The historical period in the textbook deals with the years in which the Khmer Rouge rose to power until they were defeated and withdrew from power in 1979.

The Khmer Rouge period has previously not been an important part of the history curriculum, and the textbook is more or less crafting this topic itself as a supplement to the regular curriculum.

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<sup>133</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 75

<sup>134</sup> Interview with DY

<sup>135</sup> Dy – A history of DK: foreword

The content is organized in a semi-chronological manner, starting with a summary before treating the early communist movement and ending with the fall and aftermath of Democratic Kampuchea. In between, there are chapters that treat a variety of different themes:

1. Summary
  2. Who were the Khmer Rouge? How did they gain power
  3. The Khmer Rouge come to power
  4. The formation of the Democratic Kampuchea government
  5. Administrative divisions of Democratic Kampuchea
  6. The four-year plan
  7. Daily life during Democratic Kampuchea
  8. The security system
  9. Office S-21 (Toul Sleng Prison)
  10. Foreign relations
  11. The fall of Democratic Kampuchea
- Conclusions

Chapter one is a general summary of the whole textbook. In four pages, it presents a comprehensible chronology starting with the early communist movement and ending with the ultimate fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1999.

Chapter two is a more thorough presentation of who the Khmer Rouge were and how they gained power. The textbook author has devoted eight pages to this chapter, dividing it into four separate subchapters. The first deals with the early communist movement, the second with the creation of the “Khmer People’s Revolutionary Party” (KPRP), the third with the “Workers’ Party of Kampuchea” (WPK) and the fourth with the “Communist Party of Kampuchea” (CPK). This chapter also has a chronological timeline, explaining how thoughts of colonial independence developed into political programs fuelled by Cambodians educated in France.

Chapter 3 deals with how Khmer Rouge came to power, focusing on the march into Phnom Penh and the subsequent decentralization of citizens.

The fourth chapter focuses on the political party and its organization. Angkar Padevat was the name of the revolutionary organization, and it was made up of men and women who were members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea.<sup>136</sup> This chapter names the leaders and their

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<sup>136</sup> Dy: 18

functions within the organization. Attention is also given to the constitution and Prince Sihanouk.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the administrative division of different zones within Cambodia. The names of the different zone-leaders are given, and the reader also gets to see the zones on a map from 1976.

The sixth chapter deals with the Four-Year-Plan, in which, the Cambodian society should transform. Collectivization of all private property was supposed to help reaching the desired rice production.

Chapter seven is concerned with daily life. More specifically the author focuses on the two new classes; The “base people” and the “new people”, marriage, abuses of children’s labor and rights, and purges and massacres.

The eight chapter is about the widespread security system and all the enemies of Angkar. Additionally, the author gives information about arrests and torture of these enemies. Chapter 9 is an extension of the previous one with the S-21 prison as the example of how the security system functioned. There is a part about the prisoners, regulations, prison conditions, interrogation, organizational structure, leaders and execution. S-21 is the most notorious prison and the author has chosen to devote a substantial amount of the book to this.

The tenth chapter deals with foreign relations, focusing mainly on neighbouring countries in addition to China and North-Korea.

Chapter 11 gives three reasons to why Democratic Kampuchea fell. Number one is a weakened populace because so many people perished. Number two is the purges where the leaders ordered assassination of the cadres in East-zone. The third reason is because of clashes with Vietnam.

Surprisingly, the textbook has an own conclusion part where the author summarizes and concludes that Khmer Rouge turned the whole country into a huge detention centre, which later became a graveyard for nearly two million people, including their own cadres and even some senior leader.<sup>137</sup>

In general, the textbook treat social, political, economical and cultural aspects of the period in a comprehensive manner. Each of these aspects is allotted some amount of space, but certainly not the same amount of space and not with the same amount of depth.

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<sup>137</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 64

### 3.1.1.3 Intrinsic factors

The English version of the textbook consists of 73 written pages. Within these there are approximately 60 pictures of various sizes, 4 maps, 4 figures and 10 “fact boxes”. It is evident that the Documentation Centre of Cambodia has diligently supplied pictures from their archives to put in this book. Some of the pictures are highly relevant to the narrative in the places they appear. Chapter 2 for instance, treats who the Khmer Rouge were and how they gained power. On the first page there is a half-page photo of Khmer Rouge leaders riding on the train.<sup>138</sup> Most notable of the people in the picture is Pol Pot, Vorn Vet and Ta Mok. Interestingly, the textbook does, for some reason, not mention the names of those in the picture. The picture gives an impression that these people are going somewhere, but the destination is unknown. Regardless of what this picture means, it is still thought-provoking, and has the capability of encouraging the reader to think without laying any guidelines or restrictions on him or her. Another example of a picture with great relevance to the text is in the part of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) on page 9. The picture shows a CPK conference where the participants are doing a peculiar hand gesture towards a big flag with a hammer and sickle. The caption only states “CPK conference”, but the picture really says a lot about what the CPK was influenced by and idealized.

Another fortunate placed picture covering half a page appears in the beginning chapter 6 and the four-year plan. This shows the Khmer Rouge cadre harvesting rice and has highly relevance to the narrative. The same thing applies to some pictures of a Khmer Rouge wedding. In particular, the facial expressions give clear indications that this is not necessarily a happy occasion.<sup>139</sup>

In general many of the pictures are very fortunate for the impressions transmitted to the reader. The total amount of them, however, is perhaps a bit excessive. Taken into consideration that this is a textbook intended for Cambodian high school, and that it does not include any assignments, questions or assessment exercises, the amount a space allotted to the pictures could easily have been allocated to other important things.

### 3.1.1.4 Pedagogical approaches

This visual improvement to this textbook compared to the national one does, to a greater extent, help the students determine meaning of details, particularly in pictures. There are for instance two pictures on page 21 in Dy’s textbook showing both the national emblem and flag

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<sup>138</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 7

<sup>139</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 33

of Democratic Kampuchea.<sup>140</sup> The same pictures are shown in the national textbook, though only in black and white. Arguably, visual recognition of these is easier if you have actually seen it, compared to have read about it.

The textbook does have some major problem with regards to being used in Cambodian or indeed in any classrooms. It contains no stated goals or aims for what the students should learn. There are not any tasks, activities or exercises, which is certainly expected in a textbook intended for high school students. The complete lack of this indicates that it is not necessarily intended for high school students exclusively, but rather a wide attempt to any reader.

Keeping in mind that on the date of publishing, 'The genocide Education Project' was still in an early stage, and further teaching material had not been published. The textbook has more characteristics of a historical record rather than a schoolbook. On this note, the excessive use of pictures makes sense, because of the high number of illiterate people in Cambodia can also utilize this to some extent.

### 3.1.2 Traces of a distinction between sensitive and controversial aspects of history

Robert Stradling points out that much of what is taught in history is controversial; There are disagreements about what happened and why it happened and over its significance. Stradling continues that controversial issues which are socially divisive are usually also sensitive.<sup>141</sup>

Sensitive issues are, however, necessarily controversial in terms of reflecting contemporary social and political divisions in society or between nations. They are sensitive because they relate to something particularly painful, tragic, humiliating or divisive, and there is a fear or concern that reference to them in history lessons might renew old wounds and divisions.<sup>142</sup>

The terms of sensitivity and controversy are closely connected, but in the context of conveying the history of Democratic Kampuchea, it could be prosperous to try and make a distinction. When conveying history, or indeed, publishing a textbook, there are several aspects of history that should be covered. The social, political, economical and cultural aspects have different potential for arousing sensitivity and controversy. Arguably, the social aspect has more potential for sensitivity, especially when dealing with mass atrocity and genocide.

The social aspect is to some extent a narrative of people's suffering and pain. Simultaneously, the political aspect is more involved in ascribing guilt and victimhood for the atrocities. The

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<sup>140</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 21

<sup>141</sup> Stradling: 99-100

<sup>142</sup> Stradling: 99-100

distancing theory introduced earlier will serve as a background in determining the emotional and political distance created in the textbook.<sup>143</sup>

The next sub-chapters will try to illuminate and give examples of established “historical truths” with social and political characteristics and see how the textbook treats them, before evaluating their taxonomical potential.

### 3.1.2.1 Sensitive social aspects

According to John Tosh, *social history* indicates a focus on society as a whole, even if only a small fragment has actually been investigated.<sup>144</sup> Social history means the history of everyday life in the home, the workplace and the community.<sup>145</sup>

The social aspect of history is most elaborately treated in chapter six, seven and eight. Chapter 6 is called “The Four Year Plan (1977-1980)” and deals with the abolishment of urban living in order to build a new Cambodia based on the production of rice.<sup>146</sup> Additionally, the prospect of forced collectivization of all private property represents a major social issue which is treated in this chapter. There is a focus on family life in this very setting where they were split up and assigned to work groups. The four year plan turned out to be disastrous and the textbook acknowledges poor living conditions and blames the leaders for ignoring the difficulties of implementing this plan. An explanation to why this failed states that “Most people know that a country needs educated people to develop. However, the Khmer Rouge killed many intellectuals and technicians, and closed all universities, schools and other educational institutes throughout the country.”<sup>147</sup> Further explanation points towards production not reaching its goal and that “most of the harvest was used to feed the army and factory worker, or was exported to China and several other socialist countries”<sup>148</sup> The textbook states all survivors of the regime agree that what they remember most aside from hard labour and execution was the extreme shortage of food. There is also a description from a woman of how painful life was without enough to eat. This is a fairly strong testimony, describing hardship and an intense struggle for food, which resulted in several of her closest family members dying. Her father died because he ate a poisonous snake even though he knew it could be fatal<sup>149</sup>. Linking this hardship to an actual living person could be a measure

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<sup>143</sup> Introduction chapter: 10-11

<sup>144</sup> Tosh – pursuit of history: 70

<sup>145</sup> Tosh – pursuit of history: 70

<sup>146</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 26

<sup>147</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 27

<sup>148</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 27

<sup>149</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 28



to add credibility to the narrative, but it also creates historical proximity on an emotional level.

Chapter 7 is called “Daily Life During Democratic Kampuchea” and covers the creation of cooperatives, the two new classes, marriage, abuses of children’s labour and rights, forced labour, purges and massacres.

The cooperative meant that people were supposed to live together, work together, eat together, and share each other’s leisure activities.<sup>150</sup> Living under such conditions had a profound effect on family life. While not necessarily living with family, people were scattered throughout the country in these villages. The textbook states that “Cambodian families had eaten together for thousands of years, so eating in cooperatives, especially when food was scarce, was unpleasant and cruel!”<sup>151</sup>

The textbook emphasize that despite the Khmer Rouge claiming they were building a nation of equals and tearing down class division, there were still made important distinctions between people.<sup>152</sup> The two classes consisted of the “base people” and the “new people”. In general, the base people were those who had lived in rural areas, while the new people were those evacuated from cities and towns. There is a testimony of a woman married to a governor, who was taken away to go “study” and never seen again. She explains that she was encouraged to “be careful with your words. Your family can be taken away. Your father had a big working history”<sup>153</sup> Meaning that the work history of your family could put you in danger and that silence was a key to surviving.

The textbook has allotted considerable space for marriages in Democratic Kampuchea, stressing that men and women were given a partner selected by Angkar, and then married at mass ceremonies where their family members were not allowed to attend. These mass ceremonies are considered a break from the traditional Khmer wedding, which in some cases, can run over several days. The textbook argues that the reason for arranging mass wedding ceremonies was that this would save time to be more devoted to cooperative work and to what the Khmer Rouge called the “super great leap forward revolution”. The author also adds that this is a slogan derived from communist China.<sup>154</sup>

In general, the textbook does not go into details regarding starvation and murder, but some of the testimonies reveal more detailed personal experiences. Chapter 8 deals with the security

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<sup>150</sup> Dy – A history of DK: 30

<sup>151</sup> Dy - A history of DK: 30

<sup>152</sup> Dy- A history of DK: 30

<sup>153</sup> Dy- A history of DK: 31

<sup>154</sup> Dy- A history of DK: 35

system, and on page 46 and 47 there are two testimonies that provides more details for the reader. The first one describes the experiences of his family after they were relocated during the Khmer Rouge years:

“My 15-year old niece was shot dead because she cried, saying she did not want to live somewhere else. I was separated from my family and sent to farm in many places. At Koh Nhek, people worked day and night with little food and became exhausted. My daughter, who had just delivered a baby, had nothing to eat except cassava, so her husband collected eight cans of rice and a chicken from other villages. The sub-district chief accused him of eating privately, and all of her family members were arrested. In Lam Tik village, two people were arrested and killed because they ate a honeycomb without sharing it”<sup>155</sup>

The second one is from a civilian recalling his four family members being killed:

“My 7-year old sister was killed by Angkar because she stole one ear of corn to eat. She was hit with a hoe and buried near the corn farm. One afternoon, while I was walking the cows across the forest, I smelled a rotting corpse. I searched for it to see if I knew the dead. There I found the body of my father, with his neck nearly cut off from his shoulders. There were two other bodies lying dead of the same cause. Two month later, my 70-year old grandmother died; she was accused of stealing rice porridge from children and was clubbed to death. Her body was wrapped in a sack and buried. Several days later, my mother died of overwork and malnutrition. I hugged her with a heartbreaking cry.”<sup>156</sup>

Throughout the textbook there are many testimonies, and probably as an attempt to make the narrative more familiar for the whole country, they have included testimonies from different geographical regions. What many of these testimonies have in common is they go into greater details describing killings, abuse and starvation, thus creating a historical distance to the narrative. These are factors which cover the social aspect of history and they share a sense of sensitivity.

### 3.1.2.2 Controversial political aspects

According to John Tosh, political history is normally defined as the study of all the formal organizations of power in society. It includes the institutional organization of the state, the competition of factions and parties for control over the state, the policies enforced by the state and the relationship between states.<sup>157</sup> Political history can mean different things, and its content has been as varied and subject to fashion as any other branch of history.<sup>158</sup>

The textbook’s approach to political history deals mostly with how the organization was built up and who where in key positions. It gives a thorough description of who the Khmer Rouge were and how they gained power in chapter two and three. Chapter four and five describes the leaders, the constitution, organizational structure and administrative divisions of Democratic Kampuchea. These serves a purpose as to establish basic facts such

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<sup>155</sup> Dy - A history of DK: 46

<sup>156</sup> Dy - A history of DK: 47

<sup>157</sup> Tosh – pursuit of history: 59

<sup>158</sup> Tosh – pursuit of history: 61

as who, when and where, but such facts are neither sensitive nor controversial. The controversial aspects of political history are more recognized when dealing with causality in history or when describing people who are part of these processes. One example is the royalty Sihanouk and his involvement in this period. On page 19 there is a part explaining Prince Sihanouk's return to Cambodia. It says that the Khmer Rouge disguised themselves behind the façade of Prince Sihanouk and his government in exile. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge invited the Prince to come home. He later said:

My decision to come home to Cambodia did not express the fact that I agree with the Red Khmer, but I have to sacrifice myself for the honour of China and His Excellency Zhou Enlai, who helped Cambodia and myself so much.<sup>159</sup>

The textbook further explains that the Prince presided over Cabinet meetings, but was not allowed to speak. The title chief of state the communist rulers had given him carried no power, and many of his supporters vanished without a trace. About twenty members of Prince Sihanouk's family died during the DK, and at least seven other members of the royal family were executed at Toul Sleng.<sup>160</sup>

The textbook also explains what happened when Sihanouk resigned as head of state. An assembly agreed to his retirement, granting him a considerable amount of pension, which was never paid, and that he and his family were put in house arrest where they remained until 1979.<sup>161</sup> The biggest controversies regarding the history of Democratic Kampuchea can be found in the chapter treating the fall of Democratic Kampuchea, which will be further analyzed later on. Before this chapter, political issues that could be considered controversial are few in numbers, and when they do occur, they are limited to stating facts as to who, what and where, thus creating a political historical distance.

### 3.1.2.3 Taxonomical value of sensitivity and controversies

At this stage, it is too early to apply Bloom's taxonomy directly, because many of the pedagogical aspects of the textbook have been reserved to the teacher's guidebook. The table below is meant to place the some "historical truths" with regards to sensitivities and controversies in a taxonomical context loosely based on Bloom's levels.

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<sup>159</sup> History of DK: 19

<sup>160</sup> History of DK: 20

<sup>161</sup> History of DK: 21

Sensitivity (Social)	Established "historical truths"	Controversies (Political)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describing the "Four-year plan", collectivization of labour and why it failed.<sup>162</sup></li> </ul>	<b>3: Interpretive information:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpreting factors</li> <li>- Hermeneutical</li> <li>- Language</li> <li>- Causality</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describing cooperatives<sup>163</sup></li> <li>- Class distinction<sup>164</sup></li> <li>- Food distribution<sup>165</sup></li> <li>- Testimonies<sup>166</sup></li> <li>- Children's rights abuse<sup>167</sup></li> <li>- Marriage<sup>168</sup></li> </ul>	<b>2: Complex information:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Descriptive</li> <li>- Multiple sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describing Sihanouk's involvement<sup>169</sup></li> <li>- Rise to power<sup>170</sup></li> <li>- Foreign relations<sup>171</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Production of rice</li> <li>- When things happened</li> <li>- Purges and massacres</li> </ul>	<b>1: Simple information:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Names, numbers, dates, location</li> <li>- Qualitative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When things happened</li> <li>- Organizational structure</li> <li>- Important persons: Leaders.</li> <li>- Administrative division</li> <li>- Names of all political organs and number of participants.</li> <li>- Rules and regulations</li> </ul>

Based on the table above, there are traces of a difference between describing controversial and sensitive issues in the textbook. The most important factor is the lack of controversies identified to operate at a higher taxonomical level as compared to sensitivities. Most of the political aspect of history concerns simple information, while the social aspect has a tendency to operate on a higher taxonomical level. This does not exclude some of the sensitivities' potential for controversy, but they seldom give in-depth explanations, thus avoiding the "historical truth" to be conceived as controversial.

<sup>162</sup> History of dk: 26-29

<sup>163</sup> History of dk: 29

<sup>164</sup> History of dk: 30

<sup>165</sup> Throughout History of DK

<sup>166</sup> Throughout History of DK

<sup>167</sup> History of dk:35-37

<sup>168</sup> History of dk: 32-35

<sup>169</sup> History of dk: 19-21

<sup>170</sup> History of dk: Chapter 2,3 and 4

<sup>171</sup> History of dk:56-57

### 3.1.3 In-depth analysis of Chapter 11

The previous analysis made a distinction between controversial and sensitive issues, labelling them as often political or social. Chapter 11 is of a nature that has high potential for controversies. The fall of Democratic Kampuchea has potential of explaining causality in history, hence revealing controversies in the past that are highly relevant for current Cambodia. One problem when ascribing taxonomical values to a text is that the “historical truth” presented, at particularly higher taxonomical levels, does not necessarily fulfil all the truth criteria of history.<sup>172</sup> In theory you could operate at a high taxonomical level without staying faithful to the truth criteria. In a history textbook, this could potentially discredit the information given, and show clear indications of political bias. Information revealed in the Field-study, compared with secondary literature from David Chandler and Evan Gottesman, gives clear indications that the fall of Democratic Kampuchea is indeed controversial.<sup>173</sup> The following analysis does not initially make a distinction between sensitivity and controversy, but will try to concentrate on the established “historical truths” in general and analyze them for their potential controversy and taxonomical value.

#### 3.1.3.1 Methodological and theoretical approach

The term “Historical truth” does indeed have ambiguity linked to it, as the “historical truths” has scopes of different sizes, value and signification. According to Paul Ricoeur, we expect history to have a certain objectivity which is proper to it. Societies rectify and arrange their past. He credits Marc Bloch for using the term *observation* to describe historians approach to the past.<sup>174</sup> “Grasping the past in and through its documentary traces is an observation in the strong sense of the word – for to observe never means the mere recording of a brute fact”<sup>175</sup> Reconstructing an event, a number of events or a situation in basis of documents is to elaborate an objective behaviour of a particular type which cannot be doubted.<sup>176</sup> This raises the trace to the dignity of a meaningful document and raises the past itself to the dignity of a historical fact.<sup>177</sup> Ricoeur continues that objectivity is a work of methodological activity and

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<sup>172</sup> Kaldal: 146-149

<sup>173</sup> Evan Gottesman – Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge: Chapter 6, David Chandler – A history of Democratic Kampuchea: Chapter 12-13

<sup>174</sup> Ricoeur - History and truth: 22

<sup>175</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 23

<sup>176</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 23

<sup>177</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 23

that “the scientific fact is what science makes in making itself”<sup>178</sup> The historical facts are a methodological platform in which to build further analysis.

When further describing analysis, he states that the objectivity of history consists in the ambition to elaborate factual sequences on the level of a historical understanding.<sup>179</sup> There is no explanation without the constitution of several phenomena such as: social, political, economical, cultural etc. Historical synthesis exists only because history is first of all an analysis and because the historian tries to find the relationship between the phenomena he has distinguished. He argues that we should insist on the necessity of understanding wholes and the organic bonds which transcend all causality.<sup>180</sup> “Explained observations” will often carry the some variation of “because” or “why”.<sup>181</sup>

In order to make this analysis feasible, it is limited to only one of the chapters. The chapter selected is chapter 11, which deals with the fall of Democratic Kampuchea. There are several reasons for selecting this particular chapter, chief among which is that it describes the fall of Khmer Rouge and the “truths” given here are particular important for student’s perception of causality in history and their historical consciousness. First of all, the chapter has the potential of conveying something important about both the present, and also the future of Cambodia. Secondly, a chapter concerning the fall of this regime should prompt a higher taxonomical level among students. Thirdly, the conducted field study revealed that there is a lot of controversy regarding the fall of Democratic Kampuchea and those involved.

Chapter 11 is divided into two sub-chapters, in which the first one gives three reasons for why Democratic Kampuchea fell. These will initially be treated separately, where excerpts of established “historical truths” are identified, analyzed and categorized in terms their taxonomical potential. Analysis of subchapter two will later on follow a similar trajectory.

1. Three Reasons Why Democratic Kampuchea Fell

- A weakened populace
- Purges
- Clashes with Vietnam

2. The Aftermath

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<sup>178</sup> Riceur – History and truth: 23

<sup>179</sup> Riceur – History and truth: 24

<sup>180</sup> Ricoeur – History and truth: 24

<sup>181</sup> Ricour – Memory, history, forgetting: 182

### 3.1.3.1 Three Reasons Why Democratic Kampuchea Fell

The title of the first sub-chapter in the textbook suggests that there are three reasons to why the Democratic Kampuchea fell. In a historical narrative this could be somewhat problematic, as it could exclude other reasons to why it fell. Having the question “why” in the headline does, however, indicate that there is an interpretation and historical explanation to follow.<sup>182</sup>

The following excerpt is taken directly from the textbook pages 58-59

**“A weakened populace.** DK’s four-year plan specified that the country would produce a yield of three tons of rice per hectare. This figure was double the pre-revolutionary yield. When production quotas could not be met, cadres throughout the country falsified their production reports. They then sent as much rice as possible to the party center, forcing people to go hungry.”<sup>183</sup>

“Because the entire country depended on secrecy, the plan to harvest three tons per hectare became impossible to implement. Regions were not allowed to share information or to see what was going on. Rarely did anyone from the party center come to see how people lived or to plan the work of the cadres under their supervision. The senior leaders seemed to believe what their subordinates reported to them, while the cadres were terrified to report any bad news. CPK officials believed that the party never made mistakes and could never be wrong. All bad things were the fault of foreigners or traitors. As living conditions grew worse during the regime, hundreds of thousands died from overwork and malnutrition.”<sup>184</sup>

This part emphasizes the problematic goals that the four-year plan laid out and that “cadres” gave false reports, which then led to a perception among leaders that they produced more rice than they actually did. In terms of placing guilt and victimhood on individuals or groups, this paragraph points in direction that the “people” are the victims. The term “cadre” is vividly used in this textbook, and it is a generalisation of a group of people. According to *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, the word cadre is “1. a small group of people trained for a particular purpose or profession. 2. a group of activists in a communist or other revolutionary organization.”<sup>185</sup> Alternatively, the author could have used for instance “Khmer Rouge officer”. This term does, however, have somewhat different connotations, and could potentially place guilt on those who were Khmer Rouge officers. A large part of the Cambodian population served as Khmer Rouge officers, and it would be problematic to have so many perpetrators, and it could possibly result in violence and hatred canalized towards them. When interviewing Khamboly Dy, he stated that this particular term was problematic in

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<sup>182</sup> Ricour – Memory, history, forgetting: 182

<sup>183</sup> Dy: 59

<sup>184</sup> Dy’s textbook: The actual text on page 58-59

<sup>185</sup> Oxford English Concise Dictionary

the Khmer language.<sup>186</sup> In the English language, he operates with the same term as Professor David Chandler does in his book *A history of Cambodia*.<sup>187</sup>

With regards to establishing “historical truth”, the number the textbook provides for the amount of rice is 3 tons per hectare, and states that this was twice as much as pre-revolutionary amount. David Chandler operates with the same number, but on the other hand, he claims that this was triple the pre-revolutionary amount.<sup>188</sup> When Chandler writes about the four-year plan, he acknowledges that news of the famine was slow to reach the leaders and when it did, starvation was seen as mismanagement and treachery by those cadres charged with distribution of food. He goes further on explaining that one way of achieving surplus was to reduce the amount of rice used for seed and what had been set aside to feed the people. He does also mention that the news transmitted up the line was always good, causing false optimism at the top even as rice production faltered and rural workers died.<sup>189</sup>

The textbook explains that the plan to harvest three tons became impossible to implement because regions were not allowed to share information and the entire country depended on secrecy. The textbook emphasizes the relationship between low and high level member of Khmer Rouge, and their belief that the Party could never be wrong, as the most important reasons for a weakened populace. The syntax of the very first sentence gives the impression that the reason for historical understanding is presented here, and that it is limited to one particular reason. Chandler, on the other hand, operates with numerous causes for the failure to achieve the agricultural goals of the four-year plan. First of all, he emphasizes the Khmer Rouge leaders brushed aside plans for moving more slowly towards the goal.<sup>190</sup> Secondly, he argues that the Party’s slogan demanded that Cambodia’s average yield should be tripled at once, not in response to superior technology or material incentives, but as a testimony to a collectivized revolutionary will and the transferability of military zeal into the economic sphere.<sup>191</sup> When food was scarce and many people were malnourished, this starvation combined with hard labour and lack of medicines, caused the death of thousands of people.<sup>192</sup> In essence, the leadership had Utopian priorities.<sup>193</sup>

The figure below shows how some historical facts add up to some explanation. The total of this adds up to a “historical truth” of a weakened populace, which accordingly is one of

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<sup>186</sup> Interview with Khamboly Dy

<sup>187</sup> David Chandler – *A history of Cambodia*

<sup>188</sup> David Chandler - *A history of Cambodia*: 262

<sup>189</sup> David Chandler - *Brother Number One*: 118

<sup>190</sup> *Brother Number One*: 116

<sup>191</sup> *Brother Number One*: 116

<sup>192</sup> *A history of Cambodia*: 265

<sup>193</sup> *A history of Cambodia*: 264



three reasons why Democratic Kampuchea fell. The table has two parts, and the numbers given on the left side corresponds with the numbers on the right side.

"Observation truths"	Taxonomy level	"Explained truths"
	6. Evaluation	1-7. Hundreds of thousands died from overwork and malnutrition.
	5. Synthesis	6. All bad things was the fault of foreigners or traitors
	4. Analysis	
	3. Application	3. Falsified reports 4. Rice sent to the party center forced people to go hungry.
3. Production quotas could not be met 4. Sent much rice to party center 6. CPK officials thought the party could never be wrong	2.Comprehension	
1. 3 tons of rice per hectare. 2. Double pre-revolutionary yield 5. Party members rarely see how people lived or planned the work of their cadres 7. Living conditions grew worse during the regime	1 Knowledge	

As the table indicates, the ones on the right side of the column naturally operate on a higher level, and add up to an evaluation and judgement. Compared to Chandler, the explanations are simplified, but one has to keep in mind that the audience of this textbook does not have an academic background, and with or without the omissions, the same conclusion would probably be made. This explanation is not particularly disputed, thus allowing it to reach a high taxonomical level.

**Purges.** In mid-1976 many key members of the CPK were purged. From then on, Pol Pot and his colleagues believed that a rebellion against the leadership of the party was always being hatched. They believed that their enemies were everywhere. Many chiefs of zones, regions and military commands were arrested and executed. The situation grew worse in 1977 when Pol Pot ordered the assassination of the cadres in the East Zone and then purged almost all of the people living in the zone. After the Vietnamese invasion in late 1977, the remaining people in the East Zone were thought to have joined the Vietnamese and were labelled "Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds." So, the party center sent troops to attack the East Zone, leaving tens of thousands of its residents dead. Hundreds of men fled to Vietnam, where the Vietnamese helped them form a military unit.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> A history of DK: 59

The textbook names the purges as the second of three reasons why Democratic Kampuchea fell. One important characteristic of Khmer Rouge leadership was the suspicion against internal enemies. People were arrested, tortured and confessed to crimes.<sup>195</sup>

With regards to guilt and victimhood, the people responsible are Pol Pot and his “colleagues”, while the victims have change slightly. During the purges, chiefs, military commanders and Khmer Rouge cadres in addition to “regular” people were all subject to persecution and murder.

In this part, Dy mentions that “hundreds of men fled to Vietnam, where the Vietnamese helped them form a military unit”.<sup>196</sup> Some of these men are today prominent politicians in the Cambodian People’s Party. Most notably is current Prime Minister Hun Sen, who had first served as a Khmer rouge courier before rising to the ranks of commander in the Eastern Zone military. According to Evan Gottesmann, his early arrival in Vietnam in 1977 gained him the trust of Vietnamese authorities.<sup>197</sup> Being so closely linked to contemporary Cambodian politics, brings the possibility of controversy.

When treating delicate matters such as the Khmer Rouge genocide, the semantics of a word can be of crucial importance. In his article *Teaching Genocide in Cambodia – Challenges, Analyses, and Recommendations*, Dy points out that some Cambodian teachers believe that the presence of the Vietnamese in Cambodia is in the form of an invasion, while others perceive it as an intervention.<sup>198</sup> In this part Dy uses the word “invasion”, which according to *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, has the following semantic meanings: 1. “an instance of invading another country or region”. 2. “An unwelcome intrusion into another’s domain.” There were several clashes between Cambodia and Vietnam between 1977 and 1979, and this particular one in 1977 has been classified as an invasion.

Regardless on how you look upon the word “invasion”, it has some negative connotations attached to itself. In this context, however, the military “invasion” was against a cruel regime which suppressed its own people, and could therefore be an unwelcome intrusion for the Khmer Rouge leaders, but simultaneously a welcoming intrusion for the Cambodian people. Arguably, the readers of this textbook will not be the Khmer Rouge leaders, but rather the survivors and their decedents.

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<sup>195</sup> A history of Cambodia: 265

<sup>196</sup> A history of DK: 59

<sup>197</sup> Gottesmann – Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge: 47

<sup>198</sup> Khamboly Dy, *Teaching Genocide in Cambodia*: 13

"Observation truths"	Taxonomy level	"Explained truths"
	6. Evaluation	
	5. Synthesis	6. After the Vietnamese invasion in late 1977, the remaining people in the east zone were thought to have joined the Vietnamese and labelled "Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds" So the party center sent troops to attack the East Zone, leaving tens of thousands for dead. 7. Hundreds of men fled to Vietnam, where the Vietnamese helped them form a military unit
	4. Analysis	
	3. Application	
2. Pol Pot believed a rebellion was always being hatched. 3. They believed their enemies were everywhere.	2. Comprehension	
4. Many chiefs of zones, regions and military commanders were arrested. 5. Situation grew worse in 1977 when Pol Pot ordered assassination of the cadres in the East Zone	1. Knowledge	1. Mid-1976, many key members were purged.

The table is similar to the previous one, but the numbers are not connected on the two sides. In this instance, they follow the chronology in which they appear in the text excerpt. Although, Ricour indicates that an "explained truth" should include a variation of "because" or "why"<sup>199</sup>, this does not mean that it cannot reach a high taxonomical level. The excerpt shows more characteristics of a narrative, where the relational meaning of time and chronology constructs synthesis on a high taxonomical level, while simultaneously not arousing any controversy.

The next excerpt from the textbook deals with the third reason for why Democratic Kampuchea fell.

**Clashes with Vietnam.** This was the most definitive cause of DK's demise. In 1975, DK began initiating its sporadic attacks on Vietnam. High-profile attacks broke out in the middle of 1977 when the Khmer Rouge shelled Chaudoc, Hatien and other Vietnamese provinces, causing many casualties among civilians and unprepared militia. Thousands of Vietnamese fled into the interior

<sup>199</sup> Ricour – Memory, history, forgetting - 182

of Vietnam. Within a few days of the attack, about 1,000 Vietnamese civilians were injured or dead.

In December 1977, Vietnam used warplanes and artillery to launch a major attack on DK, capturing the territory known as the Parrot's Beak area in Svay Rieng province. Vietnamese forces penetrated more than 20 kilometers inside DK, reaching the city of Svay Rieng. As a result, DK broke diplomatic relations with Vietnam and ordered Vietnamese diplomats in Phnom Penh to leave the country. The Khmer Rouge agreed to negotiate the border dispute only when all Vietnamese troops had withdrawn from DK territory. Soon afterwards, Vietnam withdrew its troops, bringing with them thousands of prisoners as well as civilians. No negotiations ever took place.

Instead, Vietnam accused the Khmer Rouge of attacking all eight provinces along its border with Cambodia. Vietnam decided to encourage the opponents of the Khmer Rouge to revolt against them. They also began training Cambodians in Vietnam to take part in military operations and to form the nucleus of a new regime. The two countries were at war throughout 1978.

On April 3, 1978, Radio Hanoi broadcast in the Khmer language an appeal to the people of Cambodia to stand up and resist Democratic Kampuchea. Vietnam selected some Cambodians who had fled to Vietnam to serve in military units under Vietnamese guidance. Most of them were East Zone cadres, soldiers, and residents. By this time, part of the zone was under Vietnamese control and the rest was controlled by a rebel group opposed to the Khmer Rouge.

On December 3, 1978, Radio Hanoi announced the establishment of the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea.<sup>25</sup> The Front was led by Comrade Heng Samrin, who had fled to Vietnam in late 1978. Vietnamese General Van Tien Dung launched a major assault on Democratic Kampuchea on December 25, 1978. His troops occupied Kratie province within five days and Kampong Cham in a week. Then, on January 7, 1979, Vietnamese soldiers and soldiers of the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea captured the capital city of Phnom Penh and soon afterward occupied nearly the entire country. They quickly organized a conference to create the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council as Cambodia's provisional government under the leadership of Heng Samrin.

This starts out by immediately claiming that the clashes with Vietnam are the most important reason for the demise of Khmer Rouge, before mentioning a lot of facts in terms of figures, dates and places. There are no reason to think that the statement is false, but it is interesting to see what kind of "historical truths" that are mentioned. Arguably, the claim that the clashes with Vietnam are the most important reason for the demise of Khmer Rouge is a different type of truth than, for instance, "On December 3, 1978, Radio Hanoi broadcast in the Khmer language an appeal to the people of Cambodia to stand up and resist Democratic Kampuchea".<sup>200</sup>

Seen through the eyes of a high-school student or other potential reader, the small "truths" are an important foundation for further exploration, but their taxonomical value depends heavily on the methodology applied to the teaching. If these "truths" are memorized, the students will still operate at level one of six on Bloom's taxonomy for

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<sup>200</sup> Dy's textbook: 59-60

cognitive comprehension.<sup>201</sup> Keeping Bloom’s taxonomy in mind, a historical explanation without sufficient empirical backup, will in a student’s mind not be perceived as something else than real-knowledge, which is at the same taxonomical level.<sup>202</sup>

”Observation truths”	Taxonomy level	”Explained truths”
	6. Evaluation	6. As a result, DK broke diplomatic relations with Vietnam and ordered Vietnamese diplomats in Phnom Penh to leave the country
	5. Synthesis	7. The Khmer Rouge agreed to negotiate border disputes only when all Vietnamese troops had withdrawn from DK territory. Soon afterwards, Vietnam withdrew its troops bringing with them thousands of prisoners as well of civilians. No negotiations ever took place.
	4. Analysis	
	3. Application	
	2.Comprehension	5. In December 1977, Vietnam used Warplanes and artillery to launch a major attack on DK, capturing Parrot’s Beak area in Svay Rieng province. 8. Vietnam accused the KR attacking all eight provinces along its border with Cambodia and decided to encourage the opponents of KR to revolt against them. 9. They began training Cambodians in Vietnam to take part in military operations to form the nucleus of a new regime. 11. On April 3, 1978, Radio Hanoi broadcasted in Khmer language an appeal to the people of Cambodia to stand up and resist DK. 12. Vietnam selected some Cambodians who fled to Vietnam to serve in military under Vietnamese guidance. Most of them were East Zone cadres, soldiers, and residents. 13. On December 3, 1978, Radio Hanoi announced the establishment of the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea. This front was lead by Comrade Heng Samrin, who had fled to Vietnam in late 1978 14. Vietnamese General Van Tien Dung launched a major assault on

<sup>201</sup> Imsen – Lærernes verden: 234

<sup>202</sup> Imsen – Lærernes verden: 234

		DK on Dec 25, 1978. His troops occupied Kratie province within five days and Kampong Cham in a week. 15. On January 7, 1979, Vietnamese soldiers and soldier of the United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea captured the capital of Phnom Penh and soon afterward occupied the entire country. 16. They quickly organized a conference to create the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council as Cambodia's provisional government under the leadership of Heng Samrin
1. In 1975, DK began initiating its sporadic attacks on Vietnam. 3. Thousands of Vietnamese fled into the interior of Vietnam 4. Within a few days of the attack, about 1000 Vietnamese soldiers were dead. 6. Vietnamese forces penetrated more than 20km inside DK, reaching the city of Svay Rieng.	1 Knowledge	1. In 1975, DK began initiating its sporadic attacks on Vietnam. 2. High profile attacks broke out in the middle of 1977, when KR shelled many Vietnamese provinces, causing casualties. 10. The two countries were at war throughout 1978

Figure: ( "Truths" are numbered and placed chronologically as in the textbook)

Riceur's perception of reconstructing an event, a number of events or a situation in basis of documents is to elaborate an objective behaviour of a particular type which cannot be doubted.<sup>203</sup> The table shows that on a sentence level only a few of the "historical truths" reach a high taxonomical level. This raises the question of their taxonomical value of these "truths". Giving "truths" such as dates, places and figures does add detail to the representation of history. These "truths" are difficult to contradict, subsequently giving the presentation more credibility. Simultaneously, contextualising on present day Cambodia and given the fact that this topic matter is very controversial, these "truths" can be regarded as a fairly safe. The purpose of the textbook is to serve as an account of Khmer Rouge history, but more importantly, a different purpose is to promote a reconciliatory peace-culture.<sup>204</sup> In his article *Teaching Genocide in Cambodia – Challenges, Analyses, and Recommendations*, Dy describes a Cambodian distrust against Vietnamese presence in Cambodia today.<sup>205</sup> Chandler describes Anti-Vietnamese feelings that ran through every Cambodian government after independence until the Vietnamese invasion of 1978-79.<sup>206</sup> Gottesman claims that no accusation against the Vietnamese occupation was repeated more frequently or subject to more debate than Vietnamese immigration into Cambodia. There were also accusations

<sup>203</sup> Riceur – History and truth: 23

<sup>204</sup> Dy interview

<sup>205</sup> Kamboly Dy, *Teaching Genocide in Cambodia*: 13

<sup>206</sup> Chandler – *A history of Cambodia*: 200

concerning the alleged control that ethnic Vietnamese wielded over the Khmers and over the country.<sup>207</sup> Many Cambodians felt that a Vietnamese-dominated PRK (People's Republican Party) favoured the immigrants.<sup>208</sup> The Vietnamese military withdrew from Cambodia in 1989, and according to Gottesman, this spelled the end of the threat and of the protections the occupants had offered the ethnic Vietnamese. For Vietnamese civilians, the departure of troops was a disaster, permitting anti-Vietnamese attacks conducted by the Khmer Rouge in the early 1990s, as well as periodic anti-Vietnamese violence that continues to this day (2003).<sup>209</sup>

In this context, it is easier to understand why the textbook operates on level where the information given in the textbook is difficult to contradict. On an explicit sentence level, the taxonomical value is low, because meaning in the historical representation is built up between the lines.

### 3.1.3.2 The Aftermath

In early 1979, the Vietnamese helped to create a new regime in Phnom Penh. Called the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), it governed Cambodia until the Vietnamese troops withdrew a decade later, in 1990. DK leaders and soldiers fled from Phnom Penh to the northwest on foot, in trucks and by train. They forced hundreds of thousands of people to go with them. During this second forced evacuation, many people died of hunger, disease or injuries.

Many people found their way back to their native villages. Prince Sihanouk and his family were evacuated by plane to China.

The Khmer Rouge established their functioning organization along the Thai border, supported militarily by countries such as China and Thailand. Until 1990 the United Nations continued to allow DK's representative to occupy Cambodia's seat in the General Assembly, in spite of objections from the PRK and its socialist allies.

In 1979, the Khmer Rouge announced the formation of a "United Front for Great National Solidarity, Patriotic and Democratic," that failed to attract many participants. At the same time, the first noncommunist resistance group, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) was founded by Samdech Son Sann, who was Prime Minister in the Sangkum period (1955-1970).**26**

Soon afterwards, a royalist faction known as the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) was formed under the Presidency of Prince Sihanouk. In 1982, FUNCINPEC, KPNLF and the Khmer Rouge formed the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) with Prince Sihanouk as president, Khieu Samphan as vice president, and Son Sann as prime minister. The purpose of the CGDK was "to mobilize all efforts in the common struggle to liberate Kampuchea from the Vietnamese aggressors." The CGDK, in which the Khmer Rouge was the biggest portion, held Cambodia's seat at the UN.

After years of negotiations, all Cambodian parties to the conflict signed a peace agreement in Paris on October 23, 1991 and agreed to organize a national election under the supervision of the United Nations

Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The Khmer Rouge boycotted the UN-organized election and refused to demobilize their forces. For several years, Khmer Rouge soldiers continued

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<sup>207</sup> Gottesmann: 161

<sup>208</sup> Gottesmann: 163

<sup>209</sup> Gottesmann: 168

to fight against troops of the 1993-elected Royal Government of Cambodia, with Prince Norodom Ranariddh as first prime minister and Samdech Hun Sen as second prime minister.

In August 1996, Ieng Sary defected to the Royal Government of Cambodia, bringing some Khmer Rouge units with him. Other senior Khmer Rouge leaders, such as Ke Pauk, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, defected in 1998. After Pol Pot died in 1998, Ta Mok was the only surviving leader who refused to join the Royal Government of Cambodia; he was captured in March 1999. By then all the surviving Khmer Rouge leaders had surrendered or had been arrested, and the movement totally collapsed. People living in the Khmer Rouge controlled areas repatriated and reunited with the Royal Government of Cambodia.

The part covering the aftermath of Democratic Kampuchea shares similar characteristics as the previous one. It is simply stating facts more or less chronologically. These facts presumably come from documents used to trace and reconstruct the past.

According to Paul Riceur, a historian's inquiry raises the dignity of a meaningful document, and simultaneously raise the past itself to the dignity of a historical fact.<sup>210</sup> Arguably, a document is not a document before being examined as one. It is basically just a piece of paper, but its credibility increases significantly as a part of this documentation process. Documenting is a form of "truth embodying", where the observed documents are established to have truth credential which cannot be doubted. Accordingly, the pieces of paper which have not been subject to documentation, is left less credible. As a consequence, you can argue that the "observed truth" is true, because things that contradict it have not been through the same "observation process".

Gottesmann writes about hostility towards Vietnamese presence in Cambodia, and that violence has erupted on numerous occasions until his book was published in 2003.<sup>211</sup> Since there has been a lack of documented account of the past, and that history of Khmer Rouge was initially taught in a propagandistic manner, this has given fertile grounds for myths<sup>212</sup>. These have the potential of upsetting peace and development in the country. A documented account of history will provide a contradiction to these myths with added credibility, because myths do not undergo the same criteria as a documented account. With regards to reconciliation and peace-building, a historical account with historical facts that can not be doubted, and can also have the reconciliatory purpose of easing tensions that the myths have created.

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<sup>210</sup> Paul Riceur – History and truth: 23

<sup>211</sup> Gottesmann: 168

<sup>212</sup> Dy – Teaching genocide in Cambodia: 7



### 3.2 The nature historical explanations

When analyzing “historical truths” at a sentence level, a preliminary general discovery was that chapter 11 usually operates on a lower level in Bloom’s taxonomy. This could partly be because of a big potential for controversy in hermeneutical explanations of delicate matters, especially when explanations might jeopardize people today. Another factor could be that simple facts and knowledge are more in line with traditional Cambodian education, and this is also what the students are tested in at examination.<sup>213</sup>

This reveals a problem with this particular Bloom’s taxonomy theory, because the “historical truth” is embodied through a sequence of “objective truths”. According to Ricoeur, specific narratives can be analyzed in terms of the “episodic” and “configurational” dimensions. The first of these can be grounded in chronology and the temporal order and characterizes the story insofar as it is made up of these events.<sup>214</sup> A good example of this “episodic” dimension can be found in an excerpt from chapter 11 concerning the purges.

**Purges.** In mid-1976 many key members of the CPK were purged. From then on, Pol Pot and his colleagues believed that a rebellion against the leadership of the party was always being hatched. They believed that their enemies were everywhere. Many chiefs of zones, regions and military commands were arrested and executed. The situation grew worse in 1977 when Pol Pot ordered the assassination of the cadres in the East Zone and then purged almost all of the people living in the zone. After the Vietnamese invasion in late 1977, the remaining people in the East Zone were thought to have joined the Vietnamese and were labelled “Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds.” So, the party center sent troops to attack the East Zone, leaving tens of thousands of its residents dead. Hundreds of men fled to Vietnam, where the Vietnamese helped them form a military unit.<sup>215</sup>

This text clearly meets the criteria for Ricoeurs’ episodic dimension; because it lists several differentiated and organized events insofar. Although, not a particularly high abstraction level, there is a clear chronology or sequence of events, which makes this a historical narrative concerning the purges. The phenomena to be explained (Purges) and the narrative explanation (Text excerpt) is tied to links in a sequence, giving the reader a deductive starting point for interpretation. The analysis of chapter 11 on a sentence level did not reach a higher taxonomical level, because they are basically facts or applied facts. If the whole text excerpt is analyzed as a narrative, then it suddenly has characteristics of a synthesis, which operates on level five in Bloom’s taxonomy.

Ricour’s second “configurational” dimension involves assembly of a series of historical events into a narrative, which entails in the act that it “grasps together” the detailed actions or

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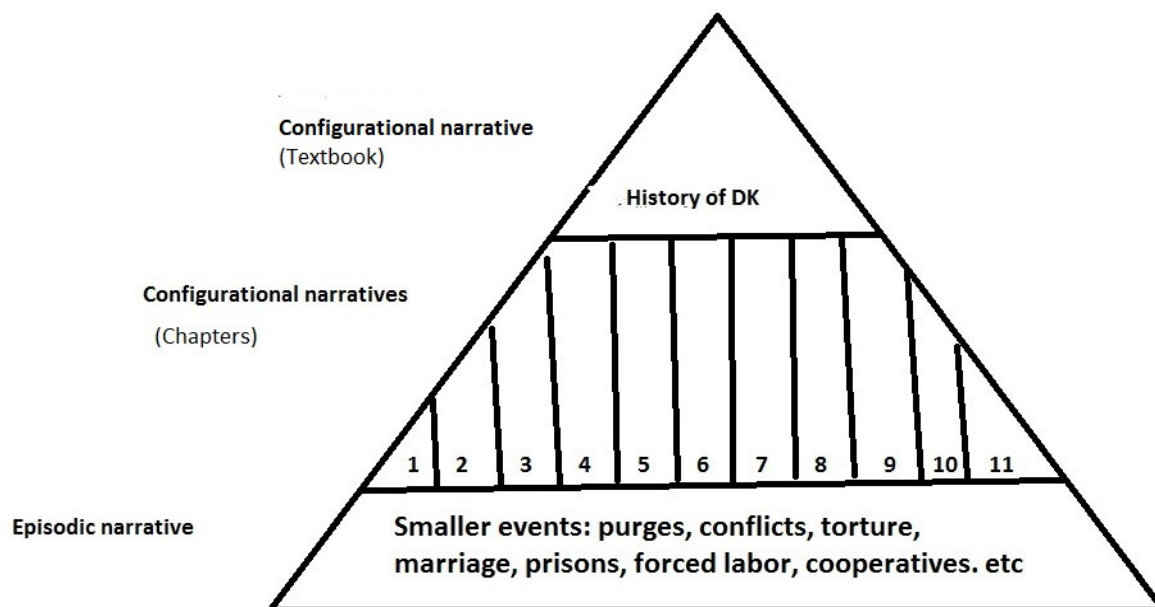
<sup>213</sup> Interviews with High School teachers

<sup>214</sup> Paul Ricoeur – Time and narrative: 66

<sup>215</sup> A history of DK: 59

incidents in the story<sup>216</sup> Instead of limiting the narrative to for example “purges”, the configurational dimension relates to how these are assembled.

The figure below shows how the textbook can be visualized as a rising cognitive process.



The figure above illustrates how episodic narratives congregate configurational narratives. Episodic narratives are numerous and placed at the bottom of the pyramid. The total amount of them, divided into chapters, will function as a much bigger configurational narrative, whose objective is to explain and creating understanding for Democratic Kampuchea. According to Kjetil Grødum, who has previously been introduced as co-supervisor to this thesis, a historical narrative set from April 17<sup>th</sup> 1975 to 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1979 would not be a narrative of Democratic Kampuchea, because it is only restricted to the war. A historical narrative trying to explain and understand the Khmer Rouge would need to start with the group of Cambodian students in Paris and end when they laid down their arms in 1998, or could indeed continue to the Tribunal trial taking place today<sup>217</sup> Because the textbook includes both the formation of the Khmer Rouge traced back to students in Paris, and also the ultimate fall in 1999, its potential for cognitive processes on a higher level, than just compared to a configurational narrative of the war.

Specific narratives produced by states usually constitute political history and can be found in school textbooks that focus on major events such as wars, revolutions, and other political

<sup>216</sup> Paul Ricoeur – Time and narrative: 66

<sup>217</sup> Grødum – narrative justice: 124

happenings<sup>218</sup> In an article in Peter Seixas' *Theorizing historical consciousness*, James Wertsch argues that it is very difficult to pursue a line of reasoning in narrative analyses by solely relying on abstract categories.<sup>219</sup> Creating a historical record which involves sensitive and controversial issues in order to promote reconciliation, needs to sacrifice abstraction level and apply a more specific approach to the "historical truths" In addition to addressing the features of reconciliation, this is also appealing to teachers who might lack confidence or competence to teach this effectively. Both learning and explanations assumes knowledge of historical facts, and despite being displayed on a low level in Bloom's taxonomy, this particular theory does not intercept the co-relation between these facts. Episodic and configurational narratives place a sequence of event in time, and can thus be called a historical explanation with implicit understanding, which then congregates to a higher taxonomical level because they provide a synthesis. This does not have to imply particular high abstraction level, but it is still regarded as a higher cognitive process.

In order to illustrate the difference taxonomical outcome of "observed truths" and a narrative, one thing that can be recognized is the use of words which place events in time, and subsequently creating a historical explanation. If a sentence starts with: "In 1977", this give a time dimension to it, which has relation to creating meaning. Other words and phrases could be: After, remaining, something grew, when, soon afterwards, until, for several years etc. On the notion that the previous "observed" and "explained" truths will be looked upon as narratives, the following table has somewhat different characteristics compared to the earlier ones. The "observed truths" are historical facts as a result of documentation; the "explained truths" include co relational observations, while the narrative combines all of them together. The same example of the purges is applied again, and given chronological numbers in the table below, as they appear in the text excerpt.

**Purges.** In mid-1976 many key members of the CPK were purged. From then on, Pol Pot and his colleagues believed that a rebellion against the leadership of the party was always being hatched. They believed that their enemies were everywhere. Many chiefs of zones, regions and military commands were arrested and executed. The situation grew worse in 1977 when Pol Pot ordered the assassination of the cadres in the East Zone and then purged almost all of the people living in the zone. After the Vietnamese invasion in late 1977, the remaining people in the East Zone were thought to have joined the Vietnamese and were labelled "Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds." So, the party center sent troops to attack the East Zone, leaving tens of thousands of its residents dead. Hundreds of men fled to Vietnam, where the Vietnamese helped them form a military unit.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Seixas – theorizing historical consciousness: 51-52

<sup>219</sup> Seixas – theorizing historical consciousness: 52

<sup>220</sup> A history of DK: 59

Taxonomical level	Observed "truths"	Explained "truths"	Episodic Narrative
6. Evaluation			
5. Synthesis			1-7. Provides an episodic narrative which is a synthesis of what happened.
4. Analysis		6. So the party center sent troops to attack the East Zone, leaving tens of thousands for dead.	
3. Application			
2. Comprehension	<p>2. Pol Pot believed a rebellion was always being hatched.</p> <p>3. They believed their enemies were everywhere.</p> <p>5. Situation grew worse in 1977 when Pol Pot ordered assassination of the cadres in the East Zone</p>	<p>6. After the Vietnamese invasion in late 1977, the remaining people in the east zone were thought to have joined the Vietnamese and labelled "Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds"</p> <p>7. Hundreds of men fled to Vietnam, where the Vietnamese helped them form a military unit.</p>	
1. Knowledge	<p>1. Mid-1976, many key members were purged.</p> <p>4. Many chiefs of zones, regions and military commanders were arrested.</p>		

The table above show how the "observed" and "explained" truths congregate into an episodic narrative and historical understanding, which operate at a considerably higher cognitive level than historical facts.

The whole chapter of 11 would in terms of a historical narrative and taxonomy look like the table below indicates.

Episodic narratives	Taxonomy level	Configurational narrative
	6. Evaluation	- Three reasons why DK fell <sup>221</sup>
- A weakened populace <sup>222</sup> - Purges <sup>223</sup> - Clashes with Vietnam <sup>224</sup> - Sequencing events that led to the fall of Democratic Kampuchea, by placing them in time, thus embodying them to be a configurational narrative <sup>225</sup>	5. Synthesis	- The aftermath of DK <sup>226</sup>
	4. Analysis	
	3. Application	
	2. Comprehension	
	1. Knowledge	

The column on the left illustrates different episodic narratives, while the column on the right indicates the congregated configurational narrative. Both operate on a high taxonomical level of the narrative, because meaning is built up between the lines of the text.

### 3.3 Didactical insight with regards to the history subject's contemporary function

In an article written by Dr. May-Brith Ohman Nielsen, who is the primary supervisor to this thesis, she argues that the nature of history is indeed very political in the sense that political projects and political rhetoric often seem to use history in the purpose of presenting point of views.<sup>227</sup> Having didactical competence in order to identify these phenomena and processes, will help students to identify them, understand them and assess them.<sup>228</sup> The 'Genocide Education Project' is not limited to producing a textbook; it also aims to educate teachers, in order to make them more competent in conveying this topic in a satisfactory manner. With regards to the textbook, there has obviously made some didactical considerations adjusting to contemporary political opinions. Many of these didactical considerations can be identified as to how sensitive and controversial issues are treated in the textbook. Historical distancing embraces emotional sensitivity and detaches controversial politics, which can have

<sup>221</sup> Dy – A history of Democratic Kampuchea: 58

<sup>222</sup> Dy – A history of Democratic Kampuchea: 58-59

<sup>223</sup> Dy – A history of Democratic Kampuchea: 59

<sup>224</sup> Dy – A history of Democratic Kampuchea: 59-61

<sup>225</sup> Dy – A history of Democratic Kampuchea: 61-62

<sup>226</sup> Dy – A history of Democratic Kampuchea: 61-62

<sup>227</sup> Ongstad, Sigmund. (2006). *Fag og didaktikk i lærerutdanning: kunnskap i grenseland* – May-Brith Ohman Nielsen's article: p 17

<sup>228</sup> Ongstad, Sigmund. (2006). *Fag og didaktikk i lærerutdanning: kunnskap i grenseland* – May-Brith Ohman Nielsen's article: p 17

reconciliatory properties on both an individual or collective level. Individual because they acknowledge suffering, and collective because the narrative is credible and serves as an antithesis to myths in social memory that could arouse tension.

There is a tendency of establishing controversial “historical truths” at a lower abstraction level, compared to sensitivities, which do not necessarily affect politics nowadays. The topic of democratic Kampuchea involves complicated processes such as starvation, war and torture, which ultimately lead to a historical narrative. This does not necessarily mean that this narrative is less true, but there is a distinction between what the textbook expresses explicitly and what it says implicitly. With regards to sensitivities and controversies, there seems to be a sort of pragmatism. Meaning that some parts are indeed controversial, but didactical measures have been made order to neutralize them, and limiting them to “historical truths” which cannot be doubted. In essence, the nature of this historical narrative makes the history of Democratic Kampuchea less complicated to convey in a difficult environment, which is something that will be brought up again in the conclusion.

Since Dy’s textbook does not have many pedagogical features in terms of exercises, another potential for cognitive learning at higher taxonomical levels can possibly be found in the teacher’s guidebook. In cognitive processes, there has to be a degree of fact building to construct a platform for developing knowledge. The next chapter will further investigate the applied methodology of teaching this textbook.

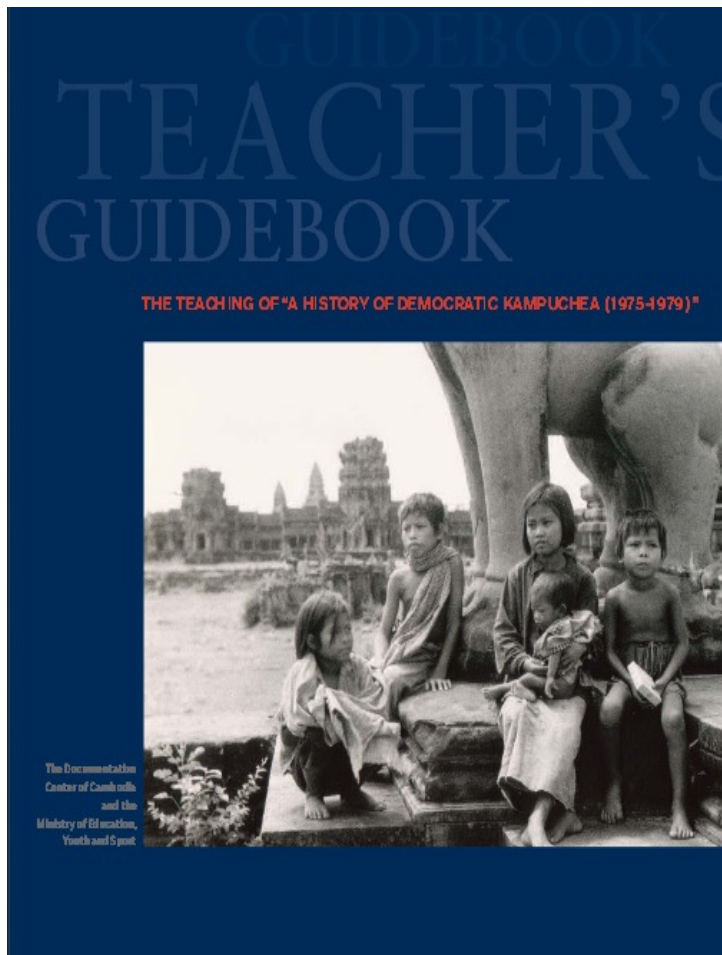
#### **Chapter 4: The teaching of “A history of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)”**

The lack of activities and teaching methodology is addressed in a separate publication called *Teacher’s Guidebook: The Teaching of “A History of Kampuchea (1975-1979)”*. This was published two years after the textbook and has a very thorough content concerning course objectives, instructional strategies and lesson plans. The fact that it was published two years later and not simultaneously, underlines that the ‘Genocide Education Project’ is an ongoing process experiencing obstacles all along the way. Some of these could be both student’s pre-requisite knowledge and teacher competence. With the introduction of a guidebook for teachers, DC-Cam shows that they have big ambitions for the ‘Genocide Education Project’, besides just documenting facts from the period.

This chapter will follow a similar trajectory as the previous one, giving a general description of the content, before analysing lessons designed to the same chapter analyzed in chapter 3.

Theory of particular importance in this chapter is Bloom's taxonomy and the theory of historical distancing.

With regards to the primary thesis question, the guidebook can also be perceived as a mean of fulfilling any aims of the 'Genocide Education Project'. Establishing it as a mean needs further discussion of its properties, and this is where secondary thesis question operates.



(Picture of teacher's guidebook – Source: DC-Cam)

#### 4.1 General description of guidebook

The published guidebook has a total of 163 pages and the content is divided into four different parts.

Part I. Overview

Part II. Lessons on the History of Democratic Kampuchea

Part III. Evaluation Rubrics

Part IV. Resources and References

The Teacher's guidebook gives an introduction chapter for teachers who will be teaching courses about the Khmer Rouge genocide. It provides interesting information regarding the whole 'genocide education project', but also a "rationale" of teaching this, a philosophy of teaching this, a description on how to use the different books, a part on instructional strategies and finally a part concerning student learning portfolio for curriculum evaluation

#### 4.1.1 Rationale of teaching the history of Democratic Kampuchea

This part starts with stating that one of the missions of DC-Cam is to promote education about the history of the Cambodian genocide and its implications for our lives today and that the *Teacher's guidebook* along with *Student workbook* will support the use of Dy's textbook in the classroom.<sup>229</sup>

It goes further on explaining why teachers should teach this particular topic.

"The history of Democratic Kampuchea provides an important opportunity for a pedagogical examination of basic moral issues. A structured inquiry into the history of Democratic Kampuchea yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behavior, ideology, beliefs and justice, and will encourage learners to think about its implications for their lives today.

The teacher of the history of Democratic Kampuchea should always attempt to connect the study of this specific time period with concepts of human society and thinking using various examples. For example, what does it mean to "examine" a moral issue? What are moral issues? How do we deal with them in history? What is the difference between handling these issues: a) today in concrete situations in our lives? B) retrospectively over time in history? c) as issues for people in a historical setting that we may not examine? One's opinion of history may depend on his or her own worldview. Challenging students to reexamine their own world views will allow them to gain a deeper appreciation of not only the complexity of the history of Democratic Kampuchea but also the complexity of Cambodian society today."<sup>230</sup>

Teaching the history of Democratic Kampuchea aims to engage intellectual curiosity, inspire critical thought and personal growth.<sup>231</sup> Teachers are then prompted to consider the following questions before structuring lessons.

- Why should students learn history?
- What are the most significant lessons students can learn about Democratic Kampuchea and about genocide?
- How will gaining insights into regime's many historical, social, political and economical factors help students gain perspectives on how problems or events occur? How do these factors contribute to the disintegration of civilized values and justice?
- How will this study build generational connections between students and their elders?

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<sup>229</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 1

<sup>230</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 1-2

<sup>231</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 2



- How will this study impact the students' sense of empathy and compassion?
- How will this study promote democracy in Cambodia? <sup>232</sup>

These questions will supposedly make the teacher more able to select content that speaks to students' interest and provide them with a clearer understanding of history, underlining that this particular topic will enable them to put the experiences of their own relatives into a larger historical context <sup>233</sup>

The Teacher's guidebook is designed to be an aid to teachers in Cambodian high schools. Educators are not expected to be familiar with all the historical details of Democratic Kampuchea, and the samples of lessons and instructions are supposed to lead the both the teachers and the students in the right direction. <sup>234</sup> The guidebook underlines that the selection of these suggestions for lessons should be made on the basis of what is most meaningful for the student and most appropriate for the particular lesson. <sup>235</sup> Teachers can, accordingly, choose to use all lessons or only select some. If they need further guidance, they are prompted to inquire with the Ministry of Education. <sup>236</sup>

The first part of the guidebook also articulates certain objectives for the course.

1. Students describe key events in Khmer Rouge History.
2. Students know critical details about senior Khmer Rouge leaders.
3. Students describe important details about Democratic Kampuchea's foreign relations.
4. Students understand the Khmer Rouge's rise to power.
5. Students explain important details about Democratic Kampuchea's administrative organization.
6. Students explain the Khmer Rouge security system.
7. Students compare some of the perspectives, opinions, and observations of the Khmer Rouge period from both victims and perpetrators.
8. Students analyze Khmer Rouge ideology and policies.
9. Students analyze differences between life today and life under the Khmer Rouge regime.
10. Students think critically about the possible causes of the genocide, and its effect and consequences.
11. Students evaluate some of the effects of the Khmer Rouge period on Cambodia today.
12. Students evaluate Khmer Rouge ideology and policies.
13. Students analyze and evaluate the history and the victims of the Khmer Rouge period in comparison with other countries' experiences of genocide and mass atrocities.
14. Students analyze controversial issues dealing with the Khmer Rouge period
15. Students analyze the use and abuse of power and the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations and the international community when confronted with human rights violations and/or policies of genocide.
16. Students gain insights into the many historical, social, political, and economic issues which cumulatively resulted in the takeover of Democratic Kampuchea. They gain perspectives on how historical events take place, and how convergence of factors can contribute to the disintegration of civilized values.
17. Students value the knowledge of survivors and foster exchange (e.g., interviews, family histories, etc) with their elders
18. Students develop a sense of compassion and empathy.

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<sup>232</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 2

<sup>233</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 3

<sup>234</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 4

<sup>235</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 4

<sup>236</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 4

19. Students consider the counterproductive effects of revenge upon Cambodian society and understand the need for reconciliation.
20. Students explain the meaning of democratic values in Cambodia.
21. Students learn to cooperate and live peacefully in society.<sup>237</sup>

These objectives are to be met during the lessons and students' achievement is supposedly measured during activities, when asking questions and when students evaluate material.<sup>238</sup>

The guidebook contains a suggestion for a final exam concerning the whole topic, and a further comparison between objectives and questions for exam will be discussed in a separate part later on.

#### 4.1.2 Instructional strategies

The instructions for the teachers are very thorough. They include goals, objectives, materials and lesson procedure. The goals, objectives and material are determined by the teacher for each lesson, while the lesson procedure follows specific stages. Despite a fairly rigid approach to the different stages, the guidebook does leave the time consumption of each stage to be decided by the teacher. Each lesson follows a three stage plan, divided into launch, explore and summarize. During the launch part of the lesson, the teacher needs to clarify the goals and expectations, and in addition, explain the reasons and values of the lesson. This stage is set to take approximately 5-10 minutes.<sup>239</sup>

The explore part prompts students to work individually or in small groups to explore information, while the teacher moves around the classroom and listens closely to what issues and reflections the students come up with.<sup>240</sup> This stage is set to take between 15 and 45 minutes.<sup>241</sup>

The final instructional strategy is to do an evaluation or assessment of the earlier stages. This is a focus to ensure the students have arrived at their intended destination, and the teacher has to ensure that they did. The preferred methods presented by the guidebook are collecting students' work and assessing students using grades or quizzing them on various concepts.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 5-6

<sup>238</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 5

<sup>239</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 7

<sup>240</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 7

<sup>241</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 7

<sup>242</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 8

#### 4.1.3 Part II. Lessons on the History of Democratic Kampuchea

This part is organized in a similar manner as the textbook, and each chapter in part two refers to the same chapter as in the textbook. Before starting the regular lessons, the guidebook prompts teachers to do two pre-lessons. This involves an initial introduction before trying to discover the student's prior knowledge. The pre-lessons include seven of the already mentioned objectives, and the lessons follow the three-stage approach previously described. Pictures and poems are important material that hopefully will engage students into the topic matter.<sup>243</sup>

The following chapters correspond with the chapters in Dy's textbook and all follow the same procedure, though with different objectives, different material, different key vocabulary and names, adapted to the respective information given in the textbook and with guided questions with answers to ask the students. Surprisingly, the *Teacher's guidebook* includes a considerable amount of pictures. Taken into consideration that this book is meant for teachers and teachers only, the substantial amount of pictures in Dy's textbook should be sufficient, and there is no effective way of showing these pictures in the guidebook to the students. Some of these pictures serve as material for the lessons, but with the current standard of Cambodian schools and their photo-copying capabilities, then it is difficult for an outsider to understand why they could not use the pictures that are already in Dy's textbook. If the students already have a copy each of the textbook, which includes detailed pictures, then it should be unnecessary to bring photo-copies as source material to the lessons. A possible explanation could be the fact that Dy's textbook was printed in 2007, while the guidebook was published in 2009, meaning that they did not emerge simultaneously. In total the guidebook contains more than 100 pictures in its 163 pages. An initial obstacle for the 'genocide education project' was that teachers lacked the competence to teach this particular topic, and perhaps all these pictures are in-line with the instructional characteristics with the whole guidebook. The guidebook has a clear instrumental value, and perhaps the vivid use of pictures is a pedagogical approach towards the teachers, because in addition to all the rigid instructions, it visualizes concepts for them in the same way as for students.

#### 4.2 In-depth analysis of truth and taxonomy in chapter 11

Teaching with the textbook in combination with a Teacher's guidebook and Student's workbook is supposed to promote knowledge about Democratic Kampuchea. Knowledge is,

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<sup>243</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 9-15

however, a term that is fairly wide and subsequently hard to determine without being categorized. Knowledge taxonomy means dividing knowledge into several levels, and can be applied to investigate how elementary or advanced to teaching result is. Admittedly, the knowledge level among students is very individual and influenced by a number of factors. The taxonomical potential can however be determined by investigating the source material. The teacher's guidebook provides a blueprint for teaching about Democratic Kampuchea to students, and there are five different lessons for chapter 11, which corresponds with chapter 11 in the textbook.

### Lesson 1: Actively reading chapter 11

Objectives:

- Students explain the magnitude of the effects of Khmer Rouge crimes on the lives and spirits of their victims.
- Students recognize the courage and strength of the victims of Khmer Rouge
- Students identify and define key vocabulary related to the survival of Khmer Rouge atrocities.<sup>244</sup>

### Lesson 2: Visual images of the day of liberation

Objectives:

- Students empathize with the general population and understand how the Khmer Rouge denied people basic human rights.
- Students explain the importance of learning history and remembering the horrors that human beings can inflict on one another.
- Students examine images of the Day of Liberation and write report about these images.<sup>245</sup>

### Lesson 3: Improving the diet/nutrition of survivors

Objectives:

- Students describe the basic food group chart
- Students explain how the lack of food caused malnutrition and disease
- Students describe the basic nutrition needed for healthy living<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 79

<sup>245</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 81

<sup>246</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 83

#### Lesson 4: A comparative mass atrocity study – Jigsaw exercise

##### Objectives:

- Students study in-depth about the experience of people under the Democratic Kampuchea regime.
- Students explain to others about the experiences of people under the Democratic Kampuchea regime.
- Students compare and contrast the Democratic Kampuchea period with other mass atrocities committed in history.
- Students analyze and evaluate the history and victims of the Khmer Rouge period with other countries' experiences with mass atrocities.<sup>247</sup>

#### Lesson 5: The children of Kampuchea film (optional)

##### Objectives:

- Students explain the meanings of turmoil, suffering, survival, reconciliation, justice and peace.
- Students write a letter to the filmmaker offering opinions and questions.
- Students analyze the impact of the film.<sup>248</sup>

The characteristics of these five lessons are very different to each other and a quick look at the headlines and objectives reveals that at least one of them has limited value for this particular historical investigation, but nevertheless probably important in other disciplines. Lesson 3 concerns starvation and malnutrition. These are key elements when describing Democratic Kampuchea and the tasks prompts a higher cognitive understanding as to why the population was weakened. The lesson also has value with regards to the need for a balanced diet today. However, taken into consideration that time allotted for teaching this topic in history is very limited, it is subsequently difficult to understand the value of analyzing healthy diet charts in history lessons. Undoubtedly, this lesson would have great value of implementing topics related to Democratic Kampuchea into other subjects besides history, or indeed if it was presented in another chapter besides this one in the guidebook. For instance chapter 7, which deals with daily life in Democratic Kampuchea, could be a reasonable placement. This lesson does not carry with it much potential for political controversy, while simultaneously having the potential for higher cognitive processes. In terms of historical

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<sup>247</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 89

<sup>248</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 107

distancing, this can be perceived as a method of creating distance to political controversies, which this chapter has the potential to arouse.<sup>249</sup>

Lesson 5 introduces a methodological challenge because it depends heavily on a film, whose content at this point, is unfamiliar to me. Given the fact that Cambodia is an underdeveloped country with very limited resources, combined with personal experiences at some Cambodian schools, excludes the possibility of this particular lesson being widely used. The Guidebook also expresses that DVD/VCR is required for this lesson and it is therefore optional.<sup>250</sup>

These two lessons should not be neglected for the purpose of this thesis, because they have characteristics which prompt advanced cognitive processes, but they will not be thoroughly analyzed.

#### 4.2.1 Analysis of lesson one: Actively reading Chapter 11

Objectives:

- Students explain the magnitude of the effects of Khmer Rouge crimes on the lives and spirits of their victims.
- Students recognize the courage and strength of the victims of Khmer Rouge
- Students identify and define key vocabulary related to the survival of Khmer Rouge atrocities.<sup>251</sup>

Materials: Textbook and Student Workbook

One interesting feature of the teacher's guideline is that it very specific about the content, while the time consumption is more or less left for the teacher to decide. The procedure of every lesson follows a trajectory of launch (5-10 minutes), explore (15-45 minutes) and summarize (15-25 minutes).<sup>252</sup> The teacher is prompted to do some general didactical measures, which is to introduce objectives of the day and discuss what the students know about the fall of Democratic Kampuchea. This is probably done as an attempt trigger their previous knowledge on this particular matter. A specific objective was to "identify and define key vocabulary related to the survival of Khmer Rouge atrocities"<sup>253</sup> Another thing that is very specific are the vocabulary and names on which to apply this objective.

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<sup>249</sup> Seixas: 89

<sup>250</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 107

<sup>251</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 79

<sup>252</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 80

<sup>253</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 79

Weakened populace	Demise	FUNCINPEC
Assault	Withdrawal	Demobilize
Malnutrition	Starvation	Repatriation
United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea		Mob justice

The teacher is supposed to “go over” the key vocabulary and names in chapter 11. Arguably, this leaves an important responsibility on the teacher. “Going over” these has the possibility of raising controversy in the classroom, especially if going into-depth explaining about United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea and FUNCINPEC. In this case the textbook could function as a “safeline”, as its content is approved by the Ministry of Education. Regardless of what “going over” this means, it leaves the student in a memorizing recipient role, consequently, at least initially, excluding the five highest levels in Bloom’s taxonomy. One important feature of Bloom’s taxonomy is that the different levels build upon each others, meaning that there has to be a knowledge-foundation that supports further cognitive processes, and memorizing key vocabulary could be a way of shaping such a foundation.

The teacher is then prompted to ask the following questions: “What was the magnitude of aftermath? What did the survivors do to begin life again? How were courage and strength were involved?”<sup>254</sup> The guidebook does not specify when the students should answer these questions and it does not specify any desired answers. The answers to these questions would depend heavily on prior knowledge, because they have not started the “explore” part of the lesson yet. Arguably, explaining the magnitude of the aftermath would require cognitive skills superior to knowledge about key vocabulary. Given the fact that the topic of Democratic Kampuchea is fairly new to the curriculum, and student’s knowledge is known to be very limited,<sup>255</sup> answering such a question could be a major challenge for many students. The question: “What did the survivors do to begin life again?” is probably more suitable for the students to answer, as they might know something from their own family. Despite the linguistic slip in the final question, this is also more comprehensible to students for the same reason as the previous. These questions are, however, directly connected to the objectives of the lesson, but the first is possibly introduced to the students too early in the lesson, not allowing them to use their knowledge to make cognitive reflections on the matter.

The next part of the lesson is the explore part, where the students actively read and take notes on important facts from the Chapter 11 and write in their Student workbook to

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<sup>254</sup> Teacher’s guidebook: 80

<sup>255</sup> DY – Teaching Genocide in Cambodia: 2

reflect on their learning. At this stage, students are supposed to fill in key vocabulary and names for themselves and also answer guided questions while reading the textbook.<sup>256</sup>

In a taxonomical context these guided questions are essential, because they give vital information regarding the desired skill level, and also what the creators deem to be the most important information. In general question asking for who, what, where will never lift the students to a high cognitive level, as they will not be able to reflect upon the knowledge they possess. Answering these questions is part of the “explore” section of the lesson and the students have between 15 and 45 minutes to both read the chapter and answer the questions, before the summarizing section where the teacher goes over the guided questions with the whole class to evaluate and summarize student learning.<sup>257</sup>

The following guided questions are asked to the students. The answers are included in the teacher’s guidebook and shown here in bold letters:

1. What are the three reasons why Democratic Kampuchea fell? **1) A weakened population, 2) purges, and 3) clashes with Vietnam.**
2. When production quotas were not met, how did Khmer Rouge cadres deal with the shortfall? **They falsified production reports and sent as much rice as possible to the party center, forcing people to go hungry.**
3. In 1977, what zone experienced punishment from Pol Pot? **The East Zone.**
4. In the middle of 1977, what military action did the Khmer Rouge take against Vietnam? **They shelled Chaudoc, Hatien and other Vietnamese provinces.**
5. In December 1977, Vietnam launched a major attack on Democratic Kampuchea and captured which territory? **The Parrot’s Beak area in Svay Rieng province.**
6. On December 3, 1978, Radio Hanoi announced the establishment of what organization? **The United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea.**
7. Who led this organization? **Comrade Heng Samrin who had fled to Vietnam in late 1978.**
8. What date did Vietnam capture Phnom Penh? **January 7, 1979.**
9. What was the name of the new regime that Vietnam established in Phnom Penh? **The People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK).**
10. What was the name of the first noncommunist resistance group that opposed the PRK? **The Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF).**
11. The Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) was comprised of what political groups? **The National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) and the Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF) and the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge were a crucial part of this government.**
12. When was the peace agreement signed in Paris between all Cambodian parties? **October 23, 1991.**
13. Who boycotted the UN-organized election and refused to demobilize their forces? **The Khmer Rouge.**
14. What senior leaders from the Khmer Rouge defected in 1998? Name 3. **Ke Pauk, Nuon Chea, and Khieu Samphan.** What is the problem with defections? **Answers will vary.**
15. When was Ta Mok captured? **March 1999.**

The following table is the taxonomical analysis of questions and answers, and their place in a Bloom’s taxonomy. The numbers on the left side correspond with the numbers on the right side.

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<sup>256</sup> Students workbook: 81-84

<sup>257</sup> Teacher’s guidebook: 80



Questions	Taxonomy level	Answers
	6. Evaluation	
14	5. Synthesis	14
1,2	4. Analysis	
6,4	3. Application	2 ,6
	2.Comprehension	
3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13,14, 15	1 .Knowledge	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15

There are nuances between the different levels, but the main point is that these questions mostly require “read-and-find” skills, and therefore the activity fails in engaging cognitive skills on higher levels. Arguably, some of the question could have reached higher potential if discussed in for instance a group activity, but in a setting were the teacher asks students and they answer quickly, they do not. There is, however, one exception on question 14, when they ask about the problem with Khmer Rouge defections. The guided questions does not only score low on Bloom’s taxonomy, but they also give an indication on what they want the students to actually reflect upon. The textbook provides numerous “historical truths” in terms of facts, and it is these “truths” that the students are asked about during this lesson. This leaves little space for critical thinking regarding the total that these “truths” add up to. It is difficult to state whether this is deliberate or not, but it does reinforce the impression of some of the tendencies explored in the textbook.

The lesson articulates clear objectives that the students are supposed to reach. You could argue that the objectives themselves have the potential for advanced cognitive processes, but the content of the lesson does not allow this to happen. There is nothing wrong with having a solid knowledge-platform, and perhaps this lesson provides this, but taken into consideration that this is concerning the final chapter of the textbook, then there should be a more fertile ground for advanced cognitive processes allowing students to identify causality and historical processes.

#### 4.2.2 Analysis of lesson two: Visual images of the day of Liberation

Objectives:

- Students empathize with the general population and understand how the Khmer Rouge denied people basic human rights.

- Students explain the importance of learning history and remembering the horrors that human beings can inflict on one another.
- Students examine images of the Day of Liberation and write report about these images.<sup>258</sup>

Materials: Paper, markers, crayons, magazines, glue, scissors, images and Student Workbook

The form of the lesson is similar as the previously described one, but instead of asking questions, the teacher tells the students to look through photos and other images showing the Day of Liberation in the Student Workbook. In the instruction, there seems to be another linguistic glitch, because the workbook contains no pictures.

In essence, this lesson prompts them to look at visual material and write a news report on the scene of January 7, 1979 based on their readings and prior knowledge.<sup>259</sup>

This task has the potential of reaching higher levels on Bloom's taxonomy, because it requires students to apply their knowledge, create and design something on their own, which is categorized as a level five cognitive skill.<sup>260</sup> They are also prompted to do an interview with their parents, asking them about mob justice.

For this particular exercise, the workbook for the students has provided them with directions on what to think of when looking through the photos.

1. How would you describe the people in these photos? Try to think of ten descriptive words to describe the people.
2. How would you describe the scenery? Try to think of ten descriptive words to describe the scenery.
3. What types of emotions do the people seem to be experiencing?
4. If you were a reporter who was asked to interview people in these photos, what kind of questions would you ask? How do you think they would answer?
5. If you were to compare the photos with photos of Cambodia today, what is different? How could you explain the difference?

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<sup>258</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 81

<sup>259</sup> Teacher's guidebook: 81

<sup>260</sup> Imsen – Lærernes verden: 234

The exercise itself combined with the directions has the potential of reaching level four in Bloom's taxonomy, which is analysis, but this would depend heavily on the material given to the students. In fact, the whole exercise depends heavily on what material the student is subjected to. The guidebook does not specify what magazines and pictures they want the students to look at, and for many reasons this fuels a potential problem for this exercise. Dy states that during the 1980s, Cambodian school children were taught about the Khmer Rouge genocide in a politically charged and propagandistic manner, which sought to spark desire for hate, violence and revenge.<sup>261</sup> One could argue that if the school textbooks were full of propaganda, then there are no guarantees that pictures and images printed in magazines are any different. If the photos applied are indeed propaganda, then it becomes an entirely different exercise, which would require the student to ask different questions to the pictures.

With regards to taxonomy, this is good exercise for engaging in higher cognitive processes. Especially if it is combined with the interview task, where the students are prompted to ask their parents questions about mob justice. After a period of mass genocide and atrocity, then such a term becomes highly relevant. If we distinguish this as a "liberation", then an immediate connotation to the word is happiness. Depending on the situation, the word does, however, have some duality attached to it. Arguably, pictures from 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1945 would display different emotions if taken on Times Square, New York, as compared to outside a German concentration camp. Pictures from January 7<sup>th</sup> 1979 in Cambodia have the potential of showing a variety of emotions. Obviously, relief and happiness, but also possibly tiredness, sadness, despair, hate and anger. In this context, mob justice could easily erupt, and having students reflect upon this has some cognitive features on a higher taxonomical level. Simultaneously, this lesson has some features concerning reconciliation and peace-building. The objectives states that the students should empathize with the general population and remember the horrors human beings can inflict on one another. There is underlying agenda, for the students to reflect on whether mob justice is a solution to anger and hatred. The students have some distance in time to the events, so they are less prone to agree to mob justice.

#### 4.2.3. Lesson 4: A Comparative Mass Atrocity Study – Jigsaw Exercise

This lesson seeks to put Cambodian genocide into a global context. It seeks to compare and contrast a total of five different topics. The first topic is Cambodia, the second is Germany,

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<sup>261</sup> Dy – Teaching genocide in Cambodia:1

the third is Iraq, the fourth is former Yugoslavia and the fifth is Rwanda. This lesson is very time consuming, because it requires the students read the historical context of each of the topics. Students are divided into groups where they read and discuss their assigned topic among the group members, and prepare a presentation. The guidebook indicates that the necessary amount of time for this is 5 minutes. The next step is to split the groups and divide them into new ones. In this new setting, there should be an “expert” on each topic present in every group. Each of these presents their notes, research and opinions to the rest of the group. According to the teacher’s guidebook, students should answer two questions when doing this presentation.

1. What are the most important facts that someone should know about the historical period you are studying? Include five facts about the period.
2. What are the most important observations of the victims who suffered this history? Include five facts or observation.

The first questions require fact and knowledge, which is on taxonomical level one, but it also involves identifying and restating, moving it to level two. The second question also operate on taxonomical level two, prompting identification, description, and selection.

When this is done, the group will discuss and prepare a presentation of their findings and conclusions to the whole class. This presentation should answer three more questions, and it is also graded by the teacher. The guidebook specifies that the presentation should be 10-15 minutes long, and assuming that Cambodian classes have at least 30 students, although this is an underestimate, it would still take a considerable amount of time.

The group presentation should answer three questions.

1. What are the similarities between all the genocides-mass atrocities?
2. What are the differences between all the genocides-mass atrocities?
3. What is unique or different about the Khmer Rouge period?

These questions prompt the students to practice advanced cognitive skills. They are expected to perform tasks operating on both level five and six on Bloom’s taxonomy. From a didactical perspective, the jigsaw exercise is indeed very good, at least in theory. One reason for this is related to its taxonomical potential. Another reason is due to the manner in which history is conveyed. The exercise is very student-centred, allowing them work actively for with the material themselves. Compared to listening, taking notes and reproducing, this is arguably a more attractive way for the students to learn, and taking the history subject into a new dimension, where they can develop more important skills.

However, the notion of selling this idea to Cambodian teachers could be a challenge. As indicated earlier, this is a very time consuming exercise. The guidebook states that launching exercise should take 5-10 minutes, the exploring part should take 15-45 minutes and summarising should take 15-25 minutes. This indicates a maximum of 80 minutes, which is somewhat hard to believe. In addition to the time consumption, this exercise also requires a high level of teacher competency. The issue of practicality should not be underestimated in Cambodian history teaching. Keeping in mind that Cambodia is de facto an underdeveloped country, where the teachers have scarce resources and often classes with 50-60 students. Such circumstances demand a lot from a teacher, and not to discredit the jigsaw exercise, but it is understandable if they would prefer an easier approach to teaching.

#### 4.3 Assessing findings

The guidebook introduces many lessons and activities which may contrast traditional Cambodian teaching. Some of them do nevertheless encourage abstract thinking and cognitive processes on a high taxonomical level, although not in issues that can be regarded as controversial. This could be a measure of historical distancing, and these observations will reappear in the conclusion.

### **Chapter 5: Workshops**

Not being able to observe these seminars during the field-study was a slight disappointment, because it could provide first-hand empiric information for the thesis. There is, however, plenty of information on this from other sources. After each teacher-training seminar, DC-Cam writes reports in English that are available for the public if browsing their website. Additionally, both the interviewed teachers and the staff at DC-Cam gave important information, which serves as the empirical background for treating this particular issue. All of the interviewed teachers had participated in a DC-Cam seminar the last couple of years. This means that they have first-hand experience from a student's point of view, while the DC-Cam staff has experience from an educator's point of view.

The purpose of this chapter is to take a closer look on how the 'Genocide Education Project' addresses the lack of knowledge among teachers. Since these reports are written by people with close affiliation to the 'Genocide Education Project', and that these workshops depend

on external funding<sup>262</sup>, one has to be critical aware that the views expressed here might not be accurate. Simultaneously, the workshops are an important part of the ‘Genocide Education Project’ and can therefore not be ignored in this thesis. A measure to overcome potential problems is to focus on the obstacles and challenges experienced in the workshops, which seems to be legitimate. The challenges and obstacles are also more closely related to the research questions of this thesis regarding means of fulfilling aims and didactical considerations done along the way.



(Picture of teacher training workshop – Source: DC-Cam)

### 5.1 Workshops

One major obstacle when organizing and planning to teach about the sensitive and controversial topic of Democratic Kampuchea is the fact that teachers lack experience in teaching this. Dy claims that teachers capable of conveying this are low in numbers and they do not have training to do conduct this in a satisfactory manner.<sup>263</sup> In order to address this problem, DC-Cam arranges nationwide work-shops where teachers participate for one week, and then receive some sort of certification that they have completed the training.<sup>264</sup> When

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<sup>262</sup> DC-Cam staff: 2

<sup>263</sup> Dy – Teaching Genocide in Cambodia: 2

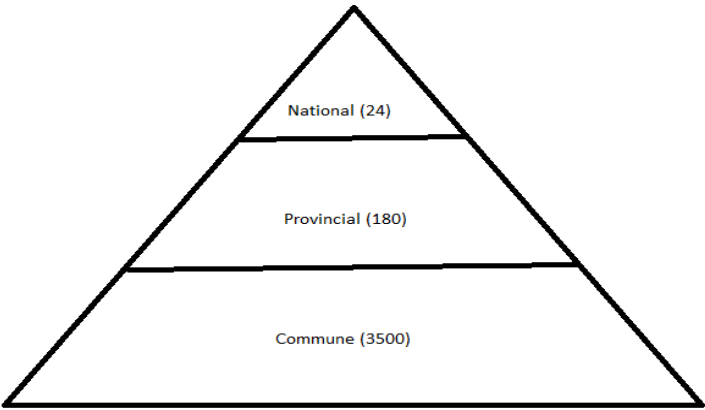
<sup>264</sup> [http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/DC-Cam\\_Certificate.pdf](http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/DC-Cam_Certificate.pdf)

planning the dates for the field-study for this thesis, the possibility of participating at a workshop was taken into consideration. This did, however, prove not to be feasible during autumn of 2012, because there were no specific plans to conduct one at this time. The work-shops are mostly funded by foreign aid and will subsequently only be arranged when the financing is in order.<sup>265</sup>

When arranging these seminars, they invite teachers from the vicinity of the actual location. The seminars take place nationwide, as an attempt to educate teachers not only in larger cities, but for the whole country. The duration is for a week, and most seminars follow a certain blueprint, although with minor modifications depending on the experience DC-Cam gain from time to time and who the participants are. The educators do also vary from time to time, also depending on who the participants are.

There are some differences between the seminars. They have different seminars for training “National Teacher Training”, “Provincial Teacher Training” and “Communal Teacher Training”. In total, DC-Cam has trained 24 national teachers, 180 provincial and 3500 commune teachers. The idea behind this is can be explained with the figure of a pyramid. The national teachers are on top, and they are responsible for teaching the provincial teachers who are on the next step on the pyramid. Subsequently, the provincial teachers have responsibility for educating the commune teachers, who are on the most numerous group at the bottom of the pyramid. One logical reason for this approach is the sheer number of teachers they want to educate, and DC-Cam alone has nowhere near the manpower needed for this. There is a co-operation between these teachers and DC-Cam staff when conduct the seminars.

The figure below illustrates how many members the different workshops have, and how it is organized in the shape of a pyramid.



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<sup>265</sup> Interview with DC-CAM staff

In order to paint a specific picture of how seminars are conducted, the following information will be based on reports from the three different types of seminars. As indicated in the plan visualized in the figure above, the national seminar is on the top of the pyramid and this was the first ever conducted. The next seminars were the provincial ones, while those on the bottom level are conducted last. The three different types of seminars will initially be treated differently, before comparing observation made.

There has only been conducted one National seminar, consequently there is just one report from July-August 2009.<sup>266</sup> The provincial reports are gathered in a 211-page final report<sup>267</sup> from 2010, where the seminars follow the same format, although with different gains and challenges experienced at the different seminars. For the commune training, there are nine different reports. *Report for Six Commune Teacher Training*<sup>268</sup> From August 2011 states in the introduction that the training was conducted in the existing format of previous training, and this will we used later on to describe specifically how the teaching is facilitated

#### 5.1.1 National teacher training seminar

This training session was arranged in collaboration between DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education, in order to conduct training of 24 Cambodian officials from the Pedagogical Research Department, National Institute for Education, General High School Education Department and Teacher Training Department of the Ministry of Education. These 24 are all employed and selected by the Ministry of Education and met for seven days in Phnom Penh with 14 staff members from DC-Cam in June-July 2009. The report states that this particular workshop was the first step in a tri-partite process to train history, language, and morality teachers throughout Cambodia to teach DK history.<sup>269</sup>

With the 14 staff members from DC-Cam, the total number of National Trainers who attended this seminar reaches 38. These will help train 186 other trainers at provincial level, who will help train over 3000 Cambodian high school teachers at the village level. According

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<sup>266</sup> National teacher training report - [http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Report\\_on\\_National\\_Teacher\\_Training-June%2029\\_to\\_July\\_7\\_2009-EN.pdf](http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Report_on_National_Teacher_Training-June%2029_to_July_7_2009-EN.pdf)

<sup>267</sup> Provincial teacher training report - [http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/DC-Cam\\_GEP\\_Training\\_Report.pdf](http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/DC-Cam_GEP_Training_Report.pdf)

<sup>268</sup> Sixth Commune teacher training report - [http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/GENOCIDE\\_EDUCATION\\_IN\\_CAMBODIA--Report\\_for\\_Sixth\\_Commune\\_Teacher\\_Training\\_in\\_Kampong\\_Chhnang.pdf](http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/GENOCIDE_EDUCATION_IN_CAMBODIA--Report_for_Sixth_Commune_Teacher_Training_in_Kampong_Chhnang.pdf)

<sup>269</sup> National teacher training report: 1



to the report, this provides an opportunity for Cambodians to train each other, thus taking ownership and responsibility towards their national history.<sup>270</sup>

The national seminar is the cornerstone for the whole training of teachers, and naturally the circumstances surrounding this seminar are very different from the communal ones. For instance there are many notable people attending this. His Excellence Im Sethy (Minister of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) gave a speech to kick-off the training. He said that this project strikes a personal cord with him and that he believed the political and social climate is right for the history of Democratic Kampuchea to enter into the curriculum. Making such a statement consequently indicates that this has earlier not been the case.<sup>271</sup>

Other individuals of particular importance are all the international scholars gathered at this seminar. Dr. David Chandler is involved in this project in many ways, and together with Khamboly Dy, they did the history lessons in this seminar. These history lessons are done in plural, and serve as a background for other activities in smaller groups. These smaller group sessions were led by international facilitators such as Sarah Jones Dickens and Chris Dearing, who both were involved in creating the teaching guidebook. A series of guest lectures by international scholars were also part of this seminar. Dr. Alex Hinton, who is an associate professor and anthropologist at Rutgers University, presented on “Truth, Representation, and the Politics of Memory after the Genocide”.<sup>272</sup> John Ciorciari, who is a professor at Michigan University, lectured on the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). Dr. George Chicas, who is a professor at the University of Massachusetts and Adjunct Professor in Asian Studies at Cornell University, spoke about trauma and its relation to Cambodian refugee poetry. Dr. Frank Chalk, who is former Chair of the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum, Director of Montreal Institution for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, and history professor at Concordia University, presented a lecture called “Genocide in a Global Context”. Laura Summers, who is a professor at Hull University, lectured on the history of Pailin.<sup>273</sup> Additionally, there were several Cambodian speakers present at this workshop.

This seminar introduced alternative methods as basis for history discussion including: screening of films, song performances, field trips to Toul Sleng and Choeung Ek and also a theatrical play showing a victim and a perpetrator speaking to one another. The report renders many positive replies from the students, although with some hesitation concerning the play. One participant stated that this belongs in art class and not history, while Professor Chalk

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<sup>270</sup> National teacher training report: 2

<sup>271</sup> National teacher training report: 3

<sup>272</sup> National teacher training report: 6

<sup>273</sup> National teacher training report: 6-8

encouraged that teachers must adapt as the world changes and begin to accept and use innovative technology.<sup>274</sup>

The report leaves an impression that the main focus is all the important people present at it, while other things such as discussions among the participants are not treated very much. There has obviously been interesting discussion, because the report includes an evaluation of its strength and challenges. At this early stage there is almost certainly a level of formality and need to present the importance of the project rather than specific scientific content. Keeping in mind that the whole project depends upon grants from organizations and governments, this seems like a sensible way to present the project to the public.

The strength and challenges seems to give an honest description of what they recognized in the seminar and what they should address at a later stage. In a setting where there are many experts from across the globe, it is interesting to see that National Trainers were trying to brag about their knowledge in large groups, while they were less outspoken in smaller groups.<sup>275</sup> Another thing of particular importance was that there were friction between the two groups regarding the issue of respect and age. In Cambodia, it is part of the culture that adults know more than children. The older you are, the more you know, and thus the more respect you receive. Accordingly, the younger DC-Cam staff had to address the National Trainers in a very respectful manner.<sup>276</sup>

It is crucial to identify challenges and possibilities for improvements at an early stage in order to deal with them properly and there are some problems which were discussed at a later meeting and the recommendations are given in the report.

Some of these challenges can be categorized as minor, as correcting and adjusting the seminars will not demand very much effort. Challenges such as lack of clear objectives and no consistent model lessons falls into this category and the recommendations seems to address them in a sensible way.<sup>277</sup>

There are, however, some more fundamental challenges faced already in the very first seminar.

Fundamental challenge 1: Tension between teaching and learning history.

There is an important difference between learning the history of Democratic Kampuchea and learning ways to teach about the Democratic Kampuchea. The second one is

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<sup>274</sup> National teacher training report: 11

<sup>275</sup> National teacher training report: 12

<sup>276</sup> National teacher training report: 12

<sup>277</sup> National teacher training report: 13

arguably dependent on the first, but during this seminar, methodology took a backseat to history lessons and facts. History lessons repeatedly ran into the time allotted for methodology and pedagogy, with participants occupying the microphone and going into long speeches. In order to meet this challenge, they recommend that the facilitators should try to keep discussions and questions centred on the textbook, rather on more nuanced detail. It is also suggested that they should stress to the trainees that they are not becoming historians on Democratic Kampuchea, but rather teachers who will be able to relay and teach DK history to high school students. Questions should be limited during the history presentations, but trainees should be free to meet historians or scholars “after class” or during lunch.<sup>278</sup>

The report does not say anything about the nature of these questions, but they nevertheless introduce a number of problems. First of all is that this means limiting all conversation to concern the things written in the textbook, which would consequently exclude things that are not in the textbook. Asking questions can reflect cognitive processes regarding for instance causality in history, and such questions are a desirable outcome of conveying history. These questions may also be encountered when the trainees are teaching themselves, and if they can not find answers for them in the textbook, then there are little chance of answering them properly. Neglecting questions beside the textbook indicates that they are not important, thus adding to a possible notion that the textbook is “the historical truth”.

It boils down to the nature and sincerity of these questions. An interview with a DC-Cam staff member gave indications that some critical participants would ask bizarre and corny questions as an attempt to sabotage the whole seminar.<sup>279</sup> This is reinforced by a report from July 2012 from the workshop at National Institute of Education, where a PhD research student notices that: “the students persist to ask bizarre questions, and there is a feeling amongst the camp that there is a degree of time-wasting and bad manners”<sup>280</sup>

The National Trainers are indeed not to be suspected of sabotaging the seminars, but it is interesting to see how fragile it could be with regards to participants not being cooperative, and that they encountered this potential problem already in the first seminar.

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<sup>278</sup> National teacher training report: 14

<sup>279</sup> Interview with DC-Cam staff member

<sup>280</sup> Report from NIE July 2012: 9 -

[http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/NIE\\_Report\\_July\\_31\\_2012.pdf](http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/NIE_Report_July_31_2012.pdf)

Fundamental challenge 2: Western way of teaching versus Cambodian way of teaching.

In general, the Western approach to teaching is very student-centred while the Cambodian is heavily teacher-centred.<sup>281</sup> The Cambodian model makes the teacher into what the report describes a “end-all,be-all” of knowledge for the students, subsequently relying heavily on historical facts to determine the success.<sup>282</sup> The methodology intended for teaching the topic of Democratic Kampuchea, is very influenced by present Anglo-American didactical theory, and the emergence of this obstacle is not a surprise. In Cambodia the teacher-centred approach is preferred because it helps the teacher maintain control over large groups of students and it prevents the teacher’s authority or competence from ever coming into question.<sup>283</sup> The desire for this approach is presented as a practical solution, rather than the theoretically possible better outcome of new methodology. Student-centred learning focuses more on the learning process rather than just transferring knowledge from teacher to student. The new methodology is designed to make the students discuss ideas, lessons, and information provided by the teacher. According to the report, in some cases, this could bring the student’s opinion in conflict with the teacher’s position on an issue, and this could potentially trigger an underlying fear of using open-ended questions and student-centred discussions.<sup>284</sup>

The recommendation for this problem is to emphasize the similarities between the two approaches rather than the differences. They also want to explain to the trainees that “Cambodian taxonomy includes discussing questions in steps four through six while it includes the need for fact based discussion questions in steps one through three.”<sup>285</sup> The report does not state which taxonomy, but the six steps indicate that it is some version of Bloom’s taxonomy. A suggestion is to have teachers read text from articles based on theory aloud in groups, which is the Cambodian way of learning, then prompt them to dig deeper into the meaning, which is more Western. After this activity they want to explain the new methodology of asking both fact and discussion based questions on the reading and the importance of facilitating these two in the classrooms.<sup>286</sup> This “solution” acknowledges the problem, but does not provide a definite answer, rather than trying to explain the new methodology to the trainees and making them understand it.

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<sup>281</sup> National teacher training report: 14

<sup>282</sup> National teacher training report: 14

<sup>283</sup> National teacher training report: 14

<sup>284</sup> National teacher training report: 14

<sup>285</sup> National teacher training report: 14

<sup>286</sup> National teacher training report: 14

### Fundamental challenge 3: National Teachers' Focus on Administrative Tasks Rather than "Larger Picture"

According to the report, participants were very critical of any teachers who failed to put the date on the blackboard or who did not abide the "5-steps process" that they learned in general teacher training. This criticism could be characterized as trivial or pedantic in Western societies, but is apparently very important to Cambodian society.<sup>287</sup> The report continues to state that the lessons given by participants were very rigid and focused on basic historical information, and would typically involve simple "yes" or "no" answers.<sup>288</sup> Some of the teachers would ask very complex questions to students, but instead of expecting a reply, they would answer them themselves very quickly after asking them. Generally, the teachers imposed their views of "right" and "wrong" and did not feel comfortable allowing students to discuss their views. The participants understood the methodology behind each lesson, but lacked sufficient practice in various teaching methodologies in order to "effectively" use the lessons from the guidebook.<sup>289</sup>

The recommendation builds upon the fact that they did not have enough time for methodology in the seminar, and that more time in practicing the lessons is required in order for all trainees to gain sufficient skill.<sup>290</sup>

During the conclusion of the whole seminar, the report states that political perspectives have inevitably affected how the educational system interpret and define important historical events. The Khmer Rouge has been used for propaganda campaigns in school curriculum, while other times the regime has simply been ignored in classrooms. The collaboration between Ministry of Education and DC-Cam is endorsed, and stating that it, while not perfect, is a solid start.<sup>291</sup>

These challenges are important, because the participants here are the ones who are supposed to teach the next step, and the problem could propagate down the Pyramid.

#### 5.1.2 Provincial teacher training seminar

These workshops follow a slightly different path compared to the earlier ones. This is possibly a reaction to the lack of time they experienced in the previous one. An important difference is that this takes place over a time period of twelve days, while the previous one was only seven.

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<sup>287</sup> National teacher training report: 15

<sup>288</sup> National teacher training report: 15

<sup>289</sup> National teacher training report: 15

<sup>290</sup> National teacher training report: 16

<sup>291</sup> National teacher training report: 17

Another difference is the number of participants, which is now over 180.<sup>292</sup> The already trained National teacher, are now present as “core leaders” of the provincial level workshops. First of all, the participants met in Phnom Penh for three days, where they attended large group sessions with speeches from domestic and international scholars. They also met with H.E. Im Sethy and went on field trips to museums and memorial sites in the vicinity of Phnom Penh.<sup>293</sup> The teachers were then divided into six different groups based on their regional affiliation. The report gives an indication that this three-day gathering in Phnom Penh sparked an understanding of the importance and severity of the ‘Genocide Education Project’ among the participants, and created a good framework for the following regional seminars<sup>294</sup> Some of the participants who had not been there before expressed the importance of conveying this to the younger generations.<sup>295</sup> By doing field trips and listening to scholars before the actual provincial seminars clears a lot of time on the schedule, and there is more time for other things. The report also states that the places visited have a legitimizing effect, because they are proof that the experiences were real, and opportunity to get a first-hand impression undoubtedly influenced their teaching of these sites.<sup>296</sup>

The provincial seminars followed a similar blueprint for each day. The first educational element on the schedule each day was history lessons, where two of the chapters from Dy’s textbook were presented. The nature of these presentations was slightly different depending on the style of the presenter. Some used PowerPoint presentations, some read directly from the textbook, and some included their own anecdotes in their presentation. The report states that “many” taught by closely following the methodology and lesson plans from the Teacher’s guidebook.<sup>297</sup> It does not say anything on how many or give a percentage, so it is difficult to get a clear picture on how to interpret “many”. The methodology is a key element of ‘Genocide Education Project’, and one might think that organizers would be adamant for the presenters to stick to the methodology they were trained for, because this is methodology desired for the participants to adapt.

Instead of letting the participants ask questions instantly, they have instead devoted time in the end of the history lessons for questions. This is probably another measure taken based on what they experienced in the workshop for National Teachers, where the amount of questions took up a lot of time. One big advantage with this approach is that the participants

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<sup>292</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 3

<sup>293</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 3

<sup>294</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 4

<sup>295</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 25

<sup>296</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 26

<sup>297</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 6

have more time to reflect upon their questions, and they may even get an answer to what they are wondering by just listening. Another advantage is that you do have to deal with participants showing-off and creating digressions in the middle of the session.

The report gives a general description of the questions the participants asked:

- The nuances between the “Four-Year Plan” and Five-Year Communist Plans
- The difference between communism and Marxism
- The motivation behind posting security regulations on the walls of S-21
- The reason why the Khmer Rouge exported rice to China, and explanations as to why the United Nations supported the “genocidal regime” during the 1980s
- Questions on the rationale for wearing black clothing
- The purpose of the Phnom Penh evacuation
- The personal stories of Khmer Rouge leaders
- The ongoing Un-Cambodia trial (ECCC)<sup>298</sup>

The nature of these questions would initially indicate a desire for a higher understanding of historical processes. In a taxonomical perspective they are a step up from establishing facts such as names, dates, places etc. Unfortunately, the report does not describe in detail how these questions were addressed, but it reveals other interesting aspects. According to the report, the trainees expressed interest in the level of blame that should be placed on the international community and King Sihanouk. They were “often determined to absolve Khmer people themselves of responsibility”<sup>299</sup> An observer of a Phnom Penh workshop states that the trainees were fishing a non-Khmer explanation for some of the harsh policies of the Khmer Rouge.<sup>300</sup> This coincides with what the teachers in the field-study experienced from their high-school students. Many of their students were also fishing for non-Khmer explanations.<sup>301</sup> This represents an important example of the fact that the ‘Genocide Education Project’ is not only conveying history straightforward, but also has to deal with a fair amount of myths which circulate in Cambodian society. If they are fishing for explanations about a foreign power behind the cruelty, this would indicate that myths are anchored in the collective memory.

The report does not give a detailed description as to how the teachers in the seminars dealt with these questions, but it states that the trainees grew frustrated when they did not receive definitive responses to questions entangled in continuing historical ambiguity and

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<sup>298</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 6

<sup>299</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 6

<sup>300</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 6

<sup>301</sup> High school teachers

controversy, adding that these are issues in which no clear answer exists.<sup>302</sup> An observer noted that the trainees showed anxiety with regards to how they should answer the many questions the students will ask.<sup>303</sup>

During the afternoon, the seminars broke into smaller parts, where each session included between one and three lessons from the teacher's guidebook. In this part of the seminar, a trainee steps into the role of the teacher while the rest go into the role as students. Overlooking the whole thing are the National teachers, who prompts discussion and encourages constructive criticism. They also give feedback to the trainees who have done a lesson.<sup>304</sup>

During the week of the workshops, the director of DC-Cam, Mr. Youk Chang visited all the provincial workshops. He stressed the purpose of the textbook and training, which is to reconcile the nation, but that this may not happen overnight and that a ten-year period is more realistic.<sup>305</sup> During the question and answer section at Kandal, one participant urged Youk to press the government to encourage teachers and students to study history, and stressing that they only have 1,5 hours per week to teach history. The director responded fairly neutral to the question and said that the Ministry of Education is aware of the problem, but they have a lot of work to do.<sup>306</sup> Another question was regarding student's lack of interest in history, and Youk encouraged them by saying that this will change soon and students will understand the value of history.<sup>307</sup>

In the same workshop, a different speaker encountered numerous questions from the trainees. Some of them were of this nature:

- Did the interrogators torture prisoners of their own will or were they following higher orders?
- Did the KR get torture and purge ideas from China?
- Why did the KR export rice to China when people were starving? Did the countries receiving export know people in Cambodia were starving
- Did the name Pol Pot come from "political potential"?<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 7

<sup>303</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 7

<sup>304</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 7

<sup>305</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 38

<sup>306</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 39

<sup>307</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 39

<sup>308</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 44



These questions are difficult to answer and they have a certain level of ambiguity. An important aspect is that the whole topic is thought-provoking, starting cognitive processes on a high level for the participants. Unfortunately, the report gives no indication to the response of the individual questions, but leaves room for a more general view of the topic as a whole. The report states that the speaker answered the questions, before explaining that the guidebook went through many drafts before publication.<sup>309</sup> Accordingly, the trainees are honoured by being able to convey this history, especially at the time of the ongoing trial. It also states that the difficulty of teaching history is remaining unbiased while doing so, warning the trainees of falling into the trap of hateful speech and stressing the importance of being careful when drawing conclusions.<sup>310</sup> The speaker then spoke of his son who used contemporary views to analyze why Cambodians did not rebel; stressing that Democratic Kampuchea is a historical experience and that the teachers need a broad range of knowledge. The speaker then applied other Asian history books in order to demonstrate similarities between the conflicts of Japan and Indonesia and North and South Vietnam. Accordingly, North Vietnam considered Cambodians lower people. In turn, not knowing the conflict, Cambodians disliked the Vietnamese while the Thai considered themselves better than Cambodians and Laotians.<sup>311</sup> According to the report, this was to demonstrate how everyone needs to be aware of the context of history, and stated that despite not being valued as history teachers, they are still peace-keepers.<sup>312</sup> This is a very general response to the questions and future dilemmas faced by the trainees. As educators, they are probably not asking these questions exclusively from own interest, but also to have something to tell their own students when time comes. This general response leaves a lot up to the trainees to figure out for themselves. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it would involve teachers presenting their own interpretation of history to their students, and the field study for this thesis gave no indications that this is desirable among the teachers.

There are subsequent questions, although these are only three of the five described in the report:

- What word should be used to describe the photo of a foreign delegation at the beginning of chapter 10? Answer: Could say Chinese

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<sup>309</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 44

<sup>310</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 44

<sup>311</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 44

<sup>312</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 45

- Why are there no photos of suffering and torture in the textbook? Answer: including such photos may make the country unstable since the thinking of a child is not like that of an adult.
- Why aren't the Chinese advisors being tried? Answer: The law states that only KR leaders can be prosecuted; do not blame others for our actions

The first question refers to a picture in Dy's textbook<sup>313</sup> showing a lot of unnamed people in front of Angkor Wat. The answer states that the foreign delegation is Chinese, but the textbook only say that they are DK leaders with foreign delegation. The Chinese participation in Democratic Kampuchea is obviously something that puzzles many Cambodians, and the textbook may have left it out as a reconciliatory measure. The second question is regarding pictures of suffering and torture, and why these have been omitted. The response is that such photos have been left out because of reconciliatory measures. The third question gives a connotation that the Chinese are indeed responsible for the tragedies experienced during Democratic Kampuchea, and also in this instance, the response is of a reconciliatory nature.<sup>314</sup>

Reconciliation is one of the most important aims of the 'Genocide Education Project', but reconciliation exists on several levels. One level is between victims and perpetrators within Cambodia, while another level is reconciliation between groups in Cambodia and also other nations. The trainees in the workshops seem to cope with internal reconciliation better than external. According to European historian Robert Stradling, controversial and sensitive issues can divide groups, whole societies or neighbouring countries.<sup>315</sup> In the case of Cambodia, there seems to be a distinct difference between controversy and sensitivity. If applying this theory, sensitivities seems to relate to domestic and social circumstances, while controversy is dealt with somewhat different. The sensitivity seems to be embraced by the need for reconciliation between victims and perpetrators, while the controversy has a tendency to remain unanswered.

#### 5.1.2.1 Large group model lesson

The National seminars encountered an obstacle as participants not only had to be lectured on real-history; they also had to convey this on their own using brand new methodology. Arguably, there is a big step between acquiring knowledge of real-history and methodology,

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<sup>313</sup> Dy: 56

<sup>314</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 45

<sup>315</sup> Stradling: 99

and actually performing this by themselves. This resulted in many, but not everyone, following the desired methodology from the guidebook.<sup>316</sup> The common structure of each day included large-group lectures from the textbook regarding real-history, and then smaller groups where the trainees were able to perform lessons from the guidebook.

The provincial seminars introduced large group model lessons, where the National Trainers taught directly from the guidebook, and the trainees went in to the role as students. The report describes a large model lesson from Kandal on training day six. For the trainees, this lesson gives an example and a hands-on approach as to how they can structure their own lessons in real life, and not just read about it in the guidebook. It also includes the whole group, which is much more similar to a Cambodian classroom setting, as compared to smaller groups with 4-5 people.

The lecturer given is his personal adaptation, and is to serve as an example for the trainees. The lecturer began by greeting the students and taking attendance. He then instructed the students to look at a particular picture in the textbook, and prompted them to describe what they saw in the picture.<sup>317</sup> One student replied that it showed unhappy children, and the lecturer asked them to look at another picture on the same page. The children looked sad and unhappy on that one as well.

He then described the objectives of the lesson from the teacher's guidebook, and asked the students to form three groups. He then asked them questions designed to answer the objectives of the lessons, and gave them 20 minutes to discuss and answer the questions. The questions were:

- What are the bad affects of the Pol Pot regime?
- From what you can see, what are the hardships and acts of braveness of the victims?

After engaging the students, he then walked around ensuring that the students knew what they were supposed to do. When 20 minutes had passed, he prompted one of the students to tell everyone the group's answer. His first response to their answers was to praise them, saying "good" or "thanks" all the time. Eventually, he rephrased them and explained in more detail and emphasized important points.<sup>318</sup>

Feedback from the participants was positive, and they thought that the objectives of lesson were met. The report does not give clear indications as to what these objectives were, but explains that the result was satisfactory. A concern from the participants was of a similar

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<sup>316</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 6

<sup>317</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 47

<sup>318</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 48

nature as earlier, namely relating to time given for teaching history in schools.<sup>319</sup> Another concern was whether the students had enough time to write the answers in their notebook. Some of the respondents said that it was okay if the students did not have enough time to write in their notebook, because they have their textbooks. The writer of this report drew a conclusion that it is not necessary for the students to draw everything down in their notebook as long as they have their textbooks. Students notion and understanding of the lecture is more important<sup>320</sup> Whether or not the participants accepts this new terminology remains unanswered, both because of time and lack of teaching material. Some trainees said that they cannot use the “student-centred” methodology, because they lack the teaching material, while others enjoyed this type of methodology, stating that they should adapt to this and abolish the old “teacher-centred” methodology.<sup>321</sup>

In western terms of teaching, this lesson does not seem to contradict any issues of important methodological nature, but it could possibly in Cambodia. Especially, considering the time-constraint that these teachers will meet when they meet their own students. According to the report, many of the trainees enjoyed the new teaching style, saying that they should adopt this and forget about the old “teacher-centred” methodology.<sup>322</sup>

### 5.1.3 Communal teacher training seminars

Some reports from the communal teacher training reinforce challenges experienced in the provincial ones. The provincial teachers are now doing the actual teaching, and some of them seemed worried about the questions posed by trainees. This was the case in the Fourth Commune teacher training – Kandal Province, and the National teachers spent a lot of time “strengthening each teacher’s flexibility to respond to any questions”. The report states further on that they gradually learned how to deal with challenging issues and questions.<sup>323</sup> Before doing presentations of the DK textbook, some provincial teachers informed the trainees about their limited knowledge and research, thus giving them diminished confidence and were not able to answer many questions. The report states that those who had very limited knowledge of DK history provided weak presentations, which consequently resulted in many questions being asked them.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 48

<sup>320</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 48

<sup>321</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 48

<sup>322</sup> Provincial teacher training report: 48

<sup>323</sup> Fourth Commune Teacher training report – Kandal province: 9

<sup>324</sup> Fourth Commune Teacher training report – Kandal province: 11

Khamboly Dy has written a report from fifth commune which took place in Kampong Cham. The report states that, generally, national teachers possess adequate capacity to teach and explain information to participants.<sup>325</sup> Provincial teachers, on the other hand, have limited ability to do presentations on both the history textbook and guidebook. The national teachers have done these seminars a few times know and are more confident than the national ones, who are teaching this for the first time. They are nervous and have limited confidence in both presenting and answering the questions from participants.<sup>326</sup>

This challenge emerges in yet another report written by Khamboly Dy. The fourth commune teacher training report– Phnom Penh, states that some national and provincial teachers possess limited ability in answering the questions from the participants, especially questions regarding history of the party (CPP), which Dy acknowledges is highly controversial.<sup>327</sup> Accordingly, the answers do not directly address the questions from the participants, which subsequently generate more confusion and unclear understanding.

In order to cope with this challenge, DC-Cam arranges additional meetings with National trainers before the actual training takes part, devoted to discussions on the answers to all the questions the participants of earlier seminars asked.<sup>328</sup>

There are geographical factors related to the questions the participants ask. In the Phnom Penh seminar, many of the participants have access to books and Internet, subsequently asking a lot more difficult questions.<sup>329</sup> The report states that the best way to deal with unknown answers is to tell the participants that that the trainers do not know the answer and ask if anyone in the group knows the answer. If not, trainers should leave the questions for further research, and not attempt to try answering any question that they do not know the answer to.<sup>330</sup>

#### 5.1.3.1 Surveys on workshops

The author of *Teacher's Guidebook*, Mr. Christopher Dearing has conducted a teacher training survey after all the communal seminars had been done. This survey is based on an evaluation done by the trainees at the workshop. In total this survey includes data from 2725 participants from 17 workshops, make the average number at each seminar 160.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Fifth Commune Teacher training report – Kampong Cham: 28

<sup>326</sup> Fifth Commune Teacher training report – Kampong Cham: 28

<sup>327</sup> Fourth Commune Teacher training report – Phnom Penh: 22

<sup>328</sup> Fourth Commune Teacher training report – Phnom Penh: 22

<sup>329</sup> Fourth Commune Teacher training report – Phnom Penh: 22

<sup>330</sup> Fourth Commune Teacher training report – Phnom Penh: 22

<sup>331</sup> Teacher training survey data 2010: 3

After each seminar, the participants evaluated key aspects of the seminar by grading them; Excellent, satisfactory, poor or no response. The overall results show that the participants were pleased with the seminars.

### Survey Results of Teacher Training

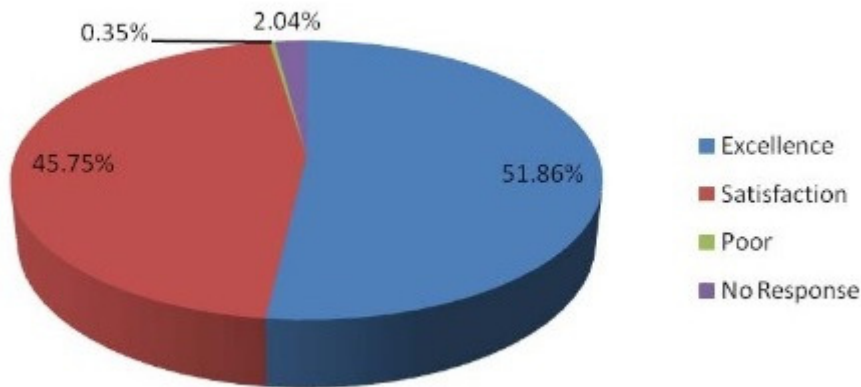


Fig: Teacher training survey data 2010:<sup>332</sup>

[http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher\\_Training\\_Survey\\_Data\\_2010.pdf](http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher_Training_Survey_Data_2010.pdf)

There are seven different factors contributing to the general result.

1. Training material
2. Overall impression of training
3. Presentation style of presenters/trainers
4. Subject matter knowledge of trainers
5. Organization of training
6. Trainers' ability to handle questions; lead discussions
7. Trainers' use of examples<sup>333</sup>

The feedback is predominantly excellence and satisfaction, with only 0,35 % to be regarded as poor. This indicates that despite some of the challenges experienced in the work shop, the participants generally had a good experience. There is however regional differences in the survey data, and they are indicated in the figure below.

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<sup>332</sup> Teacher training survey data 2010: 4 - [http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher\\_Training\\_Survey\\_Data\\_2010.pdf](http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher_Training_Survey_Data_2010.pdf)

<sup>333</sup> Teacher training survey data 2010: 6 - [http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher\\_Training\\_Survey\\_Data\\_2010.pdf](http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher_Training_Survey_Data_2010.pdf)

## Teacher Training Survey Results by Province

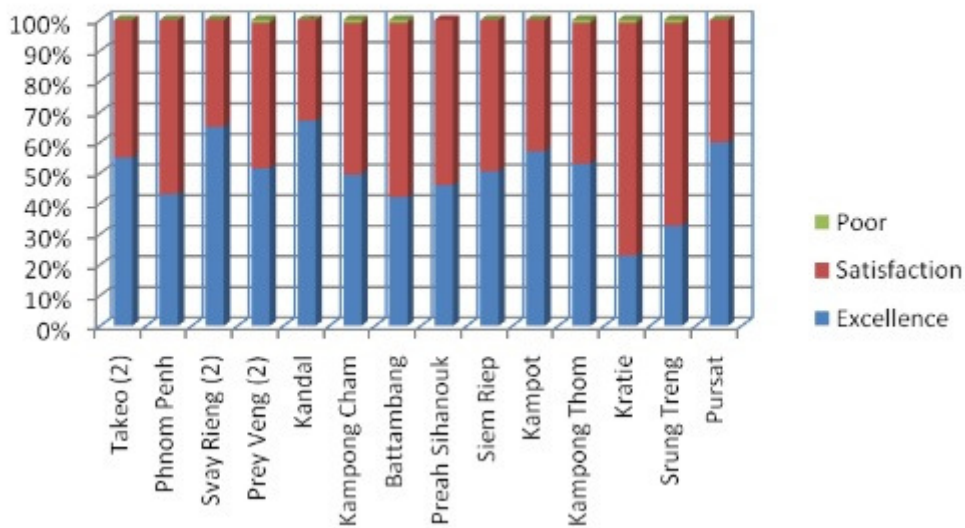


Figure: Teacher training survey data 2010: 5<sup>334</sup>

Particularly Kratie province has the least percentage of “excellent” feedback and there is no obvious explanation in the survey for this. It was, however, one of the first seminars to be conducted. The report from this seminar indicates that there were some confusion with the guidebook and the normal “five-step-approach” of traditional Cambodian teaching.

Accordingly, many participants requested that DC-Cam produce a “lesson plan guidebook” apart from the already existing Teacher’s guidebook.<sup>335</sup> This guidebook is written by two US citizens, and contrasts traditional methodology.<sup>336</sup>

### 5.2 Teacher competence

There are many challenges with regards to teacher competence. An important feature of the workshops that DC-Cam conducts is that they acknowledge these challenges and try to address and adopt to them the best they can. There are no definitive solutions on how to train these teachers in the best manner. DC-Cam has received a lot of help from international experts on ideal approaches to teaching and methodology, but in some cases this is in direct contrast to traditional Cambodian teaching, thus making it a challenge in the seminars. What characterizes the teacher-training is the fact that it is an ongoing learning process for all the

<sup>334</sup> [http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher\\_Training\\_Survey\\_Data\\_2010.pdf](http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher_Training_Survey_Data_2010.pdf)

<sup>335</sup> First commune teacher training report: 12

<sup>336</sup> First commune teacher training report: 12

people involved and not only the trainees. The reports clearly indicate a learning curve from the facilitators, which again influences the outcome of the seminars and future seminars. The participants who have received training can not be called experts after a one week course, and the learning process continues for them as well when they start practicing with their own students.

### 5.3 Questions asked in the seminars

Questions from students seem to be a concern for the participants in the seminars.

Controversial questions appear in many of the provincial seminars. In some instances the reports state the answer to these, while sometimes it does not.

The fourth commune teacher training report from Kandal province includes an appendix with questions from the trainees and some of the questions were of the following nature:

1. Why Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk did not tell his countrymen about who were the leaders of the KR regime.
2. How many people died during the KR regime?
3. Why did Sihanouk join the revolution?
4. Why did China decide to not help KR when the Vietnamese forces attacked Cambodia?
5. Was it correct that Khmer Rouge had two groups – one supporting Vietnam and another China? Who were the members of the respective groups?
6. Why were Nuon Chea condemned or mentioned during the early 1980s?
7. Was Samdech Sihanouk involved in the eight principles of the KR?
8. What was the relation between Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK)?

The questions reveal that the participants engage in higher cognitive thinking processes, and they also reveal that there are uncertainties, even though they have read the textbook. Some of these questions are indeed controversial, because they relate to certain people, groups or political organizations today.<sup>337</sup> Unfortunately, the reports do not indicate how these particular questions were addressed initially, but they have been subject for discussion among the facilitators of the seminars.<sup>338</sup> The survey, however, does not indicate any discontent with how the facilitators addressed questions nationwide.

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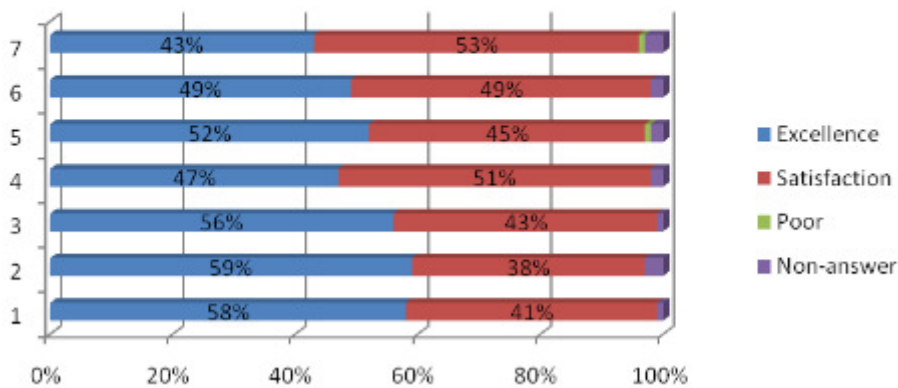
<sup>337</sup> Stradling: 99

<sup>338</sup> Fourth Commune Teacher training report – Phnom Penh: 22



Nationwide survey results:

### Summer/Fall 2010 Training Survey Results by Metric



1	Training materials
2	Overall impression of training
3	Presentation style of presenters/trainers
4	Subject matter knowledge of trainers
5	Organization of training
6	Trainers' ability to handle questions; lead discussions
7	Trainers' use of relevant examples

Figure: Teacher training survey data: 6<sup>339</sup>

Trainers' ability to handle questions and lead discussion receive 49% excellence and 49% satisfaction, indication that the participants are pleased with how this was conducted.

In the report from Fourth Commune Teacher training report – Phnom Penh, Dy writes that questions regarding the ruling political party is of a controversial nature, and encourages participants from workshops to refrain from answering if they do not know the answer.<sup>340</sup>

The report from Phnom Penh involves some of the teachers who are subject for interviews in the field study in the next chapter, and one of them expressed to be particularly unhappy with the seminar. There were many things that he had been asking and the people could not answer his questions, and he subsequently quit the seminar.<sup>341</sup> This is just on instance that happened to occur to one of the interviewed teachers for this thesis, but arguably, the survey cannot pick

<sup>339</sup> [http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher\\_Training\\_Survey\\_Data\\_2010.pdf](http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Teacher_Training_Survey_Data_2010.pdf)

<sup>340</sup> Fourth Commune Teacher training report – Phnom Penh: 22

<sup>341</sup> High school teacher 11

up negative evaluation from those who quit. The interviewed teachers seem to have adapted the advice of refraining from answering question. Not necessarily because they do not know the answers, but because they do not want to answer them.

#### 5.4 Assessing findings

The focus of this chapter is mainly on the obstacles encountered in the workshop. It becomes evident that the combination of learning new knowledge and adapting to a new methodology adds complexity for them as teachers. Although the survey show good results, the nature of the topic and the manner in which is supposedly conveyed compromises them. They are particularly exposed in situation where their knowledge is sufficient to answer open-ended questions. Facts and figures are the questions they are used to, and when the trainers cannot give them clear answers on how to address certain open-ended questions, it becomes a problem for the. It is easier for them to articulate something that is certain.

There is a learning curve involved both for DC-Cam and the trainers. Many of the challenges encountered in the first workshops are still present because they propagate down the pyramid. They adapt to the challenges and attempts to address them properly, but there is no clear solution to the challenges, and they more or less have to adapt to a learning-by-doing strategy. These observations will be brought up again in the conclusion.

### **Chapter 6: Field study**

The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate findings from the field-study. The main objective of this field study was to investigate how the topic of Democratic Kampuchea is conveyed to Cambodian students, and in doing so, highlighting how some of the aims of the ‘Genocide Education Project’ are fulfilled in Cambodian schools.

#### 6.1 Methodology and planning

As with all field studies, there are some expectations and perceptions on the ideal methodological approach. There are many practicalities that can be prepared in advance, but certainly not all. The first methodological consideration to take was the duration of the stay. Seven weeks was initially thought to be more than sufficient, but it is better to stay on the safe side. Contact was established with DC-Cam previous to departure informing them of time of arrival and duration of stay. It is not uncommon to do a field-study in Master Dissertations, but spending close to two month half-way across the globe, belongs to the exceptions. Subsequently, many of the researchers who work with DC-Cam were pursuing academic

degrees above MA-level. One anticipated challenge was that a completely unknown MA-candidate could possibly be disregarded by people encountered. As a precaution, the scientific supervisors of this thesis, May-Brith Ohman Nielsen and Kjetil Grødum, each wrote a “letter of introduction”, explaining the purpose and importance of the study.

The Norwegian Research council provides ethical guidelines on confidentiality when performing qualitative interviews, which were noted and reflected upon before arrival. On the assumption that documentation of this field study would rely heavily on sound recording, an Olympus Digital Voice recorder was acquired. This served as the primary recording device, while a mobile phone was used as backup in case anything should go wrong.

### 6.1.1 Initial approach in Cambodia

The interviews in this field study were planned and organized in the following manner. DC-CAM provided a list with the phone numbers of National Teachers living in the vicinity of Phnom Penh city. These are the ones who train other teachers at the specially arranged workshops. As none of these were particularly proficient in English, the phone numbers had to be passed on to an interpreter who then could set up the meetings. Getting hold of an interpreter was the first major challenge of the field-study. Several companies in the translation business were contacted, but the prices were severely higher than expected. In order to stay within budget, the initial thought was to raise the number of interviews to 4 per day. In hindsight, the feasibility of this approach is vanishingly small, if not impossible. Coincidentally, an acquaintance stated that she was waiting for enrolment to University and subsequently had a clear schedule until mid-November. In addition to being the most proficient English speaker encountered in Cambodia, she has also been available retrospectively if any uncertainties in the interview-transcriptions should appear.

The interpreter arranged and set up meetings two of the National Teachers. These initial interviews revealed that being a national trainer in DC-Cam workshops does not necessarily mean that they have their academic background from history. One of them had a background from social science and the other one from foreign language. In addition, the two national teachers mostly had administrative tasks and rarely taught history to high-school students. The interviews with the national teachers gave some important information, but they could not elaborate on how this was being taught in public high-school, simply because they mostly worked with curriculum development.

Unfortunately, DC-CAM did not have a list of high-school teachers in the city of Phnom Penh, which made the process of getting more interviews severely more difficult. Luckily the interpreter had some contacts at her former high-school, and we were able to schedule an interview with the first of the high-school teachers. At this point, the strategy was that this first teacher would hopefully provide more phone numbers of colleagues. Additional phone numbers were obtained, although with a warning that if they at all agreed to do an interview, they would be very reluctant revealing too much information. “They really just want to keep their safety. They are afraid that they could go a bit far and that could be dangerous. So they don’t know and just want to keep their safety”<sup>342</sup>

### 6.1.2 Adapting to the challenges

Regardless of having a new list of phone numbers, getting more people to interview was not easy. Accordingly, many methodological requirements had to be erased. Hopes of having an even distribution between gender and age vanished quickly. Ideally, there should be six male and six female interviewees, while the end result was ten male and two female teachers. On that same note, the distribution of teachers who have first-hand experience with Khmer Rouge and younger teachers should be the same. The age and gender of the interviewees had to be randomized in accordance with the few who actually agreed to do the interview. The same thing applied to the location of the interviews. The interviewees decided for themselves. Some times that meant visiting their school, while other times doing the interview at a booked meeting room at a Phnom Penh restaurant. Admittedly, the restaurant location was preferable, because of the possibility of getting there in advance to prepare. Also the surroundings of the restaurant were quiet, with no unwanted interruptions or noises. At the schools you will always run the risk of there not being any suitable places to do the interviews. In addition, a foreigner at a school does also cause some attention and raise a few eyebrows. Whether this influenced the interviews in an undesirable manner is difficult to say, but summarized there are more cons than pros in doing interviews at unknown locations.

When doing field-work in a foreign country, the language factor is crucial. Not only during the interviews, but also when organizing them. Obviously you got to have a fair amount of trust in the person interpreting. In addition to what the researcher perceives, the interpreter’s opinion and feelings can also serve as an important additional empirical background. For instance, the interpreter contacted somewhere between 45 and 50 high-school teachers, which

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<sup>342</sup> National teacher 1

resulted in 12 interviews. Their reason or excuses for not doing it is also valuable information. Even though most of them said that they did not have time, it is somewhat hard to believe when they could pick any place, any time, any day for a period of 2-4 weeks (Depending on when they were contacted). 4 people also cancelled or did not show up for the interviews. When being contacted again, they denied a proposal of rescheduling.

Those who agreed to do an interview did so because they felt it was important. When asked about why so many declined, some of them said that it is understandable because the teachers have much to lose, but not very much to gain by talking to researchers.<sup>343</sup> The salary for a teacher in Cambodia is very low even when compared to other occupations. Consequently teachers will often have two or even three jobs just to make a decent living. This could partially explain why they did not want to waste time doing volunteer interviews, but it is not an entirely convincing explanation.

## 6.2 Conducting interviews

The fear of these teachers was very real, but at the same time hard to measure for scientific purposes. One of the teachers was, according to my interpreter, particularly hesitant to do an interview but nevertheless agreed to. When asked about the reason for hesitating, the teacher admitted being afraid of kidnapping when setting up a meeting with unknown people.<sup>344</sup> Some of them kept asking the interpreter how we got their phone number, why them etc. Their need for information was anticipated before meeting them. In order to give them all similar and accurate information, they were given a written information letter in their native language, explaining the purpose of the interview, information about me, and also information about the ethical guidelines and the confidentiality in the interviews.

After reading this, the interviewees were then prompted to ask any questions they wanted. Most of them were wondering about why they in particular had been chosen and why not someone else, and were subsequently reassured that the selection process was completely random. In order to avoid any complications during the interview, the interpreter was well informed about the whole research project and all questions and topics were discussed in advance.

The structure of the interviews was based on the information that they would be very reluctant to talk about anything controversial, especially to a complete stranger. The common trajectory for the interviews was that the interviewees started off by talking about themselves

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<sup>343</sup> High-school teacher 1,5

<sup>344</sup> High-school teacher 6

and their education. This is information they gladly shared and had no problems with. The next step was to ask them questions about their methodology and how they teach on a daily basis. These questions are also not very dramatic. In order to lead them towards more political aspects of the history subject, they were given question on to how both methodology and the history subject have developed during their time as teachers. This forces more political aspects of history teaching, because the topic of Demokratio Kampuchea has been omitted for so long.

Every interview sort of lived its own life, meaning that they did not necessarily follow a rigid line of questions. Sometimes new questions would appear depending on the answers. The questions which had been prepared in advance would also have been presented and discussed with the interpreter. Any new questions along the way had to be presented in a comprehensible way for both the interpreter and the interviewee. Not having a very firm structure on the questions, combined with use of an interpreter, raises a potential challenge for the researcher. The teachers would sometimes keep talking for minutes at a time in a completely different language. After hearing the interpretation and if they answered lengthy and somewhat off topic, it would sometimes be difficult remembering what they actually were being asked in the first place. This underlines the importance of doing notes along the way. Not only to have as empirical support to the interviews, but also to easier hold the structure of the interview.

The only general rule or strategy in the interviews was to wait at least 30-40 minutes before asking questions they would perceive as difficult or intimidating. Whether or not this strategy was successful is difficult to say, but the tension in the room was always completely different before than after the interview. They could start out by being deviant and out of their comfort zone and then end up being really friendly and also helpful in the end. Some of them offered to help by giving away phone numbers to colleges, which was crucial for the completion of the field-study.

Interviews with the people at DC-CAM were deliberately postponed until the end. The reason for this was a wish to confront them with information obtained from the other interviews. They work with this project on a daily basis and they are also the ones who have also trained the teachers on this topic. They also regularly deal with the government and Ministry of Education. Arguably, the DC-Cam interviews would not have been very prosperous if not already having a fair amount of information from the other interviews and also the empirical background of living 7 weeks in Phnom Penh.

### 6.3 Findings from interviews with teachers

The field study encountered many methodological challenges. The ideal expectations and desirable scientific standards turned out to be difficult to achieve. There are many features of the interviewees that ideally should have been different or more balanced. Many possible challenges were taken into consideration and prepared for in advance, but it is hard to anticipate such a thing as fear and reluctance to do interviews. This methodological problem leaves a material that is partially flawed for research potential. This does not necessarily imply that the material is less prosperous compared to preparing and conducting interviews without encountering any problems. On the contrary, this serves as valuable information which underlines, reinforces and confirms the sensitivity of this matter. The sensitivity and controversy of this matter applies to the interviewees as well as other material.

#### 6.3.1 Student's knowledge

This topic has more or less been left out of textbooks in history until 2011. Accordingly, before the students obtain information in school, what they know about the Khmer Rouge Genocide is obtained through a variety of other transmitters, with their family as the perhaps most important one. Some of the teachers have pointed out that when the students receive homework, the only answers they bring back to the classroom are the difficulties, sadness and tragedy of the past.<sup>345</sup> They seldom reflect on the regime itself and what kind of politics being used. One of the teachers said that: "I think the families of the students only know what they have seen and experienced for themselves, so they do not really see what was happening in the regime. Now there are more media, newspapers, radio and everything, but they only knew what they have experienced. Most of the parents are uneducated, so they don't really use the critical thinking, because they do not have that ability. So what they know is what the political people have been tricking them to know. And then they just believe it."<sup>346</sup>

Not ever having a written testimony of what happened has left fertile ground for myths to appear. When conveying this topic, teachers are left with the task of challenging any former perceptions the students might have. When dealing with the sensitive issues on an emotional level, the teachers are the one who challenge these myths. One potential problem is that children of former perpetrators often sit side-by-side with children of victims. This could

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<sup>345</sup> High-School teacher 2

<sup>346</sup> High-School teacher 1

create a highly volatile classroom environment where resistance to acknowledging the past could occur.<sup>347</sup>

None of the interviewed teachers gave any indication that they ever felt the classroom environment to be threatening, but they did have problems getting students to acknowledge what they were teaching them. According to some of the teachers, the students will learn and know what is expected of them, but at the same time they were under the impression that the students do not always accept it to be the truth.<sup>348</sup> This is a challenge that both National teachers in the workshops identified as well as the high school teachers in their classrooms. When asked about the general knowledge level on this period among young Cambodians, one of the National teachers put it this way. “The young find it hard to believe. Before the trials, they thought this was a fantasy or a fairy-tale and not reality. They are a different generation, so it is very hard for them to go back. (Back then) There were all these difficulties that they can’t even imagine. It is too hard to believe”<sup>349</sup>

Students not believing in what they are being taught represent an important obstacle. Not having a historical record of the events, combined with a complete lack of accountability for those involved, has left Cambodian people with more questions than answers. These questions are sometimes too controversial for the history teacher to answer properly.<sup>350</sup>

One common myth is that there was a foreigner behind Pol Pot and that the Vietnamese were backing the killings in Cambodia. The reason for this myth to flourish is an idealistic thought that Cambodians would never do such terrible things to each other. The atrocities are so excessive that they are incomprehensible for many.<sup>351</sup>

When teaching the topic of Khmer Rouge genocide to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, this includes atrocities of immense proportions. The notorious use of violence and torture towards targeted victims is one of the reasons why the students think it is too much and hard to believe. When asked about restrictions or limitations on how far the teachers could go when explaining torture or violence, they said that there are none.<sup>352</sup> To what degree they reveal details of torture and violence is subjective, but more importantly, they can reveal extreme details of violence and torture without anyone making a note of it. The lack of restrictions or

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<sup>347</sup> Genocide Education Training for Pre-Service Teachers, The National Institute of Education, Phnom Penh July 23-28, page: 3

[http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/NIE\\_Report\\_July\\_31\\_2012.pdf](http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/NIE_Report_July_31_2012.pdf)

<sup>348</sup> National teacher 1 and 2, High-school teacher 1,2

<sup>349</sup> National Teacher 2

<sup>350</sup> High-school teacher 1,2,3,4,5 etc

<sup>351</sup> High-school teacher 1

<sup>352</sup> High-school teacher 5



guidelines may indicate that the topic is not necessarily so social divisive as first indicated, and there is a distinction between controversy and sensitivity.

The credibility of the details revealed to the students is important. With regards to old and young teachers, there is a striking resemblance between what national teachers experienced in DC-CAM's workshops and what the teachers experience in high-school classrooms. The credentials as time witnesses are perceived by high-school teachers to have a positive effect on student's belief. They have more information, experience and they are also emotionally tied to the topic.<sup>353</sup>

### 6.3.2 Teacher's emotions in the classroom

The Khmer Rouge genocide was a tragic event which affected a whole nation. 8 of the teachers claim that they are survivors of the regime, although some of them at a very young age. Despite not necessarily being survivors from the regime, they are all victims because it happened on such a large scale that it affected everybody. All of them had lost close family members or loved ones during that regime.

In 2010, Mikael Berg published his analysis of history teachers' understanding of the school subject history. This revealed that there was a connection between the teachers' biography and their general understanding of the school subject. The analysis pointed out that teachers relate in different ways to history as science, history as identity and history from an ideological viewpoint.<sup>354</sup> One question that Berg asked his 50 teachers was "which factors they believe to have the biggest influence on how they understand history as a subject"? 15 of them answered 'childhood and family', 13 answered 'higher education' and 10 answered 'time as teacher'.<sup>355</sup> Inevitably their childhood and process of growing up will play an important role in their teaching. Especially when teaching such a delicate matter as the Khmer Rouge Genocide. Being a time witness sort of adds a new dimension of credibility when conveying history.

When asked about how they feel about teaching this. All except one agreed that the topic is very important and that the students need to learn. The one, who expressed a concern, argued that it is too early because we do not have enough information about it yet, referring to the ongoing Tribunal Trial.<sup>356</sup> All the teachers get emotional, because they have all been affected by this regime in some way. The older ones, who have experienced it on their own, get more

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<sup>353</sup> High-school teacher 3, 4, 5, 8

<sup>354</sup> Berg 2010: 161

<sup>355</sup> Berg 2010: 51

<sup>356</sup> High-school teacher 11

emotional than the younger teachers. Some of them start crying almost every time they teach this lesson. One of them also cried for long periods during the interview.<sup>357</sup> They nevertheless claim that they are able to stay professional during the lesson, and that their emotions just add credibility to their presentation.

When asked about how it makes him feel when he goes back in time to remember what happened, and then convey it to the students, he answered: (Interpreter: It was very hard to go back to his old experiences to teach, because it was a very tragic event and he almost died many times. It is very hard to go back, and he has found himself crying and getting very emotional. It was a long time ago, but he is stuck with bad memory, but he still wants to share the story to the student and let them know why it is like that. He does not want to hide it, he wants to share it, because like the student will know more about it)<sup>358</sup>

When asked about the psychological effect this has on them as human beings, three of them considered teaching this to be a good way of processing traumas. Despite periodically feeling devastated, some of them also indicated to feel better afterwards and that the teaching is some sort of therapy to them. When asked about feeling confident enough to convey this subject matter, one of the National teachers said. “When I found out that I got to teach this book (Dy’s) about this part of history, I felt nervous and also a bit scared, because I had to reflect back on my past. But I think that I have to do it and I want to show it to the next generation. One time I got to do the case of one of my own personal experiences and shared it with the class, and at that time I got very emotional and very scared. But it is a good thing to do, to share the experiences with younger students”<sup>359</sup>

The general perception to be traced in the interviews is, despite having to deal with this topic on an emotional level unimaginable for most, the teachers are still adamant about the need to convey this part of Cambodian history.

### 6.3.3 Political balancing towards contemporary politics

One of the biggest obstacles with regards to genocide education has been political will to teach this matter. Prime Minister Hun Sen, once said Cambodia should “dig a hole and bury

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<sup>357</sup> High-School teacher 9

<sup>358</sup> High school teacher 3

<sup>359</sup> National teacher 2

the past”<sup>360</sup> With this statement, genocide education in this context has always seemed unlikely.

Politics in general are sensitive issues in Cambodia. The policy-makers have effectively created a political landscape or environment where criticism can be dangerous. People who openly criticize the government have ended up in jail, missing or dead.<sup>361</sup> The national media is heavily influenced by the policy-makers, and events such as people being sent to prison are likely to be framed in a way to suit the government. A recent event of relevance, as it happened simultaneously as the interviews, was the conviction of independent radio station owner Mam Sonando. “He was sentenced to 20 years in prison this morning by Phnom Penh Municipal Court on charges related to stoking a so-called secessionist movement in Kratie province.”<sup>362</sup> He has long angered the government by broadcasting Khmer-language news from US funded Radio Free Asia and hosting call-in shows where average Cambodians vent against corruption and abuses. Facing trumped-up charges publicly endorsed by Hun Sen of participating in a secession movement, Mr. Sonando showed considerable courage and returned from Paris to stand trial. On Oct. 1, a Phnom Penh court sentenced him to 20 years in prison—essentially a life sentence for a 71-year-old.<sup>363</sup>

When people are missing, friends and family are bound to find out. And when people disappear for no obvious reason, rumours will eventually start flowing. One of the teachers expressed concerns about people complaining on politics end up missing or dead, without any reason and you do not know why.<sup>364</sup> Deliberate or not, this is arguably an effective way of creating fear among a population and also creating impotency.

Given the fact the Prime Minister and also some of his ministers served as officers in the Khmer Rouge<sup>365</sup>, it is remarkable that the topic of Democratic Kampuchea being included in the national textbook for year 9 and 12. Understanding history and historical processes require a fair knowledge of social, political, economical and cultural aspects. This topic in history is sensitive and controversial in many ways and there is bound to be some major challenges to conveying this properly.

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<sup>360</sup> Linton, p 84

<sup>361</sup> HRW report: 3

<sup>362</sup> Article in Phnom Penh Post: <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/index.php/2012100159018/National-news/activist-mam-sonando-gets-20-years.html>

<sup>363</sup> HRW article: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/18/speak-truth-cambodias-dictator>

<sup>364</sup> High school teacher 7

<sup>365</sup> HRW report: 13

Oppression from the authorities is the environment in which most Cambodians live their daily life. Present is a risk of being portrayed as a political opponent. One of the interviewed teachers explained that a friend had breakfast at a restaurant with her family, and they were discussing politics. Suddenly some guys came and took away the husband, who ended up in jail for 4-5 years. The woman was unable to visit her husband in jail, because visiting him would involve bribing five people just to see his face, and she could not afford it.<sup>366</sup> There is, however, one occupation where this risk severely increased. Teachers in general and specifically history teachers run the risk of being labelled a political opponent. The man who was arrested at the restaurant was what the interviewee describes as an outspoken teacher.<sup>367</sup> The risk of being portrayed as a political opponent has probably increased a lot after the 2011 edition of the national textbook, because this is the first textbook in a while to have a considerable amount of information about the Khmer Rouge genocide.<sup>368</sup> The topic of Democratic Kampuchea is indeed sensitive and controversial, but when asked whether they wanted to teach it, 11 out of 12 teachers said that they thought these lessons were particularly important. One big problem arises when it comes to the question of how to teach it. In order to cope better with potential problems in the classroom, all the teachers in the interviews have received special training by DC-Cam on the subject matter. The teachers also have an extensive education in history, and during the interviews, it was hard to question their competence as history teachers. The problem is that they are afraid. They are afraid of talking to researchers and they are afraid of saying something politically wrong in their classrooms. Accordingly, the majority of them just teach the students exactly what the national textbook in history says. They sometime bring additional material to class, but never anything that can jeopardize them.<sup>369</sup> According to the teachers, there are no articulated or official guidelines from the Ministry of Education on how to teach this topic, but they all spoke about an artificial line which they did not dare to cross. The teachers probably have different perceptions on where exactly this line goes, but they revealed that they are very reluctant to talk about politics in their classes, because it concerns the authorities today. If crossing this artificial line, they run the risk of being portrayed as a political opponent.<sup>370</sup> One student with family connected to the government could be enough to get them in trouble. The rise of social

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<sup>366</sup> High school teacher 9

<sup>367</sup> High school teacher 9

<sup>368</sup> High-school teacher 1

<sup>369</sup> High-school teacher 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

<sup>370</sup> High-school teacher 1

media has substantially increased the potential audience of high-school students, and the teachers feel that this is dangerous for them. If the students write: “Today history teacher said this or that”, then the potential audience, or people being aware of this, is very high, and the risk of someone of political importance picking this up is quite big.<sup>371</sup>

All of the teachers expressed a concern about saying something wrong in the classroom, and they have a genuine fear that something could happen to them if they did. When asked about what is over the line, one answered: “Mostly it is like teachers not teaching exactly what the Ministry of Education asks them to. For example, some could have been teaching too far into the political aspects and what politics is nowadays and in the trial. That could be to go over the line, because we should not include what is happening nowadays....One other way could be like saying: who started that revolution in the Pol Pot regime, which country etc. That could really affect the government”<sup>372</sup>

When asked about possible punishment, many of them were reluctant to answer. What they fear is different punishments with a big difference in severity depending on the offence. One thing is that they receive less hours from the Ministry of Education. Meaning, that they are not paid for the full amount hours as needed to get through the whole curriculum.<sup>373</sup>

Arguably, receiving less pay is not the cruelest type of punishment, but given the fact that the teachers are very underpaid, this could result in a big financial issue for the teacher.

Especially in the countryside where teachers mostly just have one job, while some teachers in Phnom Penh have two or three, due to availability of jobs and also higher prices.

Another thing that some of the teachers feared as strategy of dealing with minor offences, is to relocate the teacher against his will to a different place. For teachers in Phnom Penh this would mean going to distant places or far away from their home. This has not happened to any of the interviewees, but one gave example of a college.<sup>374</sup>

They also feared that the Ministry of Education could label them as a rebel and fire them or preventing them from ever building a career in educational system in Cambodia.<sup>375</sup>

Most of the teachers thought that talking about politics in their classes would be very damaging to their careers, but only a few went beyond that. Some of them did, however, express that what they were most afraid of was saying something wrong and then ending up in

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<sup>371</sup> High school teacher 3

<sup>372</sup> High school teacher 2

<sup>373</sup> High school teacher 9

<sup>374</sup> High school teacher 2

<sup>375</sup> High school teacher 5

a trial facing a jury.<sup>376</sup> Another was just simply afraid of ending up in jail.<sup>377</sup> This is highly understandable when looking at the website of Transparency International clearly stating the public opinion that the judiciary is the institution perceived to be most affected by corruption.<sup>378</sup>

The result of their fear is that they try to do what is best for themselves and their career. Despite having both the competence and social confidence to convey this topic in a convincing manner, they still just teach at a fraction of what they have at their disposal. In some cases, teaching historical errors deliberately to the students, just because they are written in the textbook.<sup>379</sup> Because of the ongoing trial, the topic of Democratic Kampuchea is one that students have a special interest in, and they also ask a lot of questions in order to understand it better. The problem with these questions is that they are quite often of a political nature and the teachers do what they can to avoid answering them. Sometimes they tell the students that can not answer it because of political reasons, but mostly they just prompt them to figure out on their own. One strategy applied is to inform the student before class that they will not talk about politics.<sup>380</sup> They agreed that this is not the ideal way of learning new material, but at the same time they have to consider their own life and their own career. 8 of the 12 high school teachers are survivors of the Khmer Rouge period. They have first hand experience of this regime. Imagining the things these people have gone through is almost impossible to conceive for an outsider. Their survival strategies are, however, easier to comprehend. The Khmer Rouge created a whole society of people who did not dare to speak, but only to do their work the best way they could in silence. Never say anything about anyone. Contextualising the past of the interviewed teachers and what they have experienced, serves to a greater understanding on how they act in the present. They were hesitant of going to a meeting with a stranger, they were also very nervous during interviews and they did not want to speak about politics. After engaging in political matters during an interview, one of the teachers said: “Interpreter: He just wants to make sure now ready to go into a bit more politics. He is kind of nervous if the, this story is getting out”. He was informed in advance that the interviewed was confidential, but still expressed a concern to get a reassurance before

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<sup>376</sup> High-school teacher 7, 12

<sup>377</sup> High school teacher: 4

<sup>378</sup> [http://www.transparency.org/country#KHM\\_PublicOpinion](http://www.transparency.org/country#KHM_PublicOpinion)

<sup>379</sup> High school teacher 1

<sup>380</sup> High school teacher 4,9

indulging further into discussions. In the classroom, the national textbook provides some sort of safe line for them, and most of them will only use this in their teaching.

#### 6.3.4 Desired skills and features of history

As established earlier, the national textbook in history is crucial to how this topic matter is conveyed in Cambodian High-school classrooms. One feature of this textbook is that it states the objectives of each chapter. In national textbook for grade 12, the objectives are articulated in the following manner:

“Lesson 4: Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)

After studying this lesson, students can:

- See the bad examples and remember the bad experience that humanity should avoid.
- Describe the tragic of Cambodian people and the overthrow of Democratic Kampuchea Regime
- Not follow the example of inhumane acts of destroying the nation and the people of Democratic Kampuchea Regime.<sup>381</sup>

In addition to the objectives stated in the textbook, the interviewed teachers revealed additional skills and features desirable for their students. The topic of Democratic Kampuchea has the potential for critical thinking, analytical skills, reconciliation and a mental state of mind favouring a peace culture.<sup>382</sup> Critical thinking and analytical skills serves as universal skills that can be obtained in the history subject and can then be applied to other subjects or indeed their daily life.<sup>383</sup> Simultaneously, reconciliation and a state of mind favouring a peace culture refer to mental processes and development of historical consciousness. The desired skill does, however, encounter the paradox of critical thinking in an authoritarian environment. You can think as critical as you want, as long as you carefully select what to be critical about.

Ideally, acquiring analytical skills should enable students to detect and analyse historical processes. But when teaching about Democratic Kampuchea, the controversial political aspects are more or less left out, leaving the students with a complex task of seeing causality in an inauspicious presentation of history.

#### 6.3.5 Exam

Students encounter National exams in grade 9 and grade 12. My interviews are with grade 12 teachers and their remarks are about the grade 12 national exam.

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<sup>381</sup> Translated chapter 4 of National grade 12 textbook in history: p 1

<sup>382</sup> DC-Cam staff 1,2

<sup>383</sup> National teacher 1

The national exam is not unique to the history subject. In fact, the result they get on the national exam is a combination of several different subjects such as English, Khmer, Science, Math etc. Accordingly, a bad result in one of them will lower your total exam score.

When asked about preparing students for the national exam, the teachers mentioned textbook errors to be a slight problem. One of the teachers pointed out places where the textbook is historically incorrect, resulting in the “historical correct” answer in the exam to actually be incorrect.<sup>384</sup>

The biggest problem, however, was for the students to remember dates and location of events, as this is what the exam usually asks about. This means that there is a huge gap between the skills that the teachers want to give their students and is actually being tested in the National exams.<sup>385</sup>

Questions about the exams revealed yet another problem for the history subject in Cambodia. In Cambodia and perhaps especially Phnom Penh, the incentives of doing well in history are restrained by the limited career possibilities that the history subject provides. The same things can be identified in western societies, but it is especially applicable in a developing country. Among students, English, Science and business administration are the key to having a good career. Majoring in history will very often lead to a career in educational institutions which has a comparatively low salary.

When asked about the results of the exams, many of the teachers started smiling. Evidently, cheating at the exam is very common in Cambodia. When asked about how many students who cheat, one interviewed teacher provided a number between 95 to 99 %, and when asked about how many teachers who take bribe, he said almost 100%.<sup>386</sup> They were less certain about cheating in other subjects. During the field-study, there was no way to quantify the number of people cheating at the exam, but no one ever denied or tried to understate this dimension, and DC-Cam also confirmed how widespread this cheating is.<sup>387</sup>

There are several methods of cheating at the national exam. First and foremost, there are people at the Ministry of Education who create this exam, and there are probably also even more people who have access to the exam paper. According to the interviewees, the exam questions are always leaked prior to the exam.<sup>388</sup> This raises questions whether there are some

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<sup>384</sup> High school teacher 1

<sup>385</sup> High-school teacher 2, 10

<sup>386</sup> High school teacher 6

<sup>387</sup> DC-Cam staff 1 and 2

<sup>388</sup> High school teacher 12



at the Ministry of Education making a decent amount of money selling these exam sheets? Most likely, yes.

How these documents are leaked and to who is a difficult question to answer, but arguably people with access to money will also have access to the exam questions.

In this setting, some of the teachers act opportunistic. They receive money from the students and then look the other way when they cheat. They can also demand money from students if they catch them cheating. One of the teachers interviewed also expressed fear of violence from the students if the teachers should refuse them to cheat.<sup>389</sup>

The attempt to cope with the cheating has so far been a failure. The exam is regarded as quite easy by the interviewed teachers. They also indicate that heavy cheating is taking place; thus the good results that students achieve on the history part of the national exam is not a big surprise.<sup>390</sup> According to one of the teachers: “interpreter: the Ministry of Education has sort of their own way to fix this to make the students pass more”. Consequently, any statistics presented by the Ministry of Education will indicate that history education is superbly managed and that they are achieving great results. This will show that Cambodian education is taking vital steps towards fulfilling United Nations goal for education in developing countries, which is ensuring that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.<sup>391</sup>

This is a huge problem for the history subject, but also the whole educational system.

Specifically damaging to the history subject because of its limitations with regards to career opportunities. An important aspect is the incentives that students have for doing well in this subject. Why should they motivate themselves to hard work and intensive study when they can just pay the teacher to get the best result? Result wise, hard work can never beat cheating, and it must be a huge blow to the motivation of students. The students with wealthy parents will do well at school, while the less fortunate will never be able to get the same results in an honest manner.

#### 6.4 Interviews with DC-Cam staff

These interviews were done during the final days of the field trip, and the idea was to both discuss and confirm some of the findings from interviews with teachers.

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<sup>389</sup> High-school teacher 6

<sup>390</sup> High school teacher 10

<sup>391</sup> United Nations millenium goals: [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG\\_FS\\_2\\_EN.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_FS_2_EN.pdf)

There is a connection between DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education, in the sense that they cooperate with each other. The people at DC-Cam eagerly explained and discussed things related to genocide education, but when describing the relationship with Ministry of Education, there was need for confidentiality.<sup>392</sup> On request of the interviewees, their names will be held confidential.

One problem is that high school teachers seem to neglect DC-Cam's desired way of teaching, and the staff agreed to this. An impression from earlier interviews was that the material provided by DC-Cam is not widely used in Cambodian classrooms. DC-Cam confirmed that this is a big challenge, because the allotted time for history teaching is limited to 1 or 2 hours per week by the Ministry of Education.<sup>393</sup>

Another topic subject for debate was the fact that teachers are afraid of saying something wrong, and DC-Cam seems to share that impression<sup>394</sup>, though stressing unless they try to manipulate the "truth", they can still teach based on the facts written in Dy's textbook.<sup>395</sup>

Some of the workshops experienced problems with regards to older and younger participants. The older ones had personal experiences from the regime, while the younger ones had problems grasping the complexity of Democratic Kampuchea. As a didactical consideration, DC-Cam started re-arranging the work shops, so that groups would consist of people of all ages, so that they can learn from each other.<sup>396</sup>

They were asked many questions on different challenges experienced along the way of the 'Genocide Education Project', and in many instances it boils down to political resistance. DC-Cam aims to educate the younger generation about the Khmer Rouge genocide. In order to do so, they meet obstacles of economic, social, pedagogical and political nature. The economical obstacle is solved through international funding; they have addressed teacher's competence and trying to change the methodology in teaching. What DC-Cam does is that they address other obstacles in order to influence the biggest one, which is political will.<sup>397</sup>

The other obstacles are often articulated by the political one, focusing on the problems in teaching this. They do not directly say to DC-Cam that they no longer support teaching of DK history; they rather argue and focus on other obstacles.<sup>398</sup> The political goal behind allowing

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<sup>392</sup> DC-Cam staff 1

<sup>393</sup> DC-Cam staff 2

<sup>394</sup> DC-Cam staff 2

<sup>395</sup> DC-Cam staff 2

<sup>396</sup> DC- Cam staff 2

<sup>397</sup> DC-Cam staff 1-2

<sup>398</sup> DC-Cam staff 1

DC-Cam's textbook to be published was that the CPP wanted their victory to be recorded and remembered, because this at some point fitted their political agenda<sup>399</sup>

Although, being pleased with what 'Genocide Education Project' has achieved within the history subject, they also acknowledged present limitations and they gave indications of a future wider approach for it.<sup>400</sup> They already have a "teaching platform" that they can use outside the history subject and seminars for police officers and the military has already started. They also discussed the possibility of penetrating into other school subjects as well.<sup>401</sup> The interviews with people at DC-Cam are important, because they confirm many of the findings from the interviews with teachers. The way they cooperate with the government and Ministry of Education is an important mean to complete the aim of the 'Genocide Education Project' and this is something that will be brought up again in the conclusion.

### 6.5 Assessing the findings

The main objective of this field study was to investigate how the topic of Democratic Kampuchea is conveyed to Cambodian students, and in doing so, highlighting how some of the aims of the 'Genocide Education Project' are fulfilled in Cambodian schools. There are many didactical considerations behind this project, and as it turns out, there are also considerable didactical considerations to be made for the teachers as well. Stradling's theory of sensitive and controversial issues, underlines that such issues are not limited to the students, they are applicable to teachers as well.<sup>402</sup> Some of the strategies outlined by Stradling to handle sensitive issues in the classroom can be identified in the interviewed teachers, although in a slightly different form. The distancing strategy outlined by Stradling, focuses on taking the heat out of situations by breaking off to examine analogies and parallels, or by going further back in time to trace the history of the issue under discussion.<sup>403</sup> The exploratory strategy prompts the student to dig deeper into the material and explore the wider implications of controversial and sensitive issues over time.<sup>404</sup> Teachers apply these to some extent by either not answering political questions or by prompting students to find out on their own.

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<sup>399</sup> DC-Cam staff 1

<sup>400</sup> DC-Cam staff 1-2

<sup>401</sup> DC-Cam staff 1

<sup>402</sup> Stradling: 100

<sup>403</sup> Stradling: 102

<sup>404</sup> Stradling: 103

The interviewed high-school teachers all had a considerable background in academic history, and they had also attended DC-Cams workshops. The investigation revealed substantial restrictions on the teacher, resulting in many of them teaching straightforward from the national textbook in history. This way of teaching does not demand very much with regards to teacher competence, and the interviewees seemed almost overqualified.

The reason for their teaching approach is that history teachers are afraid of being labelled as political opponents. Being a political opponent is not desirable in an authoritarian society infamous for impunity and human rights abuse, resulting in the teachers adapting a “staying safe mentality”.

The artificial line concerning controversies could not be identified in issues that are more emotionally sensitive. Talking to much about politics could get you in trouble, while talking about personal experiences was more like therapy for them.

The history teachers are caught between the Ministry of Education and DC-Cam’s approach to teaching this topic. Many of the teachers would agree that DC-Cam’s approach is the favourable one, but that does not necessarily mean that they will use it in their own classes.

There is a gap between the perceived best way of teaching and how they actual teach.

The teachers identified certain skills and features of history which are desirable to transmit to the students, but these skills and features are not tested or measured properly at the exam.

Not having a historical record and omissions of this topic from history curriculum for so long has given fertile grounds for myths to appear. Teachers encounter both myths and students having problems acknowledging this part of history.

Being an underpaid group in a corrupt society, give some teachers incentives to find alternative income. Some of them have two or three jobs, but more importantly, they receive money from students if allowing them to cheat on the national exam.

This creates a problem for the history subject. Students are graduating without necessarily having the knowledge or skills expected of them, and the measurements of desirable skills and functions of history are unreliable.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusions**

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate didactical processes in post-conflict Cambodian history teaching. The primary research question is: *What are the aims of the Genocide Education Project, and by what means are they fulfilled?* The conclusion will first

address the secondary research questions in light of traces found in the source material, before answering the primary one.

It will first clarify how the teaching material deals with the concept of truth in sensitive and controversial issues, recognized reconciliation strategies, how teacher competence is addressed, which add all up to didactical considerations that has been made on how to convey history.

### 7.1 Concept of truth

Before being published, the textbook underwent a process of documentation. This process adds credibility to the historical facts, which then embodies a “historical truth”. The nature of the “historical truth” seems to be determined by its potential to arouse controversy. When dealing with potential controversy, the material keeps information at a level where there is no way of questioning its credibility. The textbook sticks to giving “observed truths” when treating controversies, while it simultaneously gives more “explained truths” when treating sensitivities. A purpose of the whole ‘genocide education project’ is to challenge both lack of knowledge and existing myths in society. The truth embodied in the textbook serves the purpose of filling a knowledge gap and contradicting myths, while it simultaneously does not compromise or affect anyone in contemporary Cambodia. Controversy is generally subjective, because it affects a group of people in particular.

In the virtue of being a historical narrative rather than a discourse, historical meaning is established implicitly between the lines of the text. This gives the presentation truth credentials, while simultaneously creating a historical distance which will not arouse controversy.

Embodying a “historical truth” is one thing, while conveying them in a classroom is another. Historical facts create a platform, in which, complex cognitive processes can take place. The guidebook for teachers endorses methodology where such complex cognitive processes can take place, but not for all lessons. It does not allow students to apply complex cognitive skills when addressing possible controversies in chapter 11 of the textbook. Ultimately, there has been made some didactical considerations with regards to contemporary Cambodian politics when establishing and conveying “historical truths”.

### 7.1 Reconciliation and peace-building

Having a historical account that everyone can agree upon is in itself a vital step towards reconciliation. On this note, the truth embodying in the textbook brings a feature of

reconciliation. Ascribing guilt and victimhood is a very delicate task, because this has the potential of arousing anger and hatred towards the perpetrators. A feature of the textbook is that it is very careful about using language that could be offensive to groups, which could indicate that they are more responsible than others. In the textbook, guilt generally operates at a macro level, while victimhood appears on both macro and micro level. Acknowledging the suffering of both individuals and whole society is one reconciliation feature that the ‘Genocide Education Project’ has. By the virtue of being implemented in high schools, reconciliation is not subjectively limited to reconciling individuals who experienced the Khmer Rouge genocide; it also appears on a collective level. On a collective level the peace-building properties of reconciliation are most evident in avoiding controversy that can disrupt the peace. Fractions in Cambodian society continued to fight each other continuously after the fall of Democratic Kampuchea, and fear of new unease is always present. Individual perceptions of what the reconciliation term is, what it means for citizens and how to get there, do not necessarily concur with what the state understands it to be.<sup>405</sup>

### 7.3 Teacher’s competence and challenges

The teacher’s guidebook pushes teachers and students in the direction of an analytical level. In theory this is a good thing, but there are some obstacles in the way. The teachers seem to be sympathetically tuned for the workshops, but the combination of both new knowledge and methodology makes it complicated for them. The workshops give a contour of a teacher role, where they are faced with the possibility of jeopardizing their reputation and authority as teachers. The student-centred pedagogy, which demands more from them, is in direct conflict with the traditional Cambodian pedagogy. It could expose them by putting them in a situation where it becomes clear that they could be wrong about things. This is closely linked to the questions that occur both in the work shop and Cambodian classrooms.

Many of the properties of the textbook are appealing for the teachers. Despite the fact that it does not offer advanced learning on its own, the content is still very comprehensible and accessible for them. It could easily be adapted to more traditional pedagogy. The fact that it is approved by the Ministry of Education does also make it more attractive. The teachers encountered in the field-study had real concerns about addressing political issues, and the national textbook provided some sort of a safe-line for them. Dy’s textbook therefore serves mostly as a reference and resource to complement the national textbook.

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<sup>405</sup> Linton : 67

#### 7.4 Aims and means of the ‘Genocide Education Project’

Removing the topic of Democratic Kampuchea from curriculum indicates that there is a lot of resistance and unwillingness from the government in conveying this in schools. The emergence of the Tribunal trial has brought a lot of international attention towards Cambodia. Since the government is ultimately in charge and working closely with this project, one has to assume that they also have some aims before allowing the textbook to be published. In her study, Ahonen finds that political leaders tend to favour master narratives and history education is therefore subjected to memory politics.<sup>406</sup> The historical record serves as a credible narrative that contradicts social memory and myths that are negative towards the authorities, and that gives them an incentive to accept it. Simultaneously, they keep a tight control of society, which prevents escalation of political discussions. The ‘Genocide Education Project’ gives Cambodian authorities “good-will” from the international society, without having to spend too much money on it.

The different aims of the government and DC-Cam do not necessarily contradict each other. DC-Cam on the other hand, has highly idealistic aims for the ‘Genocide Education Project’. They want to the historical narrative to educate the Cambodian people, creating a collective memory that embraces reconciliation. Collective memory is not limited to the history subject. Observations during this study indicate that this is not necessarily limited to Cambodian High School, but has a much wider approach. Pragmatism in dealing with the many challenges in introduces new arenas in which genocide education can take place.

In essence, the aims of the project are first and foremost fulfilled by the means of creating a credible historical narrative that the authorities can accept and the society can comprehend and make use of. The guidebook serves as a mean of conveying this historical narrative, while the workshops serves as a mean of educating teachers competent to convey it in such a manner that the aims are fulfilled. In the virtue of being an ongoing process, the means are adjusted along the way.

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<sup>406</sup> Ahonen: 23

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