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DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA
Genocide Education in Cambodia
The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)"

Regional Pedagogical Training Center, Kandal Province

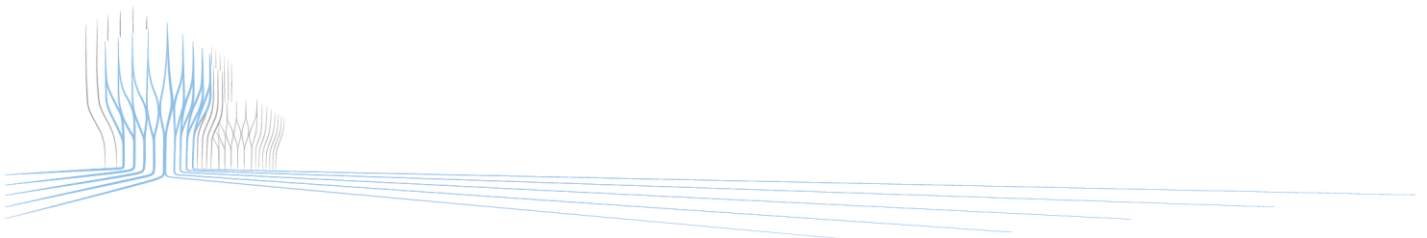
March 29-April 2, 2016

Day 2—March 30, 2016

Today's themes: The trainees focused on the Khmer Rouge's rise to power and the formation of the government of Democratic Kampuchea. It was also the first round of student teaching using the new methodology that they've learned in this training.

Today was the second day of the Pre-Service Teacher Training at the Kandal Province Pedagogical training center, which focused on practice teaching by the trainees and deepening their understanding of the history of the formation of the state in Democratic Kampuchea. The program opened again with an assembly, where a multimedia presentation was given to show the trainees the materials that they were given on flashdrives yesterday. They had digital copies of the teaching materials they were given, as well as other documents, revolutionary songs, images, and some video clips from the DK period. They then showed a movie clip about the Khmer Rouge that depicted KR leaders and soldiers visiting the countryside, meeting with the people, and lots of scenes of them greeting children in typical KR period clothes. Following the morning assembly, the students were off to their small groups to practice teaching.

The four classrooms were divided into three small groups each and split up for the students to practice teaching. This morning's classroom activity is to have the students practice teach about the material that they learned yesterday, using the techniques that they learned yesterday as well. This activity gives a quick turn around on the material and methods they just learned – requiring the students to take an active role in their learning. I was observing classroom 3 and went to see small group 3A. The first student has prepared his lesson following yesterday's example of the narratives



about forced transfers. He began by posting up the chapter title and objectives on the board before starting to teach. Everyone in the group was part of the lesson yesterday



Inside the classroom

on this material, giving the students some common ground from which to discuss each other's work. He pauses after introducing some of the objectives to give time for questions from peers. The other trainees are paying attention well and being very polite to each other, a good sign that the students want to help each other out in this group. The presentation is well organized and the students follow where

the lesson is heading. After the lesson, the trainees and trainer offered constructive feedback about the presentation. Each of the students will prepare and present a practice lesson based on the material and applying the new teaching method that they've learned the previous day. The students have been doing well; however, it seems like it could be helpful for students to vary the method or material: either teaching the previous day's lesson with a new method or using the method they just learned to teach different information so that they get practice in applying these tools to new materials.

After the student teaching ended for the morning, the second session was a return to the history lesson. Today's class focused on the Khmer Rouge's rise to power and the formation of the DK state. The MoEYS teacher started setting up the lesson focused on the DK government by sketching out the DK government. Cheng Hong, a trainer from



National Institute for Education (NIE) is a seasoned teacher who is clearly a captivating speaker. He sets up the lesson going through each of the components of the DK state, starting with explaining Angkar, the components of the DK government, and people who played key roles. While this history is dense, the students are engaged and interested in his lecture. Although the students start to get restless toward the end of the of the two-hour block, the trainers have been emphasizing a method throughout their sessions to give the students space to review what they already know, learn the new material for that lesson, and preview what they will be learning in upcoming classes. This has been useful to structure the lessons and reinforce what they've been learning. I also asked some of the trainees how the teaching methods they were learning were different from what they had already studied in school. One commented that he found the focus on different articles and documents (from the Civil Parties) has been very interesting. Another added that it was new for them to start the lesson with clear objectives stated for the class.

The afternoon sessions focused on pedagogy and teaching methodology, using the history lessons that the students learned in the morning. Today's method focuses on the students discussing, or making, a hypothetical survival kit that they would put bring with them if they were forced to evacuate their home during the DK period. In class today, the students first discussed the things they would include and then made a hypothetical kit. Instead of making a physical survival box, the students are writing down on paper what they would include which will be put into a class survival box. However, when the first student stands up to answer what she would include, one of the other students interjects 'shoes!' and starts laughing. The first student does answer, but other the students seem more interested in the guy making jokes. This quieted down and they participated in the activity, but it did raise the question of teaching difficult material to a diverse age range.

The training today concluded with more a second group of students preparing for their practice lessons later this week. In this group, the first student presented the survival box activity to her small group. As with the other lessons, she went over the objectives and then several directing questions. The students in this small group seemed more focused and took the activity more seriously, many of them said they would include

food or medicine. Faced with the question of how they would respond to their communities being overworked with little food, some said they would share what they had or try to take other food for their families. This reflected that the students did have a lot of sympathy for the situation that many people were forced into and the kinds of decisions that people needed to make during that time.

Comparing today's teaching methods with the ones taught yesterday raises an interesting question of the age group that these lessons are meant to target. From a pedagogical perspective, it would be very useful to know what age group these lessons are targeting, or if there were ways to adapt these lessons to appeal to students at different levels. For example, the survival kit activity today focused on a very big issue,



Inside the classroom

but it seemed like some of the students struggled to take it seriously. The end goal of the lesson – to discuss the effects of forced evacuations and ensuing difficult life conditions – is an important part of this history, but perhaps it needed to be approached in a more realistic way since some of the students seemed put off by the hypothetical. In contrast to yesterday's demonstrated teaching method, this kind of activity seems like it would be better for younger students. It makes sense to use this kind of tactile activity for younger students, it gives them something tangible to think about and to work through, as well as open the conversation with students' families about their own experiences. However, for older students, it seems like the hypothetical situation becomes too far off. Instead of focusing on critically engaging with history, as that had with other lessons, it seemed here they got caught up in the prompt and some were unwilling to take the activity seriously. In contrast, yesterday's



teaching method - engaging directly with testimony from Civil Parties was more difficult material but presented in a way that could be adapted to high school students as well as college students.

I also had the opportunity to speak with some of the trainees about their experiences with the training course. One explained that she joined the training because she wanted know the truth about Cambodian history. Another added on that she wanted to know more about history and methods to teach this history because she will have her own class in 2 to 3 years. She said she will use these methods to teach history in her future classroom. Another student added that the training is very short and there is a lot of information, he would like to have more time to learn about these issues. He said he is worried that teaching about the genocide might be difficult when he his own class, he might not have enough material because this training is the first time he has learned about the Khmer Rouge history.

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