

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA FROM 1979 TO 2008

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Kingdom of Cambodia is one of the oldest states in Southeast Asia and it is also a member of ASEAN, the economic grouping of Southeast Asian Nation, since late twentieth century. Location of Cambodia is in the tenth and fifteenth north latitudes and between the hundred-second and the hundred-eighth east longitudes. Cambodia shares a long border with Vietnam in the east, Thailand in the northwest, Laos People's Democratic Republic in the north and the gulf of Thailand in the southwest. Most of the country consists of a low-lying alluvial plain that occupies the central part of the country. Administratively, there are several types of administrative divisions of Cambodia. The country is divided into twenty-three provinces (*khaet*) and one capital city which is equal to province-level municipality (*Reachteany*). Provinces are further subdivided into districts (*sröök*), which are divided into communes (*khum*), then further divided into villages (*phum*). The municipality is divided into sections (*khan*), which are divided into quarters (*sangkat*), and further divided into groups (*krom*).

Within long history from the innate territory, Cambodia just had continuously injured in the more than two recent decades of civil war. However, before and after the national reconciliation 1991 under the support of the United Nations Organization, Cambodia has been recognized with its land area of 181.035 square kilometers. The country, at the present time, has a population of over 14 millions.

In the time of civil war, the heaviest tragedy the people remember was "The Genocide Crime" in the "Dark Time" which was started from 17 April 1975 and ended at the Liberation Day of 7 January 1979.

The Dark Time had trampled Cambodian society as a whole. More than 3 Million people had been killed; the rest of less than 4 Million had been all victims of human right abuse such as torture and abusive labor.

The Liberation day (7 January 1979) led by the Kampuchea United Front for National Salvation, brought back freedom of traveling, freedom to association, freedom to belief, freedom to life, freedom of marriages, and freedom to other basic demands.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

From 1979 up to 2008, the Ministry of Education has determined the improvement of quality of Education through the reforms of Education System, School Curriculum, Textbooks and the modification of the Teaching-Learning Approach.

Obviously, there are 3 main reforms on Education System have been conducted as the following:

- From 1979 – 1986, the Education System was introduced 10 years (4+3+3) (4 years of Primary Education + 3 years of Lower Secondary School + 3 years of Upper Secondary School).
- From 1986 – 1996 the Education System was revised into of 11 years (5+3+3).

- From 1996 up to the present, Cambodia implements a system of 12 years of general education consisting of six years of primary, three years of lower secondary and three years of upper secondary education (6+3+3). Basic education covers the first nine years of schooling and it is intended to meet basic learning needs and also to instill lifelong learning skills that will lay the foundation on which continuous learning can be based.

At the mean times, Teaching–Learning Approach has been modified from Teacher Centered to Student Centered.

SCHOOLING SYSTEM

The current schooling system is:

Pre- School

- Lower Step (for children of 3 years old)
- Medium Step (for children of 4 years old)
- High Step (for children of 5 years old)

9 years basic education

Primary School

There are 6 grade levels namely

- Grade 1 (for children of 6 years old)
- Grade 2 (for children of 7 years old)
- Grade 3 (for children of 8 years old)
- Grade 4 (for children of 9 years old)
- Grade 5 (for children of 10 years old)
- Grade 6 (for children of 11 years old)

Lower Secondary School

There are 3 grade levels namely:

- Grade 7 (for children of 12 years old)
- Grade 8 (for children of 13 years old)
- Grade 9 (for children of 14 years old) will be passed by exam

Upper Secondary Education

In Upper Secondary School, there are 3 grade levels namely:

- Grade 10 (for children of 15 years old)
- Grade 11 (for children of 16 years old)

- Grade 12 (for children of 17 years old) will be passed by exam

Higher Education

Schooling of post secondary education and higher education or university takes from 4 to 7 years for the children aged from 18 years old.

Selected Education Indicators 2005-2006

Educational Information

Description	Pre-School	Primary	Lower Secondary	Basic Education	Upper Secondary	Total
Schools	1,429	6,277	670	6,947	252	8,628
Classes	2,413	61,901	11,783	73,684	3,996	80,098
Teachers	2,708	50,378	18,579	68,957	6,941	78,606
Students	75,669	2,558,467	588,333	3,146,800	204,925	3,427,394

Pupil-Teacher ratio

Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary
50.8	31.7	29.5

Pupil-Class Ratio

Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary
41.3	49.7	51.3

BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM

This section sets out a new policy for the delivery of the Basic Education Curriculum in Cambodia within the framework provided by the *Education for All National Plan 2003-2015*. It sets out the aims and structure of the Grades1-9 curriculum, including hours of instruction.

The detailed content of the curriculum for *Basic Education* is followed:

The purpose of the Basic Education Curriculum is to contribute to the achievement of the aims of schooling in order that students can further their studies at the upper grades, participate in the vocational training or to participate in social life by ensuring that every student has acquired:

- knowledge of Khmer language and mathematics
- knowledge of the national identity;
- an understanding of morality and civic responsibilities;
- the every day life skills the enable participation in their local community life and Cambodian society;
- a basic understanding of the natural world and of scientific principles and

- communicative competence in a foreign language

GRADES 1-3

The purpose of the basic education (Grades 1-3) Curriculum is to ensure that every child has a strong foundation in literacy and Mathematics and that they develop their health, physical appearance, moral understanding, learning skills and life skills.

The National Curriculum in Grades 1-3 comprises the following subjects with the indicated amount of time allocated to each subject in which there are 40 minutes per period.

SUBJECTS	Hours taught per week
Khmer	13
Mathematics	7
Science & Social studies(incl. Art Education	3
Physical and health education	
Sub Total	25
Local Life Skills Program (LLSP)	2-5
GRAND TOTAL	27-30

Art education (songs, drawing, dance, music...) integrated into science and social studies.

The purpose of the basic education primary school (Grades 4-6) curriculum is to expand and consolidate students' knowledge and understanding of Khmer language, Mathematics, learning skills, life skills, moral, and personal development that will enable them to pursue life-long learning and introduce students to content in the areas of Science and Social studies.

The National Curriculum in Grades 4-6 comprises the following subjects with the indicated amount of time allocated to each subject in which there are 40 minutes per period.

SUBJECTS	Hours taught per week	
	Grade 4	Grade 5-6
Khmer	8	10
Mathematics	6	6
Science	4	3
Social studies (incl. Art education)	5	4
Physical and health education	2	2
Sub Total	25	25
Local Life Skills Program (LLSP)	2-5	2-5
GRAND TOTAL	27-30	27-30

Art education (songs, drawing, dance, music...) is include in social studies.

In Grades 5 and 6, foreign language is introduced to students according to school availability of local resources. For the first stage (2005-2009), the MoEYS encourages schools to offer foreign language using non-MoEYS resources in the LLSP time.

GRADES 7-9

The purpose of the basic education lower secondary school (Grades 7-9) curriculum is to provide all students with a breadth of knowledge, skills, Khmer language, Mathematics, Sciences, Social studies, Life skills, learning skills, life skills, vocational education, moral education and personal development necessary to enable them to contribute as productive members to the growth of Cambodian society and be able to further their studies at the upper grades, participate in other vocational training or to participate in social life.

Foreign languages are included as a compulsory subject for all students at lower Secondary

Pre-vocational life skills are taught as part of social studies and through the LLSP.

The National Curriculum in Grades 7-9 comprises the following subjects. Each learning period consists of 50 minutes teaching, with the indicated amount of time allocated to each subject.

SUBJECTS	Hours taught per week
Khmer	6
Mathematics	6
Social studies	6
Sciences	6
Foreign Languages	4
Physical and Health Education	2
TOTAL	30
LLSP (incl. Art education)	2-5
TOTAL	32-35

Students who have successfully completed the Basic Education will sit for the National Examination and be awarded of the Diploma of Basic Education.

Art education (songs, drawing, dance, music...) is included in the Local Life Skills Program.

POST BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM

This section sets out a new policy for the delivery of the Upper Secondary Curriculum in Cambodia within the framework provided by the *Education for All National Plan 2003-2015*. It sets out the aims and structure of the curriculum for Grades 10-12, including hours of instruction.

The detailed content of the curriculum will be set out in the *Upper Secondary Curriculum* documents.

The purpose of the Upper Secondary school curriculum is not only to expand and consolidate students' knowledge from the basic education but also to provide them opportunity for future orientation, that is, to have capacity to continue their studies at higher education or to specialize their studies or to participate in social life by ensuring that students have acquired:

- advanced knowledge of Khmer and mathematics;
- deep knowledge of the national identity;

- a more complex understand of morality and civic responsibilities;
- the every day life skills that enable participation in their local community life and Cambodian society;
- a board understanding of the natural world and of scientific principles and
- high communicative competence in foreign language .

In Grades 10-12, the teaching time is 50 minutes per period as in indicated in the below section.

GRADE 10

The purpose of the grade 10 curriculum is to expand and consolidate students' knowledge obtained from the Lower Secondary education. In addition, school must ensure the provision of a significant subject choice advice for students to study in grades 11 and 12. The career advice provision must start from the beginning of the school year.

In Grade10 students study the following subjects for the time allocation indicated

SUBJECTS	Hours taught per week
Khmer	6
Mathematics	6
Sciences	6
Social studies	6
Foreign Languages	4
Physical and Health Education and Sport	2
TOTAL	30
Local Life Skill Program (incl. Art education)	2-5
TOTAL	32-35

Art education (songs, drawing, dance, music...) is included in the Local Life Skill Program.

GRADES 11-12

The purpose of the grade 11-12 curriculum is to provide students with the opportunity for increased specialization through subject choice to develop a depth knowledge in particular subjects or take training-based vocational subjects in order to continue their study in higher education or to study vocational subjects or to participate in social life.

Students choose their program of study following the time allocation indicated from the subjects areas listed below.

COMPULSORY		Hours taught per week
KHMER LITERATURE		6hours
PHYSICAL, HEALTH AND SPORTS EDUCATION		2hours
FOREIGN LANGUAGE • Must choose one	English	4hours
	French	4hours
MATHEMATICS • Must choose one	Basic	4hours
	Advanced	8hours

ELECTIVES		Hours taught per week	
SCIENCES • May choose none, one, two, or three	Physics	4	hours
	Chemistry	4	hours
	Biology	4	hours
	Earth and Environmental studies	4h	
SOCIAL STUDIES • May choose none, one, two, or three	Morals/ Civics	4	hours
	History	4	hours
	Geography	4	hours
	Economics	4	hours
Elective Vocational Education Program (EVEP) May choose none, one, two, or three	ICT/ Technology	4	hours
	Accounting/Business Management	4	
	Local Vocational Technical Subjects	4	hours
	Tourism	4	hours
	Art Education(and other subjects)	4	
Students who choose Math (Basic) must choose 4 subjects from the Electives $\text{Total } 16 \text{ h} + (4 \times 4) = 32 \text{ hours per week}$			
Students who choose Math (Advanced) must choose 3 subjects from the Electives $\text{Total } 20 \text{ h} + (3 \times 4) = 32 \text{ hours per week}$			

Students study the same subjects in Grades 11 and 12

During the initial stage, the MoEYS will endeavor to support the Elective Vocational Education Program (EVEP). The Elective subjects offered by schools will, however, depend on students' choice, teacher and resource availability.

All students must take four compulsory subjects:

- Khmer Literature
- Mathematics (Basic or Advanced)
- Foreign Languages (English or French)
- Physical and Health Education and Sport

Students who choose the Basic Mathematics must choose four other subjects from the Electives subjects.

Students who choose the Advanced Mathematics must choose three other subjects from the Elective subjects.

They may choose none, one or two or three of the elective subjects from subject areas of the Sciences, Social Studies and EVEP.

The maximum number of subjects chosen by students is eight (8) for students who choose Basic Mathematics and seven (7) for those who choose Advanced Mathematics.

Students who have successfully completed the Upper Secondary Education will sit for the National Examination and be awarded of the Diploma of Upper Secondary Education.

Entrance to University and colleges is based on the grades achieved through the National Examination.

The grades achieved for each examined subject are report on a transcript of achievement attached to the Diploma of Upper Secondary Education. The Transcript of achievement also list the EVEC subjects completed and the assessment result achieved.

TEACHER TRAINING

With regard to the qualifications of the teaching staff in Cambodia, it has been reported that teachers are not highly qualified. Around 5 percent of the Cambodian teaching staff possesses only primary education; 60 percent possess lower secondary education; 29 percent possess upper secondary certificates and only 6 percent possess tertiary education. Except for upper secondary teachers who are required tertiary education, primary and lower secondary teachers are required only a few years of training to become teachers. Normally, primary teachers are recruited and trained at the Provincial Training Colleges (PTTCs) which are located in all provinces around the country except in the remote provinces. The Provincial Teacher Training Colleges offer two years programs. Lower secondary teachers are trained at the Regional Teachers Training Colleges (RTTCs) which are located in densely populated provinces. There are six Regional Teachers Training Colleges (RTTCs) in Cambodia which offer two year training programs. The basic requirement for admission to teacher training colleges is the completion of grade 12 but there are wide variations in admission procedures. There are also geographical variations because remote provinces face problems in attracting qualified students. Because the admission requirements for teacher are not very high, the curriculum for teacher training is academically based, where a large proportion of time is spent on upgrading the trainees' general knowledge as opposed to teaching professional skills. At primary level, teachers are trained to become multi-subject specialists while for secondary schools teachers they are trained to become single-subject specialists.

Upon completion of the training programs, graduates are nominated to be teachers and are sent directly into the classrooms. The deployment of new teachers is done centrally, normally by the personnel department through the provincial officer of education. Because of family-ties and salary condition, new teacher choose to be posted to nearby locations. This creates more problems because urban schools receive more teachers compared to the rural schools.

CONCLUSION

After three decades of civil war, Cambodian education has been progressing well from limited human resources to present rapid expansion of education which can be seen in the statistics produced such as the number of student enrolments, the number of school buildings and classrooms, the number of teachers and teaching staff. This output is reflecting efforts of the Government of Cambodia especially the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in rebuilding human resources and improving education quality and efficiency. However, continuing efforts to standardize Cambodian education system into the region and integration general learning competencies as implemented worldwide.