

Right to Education in Cambodia: Community Level Research



A joint research initiative by



ភាពជាដៃគូអប់រំនៃអង្គការស្រាវជ្រាវអប់រំ
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Abbreviations

ASPBAE	:	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
CWDCC	:	Children's and Women's Development Center in Cambodia
CSEF	:	Civil Society Education Fund
CSES	:	Cambodian Socio Economic Survey
DOE	:	District Office of Education
EMIS	:	Education Management Information System
FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
KAPE	:	Kampuchean Action for Primary Education
KHR	:	Khmer Riel
LSS	:	Lower Seceondary School
MoEYS	:	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
NUT	:	National Union of Teachers
NER	:	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	:	Non-governmental Organization
NEP	:	NGO Education Partnership
NTFP	:	Non-Timber Forestry Product
POE	:	Provincial Office of Education
p/a	:	Per Annum
RTE	:	Right to Education
RUPP	:	Royal University of Phnom Penh
UN	:	United Nations
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WFP	:	World Food Program

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VSO is the world's leading international development charity that works through volunteers to fight poverty in developing countries. VSO has been working in Cambodia since 1991. VSO brings people together to share skills and knowledge to create lasting change. VSO volunteers work in whatever fields are necessary to fight the forces that keep people in poverty – from education and health through to helping people learn the skills to make a living.

UNESCO believes that peace must be established on the basis of humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity. UNESCO strives to build networks among nations that enable this kind of solidarity, by:

- Mobilizing for education: so that every child has access to quality education as a fundamental human right.
- Building intercultural understanding: through protection of heritage and support for cultural diversity.
- Pursuing scientific cooperation: such as early warning systems for tsunamis or trans-boundary water management agreements.
- Protecting freedom of expression: an essential condition for democracy, development and human dignity.

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) is the United Kingdom's largest union for qualified teachers. The NUT supports a number of campaigns that address international development issues, including VSO's Valuing Teachers campaign and the Global Campaign for Education. The NUT collaborates with unions and non-governmental organisations in the Global South on projects which aim to provide high-quality education for all children, safeguard the wellbeing and professionalism of teachers, and build the capacity of teachers' unions. This includes funding for short-term projects, commissioning research, and working in partnership with unions or civil society organisations on long-term development programmes.

The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) is a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals. It works towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, life-long adult education and learning. It strives to strengthen an Asia-Pacific movement to support community and people's organisations, national education coalitions, teachers unions, campaign networks, and other civil society groups and institutions in holding governments and the international donor community accountable in meeting education targets and commitments.

MISEREOR is the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation. For over 50 years MISEREOR has been committed to fighting poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America. MISEREOR's support is available to any human being in need – regardless of their religion, ethnicity or gender. MISEREOR believes in supporting initiatives driven and owned by the poor and the disadvantaged in accordance with the principle of help toward self-help. On the ground, projects are run by local organisations.

Executive Summary

This study of The Right to Education in Cambodia is part of a global project of UNESCO to review national legal and policy frameworks regarding the right to education. In the Asia-Pacific region, the project is coordinated by UNESCO Bangkok with studies conducted in Cambodia and Thailand in 2013.

NEP collaborated with VSO and UNESCO to conduct community-level research on children's experience of their Rights to Education (RTE) to identify successes and challenges in the implementation of policies related to these rights in basic education (grades 1 – 9). In Cambodia, people have a right to nine years of free education. Analysis followed the 4A's (Accessibility, Acceptability, Availability and Adaptability) framework developed by Profesor Katarina Tomaševski (former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education).

Research Method

The research was undertaken in 12 communes in three provinces - Rattanakiri, Siem Reap and Kampot. These communes are a mix of communes located in remote, rural and semi-urban areas. Data collection involved a total of 48 focus group discussions with parents of primary school students, parents of lower secondary school students, primary school students and lower secondary school students. Focus group discussions had between 8 and 12 people in them. We also conducted a total of 123 interviews with basic education teachers, children who have dropped out of school and children who have never been to school. Additionally, we organised a consultative workshop specifically with children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities, their respective parents, and representatives of NGOs (34 people in total).

A research advisory group consisted of six members representing Royal University of Phnom Penh, UNESCO Cambodia, VSO Cambodia, Action Aid and teachers association. The group members provided feedbacks and inputs at all key stages of research to make sure it meets the requirements of UNESCO and VSO in Cambodia.

An analysis of the current situation and existing evidence

Access to education

Official statistics from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) showed that the net enrolment rate (NER) in primary school (grades 1 – 6) was 97% in 2012-2013¹. However, statistics collected by other Government ministries indicate a primary NER of approximately 85%². Enrollment in lower secondary school (grades 7 – 9) remains a challenge as NER was only 37.8%³ in 2012/13. Moreover, the dropout rate at lower secondary level remained as high as 20% in 2011-2012⁴.

¹ Department of Planning (2013), *Education Statistics and Indicators, 2012-13*. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport: Phnom Penh

² The Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey reported a primary NER of 84.3% in 2012 and the Commune Database reported a primary NER of 87.9% in 2011. Both are compiled by the Ministry of Planning.

³ This figure were taken from a presentation given by Peter De Vries, then Head of Education Cambodia, UNICEF on 11th April 2013 at a meeting of the Education Sector Working Group..MoEYS did not report the 2012/13 NER for LSS in Education Statistics and Indicators, 2012/13. In 2011/12, they reported a LSS of 35.1%

⁴ Department of Planning (2013), *Education Statistics and Indicators, 2012-13*. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport: Phnom Penh

To increase access to education, MoEYS has built 345 new primary schools and 42 new lower secondary schools between 2009/10 and 2012/13 with about half of each being built in rural areas and half in urban areas⁵.

MoEYS, World Food Program (WFP) and NGOs have provided scholarships to improve accessibility and reduce school dropout, especially among vulnerable children. MoEYS provided scholarships worth \$45⁶ per year to 56,477 students in lower secondary schools. The dropout rates of scholarship students at grade 7 and 8 in 2012/13 were less than half of the nationwide drop-out rate in 2011-12, although there was no impact for grade 9⁷.

The WFP has been running scholarship programmes for almost 10 years. In the school year 2012-13, the programmes have covered 97,000 scholarship students (88,000 food, 9,000 cash). The cash scholarship programme provides \$50 per annum for children in grades 4 – 6 and the dropout rate was 2.37%, which is lower than the national dropout rate despite this being amongst the group of children that would be expected to have a higher than average dropout rate⁸.

A possible barrier to accessing education could be the existence of informal school fees. During previous NEP research⁹ 53% of student and 67% of parent respondents advised that they incurred costs for items that would expected to be the responsibility of schools and MoEYS as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Informal School Fees

Types of expense	Student responses: Mean average of expenditure (Riels)	Parent responses: Mean average of expenditure (Riels)
Teacher's learning materials/stationery	1400 per time	6870 per time
Bicycle parking fee	2860 per month	Data not returned
Examination fee	2300 per time	2500 per time
Extra tuition fee inside of school	12500 per month	12,480 per month
Extra tuition fee outside of school	18400 per month	16410 per month
Teacher's note	1800 per time	3090 per time
Teacher's fee	13200 per month	16200 per month
Appraisal record book	1200 per month	1100 per month
Present for Teacher	6800 per year	
Other expenses	1200 per time	6740 per time

⁵ Department of Planning (2013), *Education Statistics and Indicators, 2012-13*. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport: Phnom Penh

⁶ All dollars quoted are US dollars. 4000 Riels are worth approximately \$1.

⁷ Taken from a presentation called 'Scholarship Program for Secondary Education', delivered during the annual MoEYS retreat with development partners. 23rd to 25th January 2014.

⁸ World Food Programme, *Findings of a Rapid Assessment on New Cash Scholarships Pilot with AMK*. Unpublished

⁹ Ang, S. & Conochie, G. (2012). *Promoting Rights in Schools*. NEP. Phnom Penh

Quality of education

For this review, we have considered some indicators – repetition rate, teacher-to-student ratio, teacher educational background, incidence of pedagogy training and in-service training - to be indicators of educational quality.

The repetition rate in primary schools in 2012-13 was 5.3%, a decrease from 9% in 2009/10¹⁰ but still indicating that challenges persist. Cambodia's pupil-to-teacher ratio in primary school is 48:1, which is the 16th highest pupil-to-teacher ratio of 202 countries and the highest outside Africa that UNESCO has information for. UNESCO advises that a pupil-to-teacher ratio greater than 40:1 can indicate an overstretched workforce¹¹.

The number of primary teachers has actually fallen by 671 since 2008/09 due to more people leaving the profession than being recruited¹². This has forced MoEYS to implement methods – high pupil-to-teacher ratio in classes, teachers doing double shifts, multi-grade teaching and use of untrained contract teachers – to manage teacher shortages, which can all negatively impact on children's learning.

To enter the primary teaching profession now, candidates must have completed Grade 12. **However, only 54% of existing primary teachers have completed grade 12, and 3% have only completed primary school. Such low levels of education is likely to restrict their ability to handle their professional tasks and their concepts of pedagogy.**

Key Findings and Analysis

Availability and accessibility of education service

Parent groups in all provinces studied, reported that enrolment in school was an easy process and free of charge, with teachers or school directors helping to fill out the application forms in necessary cases. All respondent groups, including children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities and their parents said that access to education is easier than 5 years ago, primarily due to provision of more schools and teachers. However, children with disabilities said that they dropped out of school due to teachers lacking understanding of their disabilities and discrimination from peers.

¹⁰ Department of Planning (2013), *Education Statistics and Indicators, 2012-13*. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport: Phnom Penh

¹¹ Leng, T. & Conochie, G. (2013), *Every Child Needs a Qualified Teacher*. NEP, Phnom Penh.

¹² Ibid.

Table 2: Factors affecting access: (in order of frequency mentioned)

Parents	Students
Learning Materials (notebooks, pens)	Learning Materials (notebooks, pens)
Students having transport	Students having transport
Schools being close to students' homes	Schools being close to students' homes
Having enough teachers	Parental behavior and encouragement
Clean water and toilets	Teacher behavior – attendance, accepting fees, treatment of students
Students having enough money to spend at school	Teacher quality
Students having school uniforms	Students having school uniforms

Parents and children who had dropped out of school advised that there was often a lack of learning materials and that this was a cause of children dropping out of school. Students said that from their own experience a lack of learning materials made it difficult for them to regularly attend school, but did not cause drop out. The inability to purchase learning materials is linked to another challenge that many discussed – the lack of money to spend at school.

Nearly half of the children who had left school early advised that this was caused by being poor, and parents also frequently advised this (although not as much as distance to school/lack of transport). It seems that there are two considerations which affect poorer children:

- The child cannot afford to go to school because the child needs to work to earn money or to help parents.
- The child cannot afford to go to school because the child cannot afford to purchase things such as a bicycle or learning materials that are needed to access school.

Students most frequently cited this first consideration as a cause of dropping out of school but parents more frequently cited the second consideration as the problem (although the first was often mentioned too). Of children who left school early, more said that a lack of transport caused this than having to leave school to work with their family or in a paid job. When added to the remarks from these children about being unable to purchase learning materials, it appears that they agree with parents that it is the second cause that is more frequent. Thus, providing poorer children with scholarships could greatly enable them to attend school.

Students advised that a lack of transport was the biggest difficulty they faced in terms of regularly attending school, and schools being too far away were also highlighted frequently as being a barrier to attending school. However, students did not think that these were main

causes of leaving school early. Parents thought differently and identified distance and lack of transport as reasons for leaving school early more often than any other factor. Distance to school and lack of transport were more relevant in rural areas rather than in urban, and in relation to lower secondary schools more than primary schools.

Some students advised that there was a lack of teachers, as did parents. Some children who would be late getting to school often chose to miss school instead because they were scared of receiving a punishment. A small minority of students did mention that teachers could be violent. It is noteworthy that informal fees are being charged and can prevent children returning to school during the school year if they have been absent (e.g. at harvest time). However, it does not appear that parents, students or children out of school think that teacher shortage, quality or behaviour are the main reasons for children not attending school.

For students, much more important than teacher behaviour was student behaviour. Student groups mentioned that children being lazy or unable to learn anything were the second most common reason for children being outside of school – even more important than being far from school or lacking transport. The important role of children themselves was confirmed when most children who had left school before grade 9 said that it was their decision to drop out of school. These children said that they valued education but that other factors, such as lack of transport and learning materials, having to work or caring for siblings/ill parents caused them to think that they had to leave school. Parental behaviour was seen as being less important, although some students groups did mention the need for parental encouragement. A small minority of student and parent groups advised that parental violence towards children was preventing children from attending school regularly.

Starting grade 1 aged 6 year-old increases the chances of completing more grades. Only one of 22 children interviewed who had dropped out during primary school began school aged 6; half of children who left school at lower secondary level began school aged 6. If children start school older than age 6, they reach an age where they are more able to contribute at home or by working before they reach grade 9, therefore making the opportunity costs of staying in school higher. Half of those children who dropped out during primary school were aged 14-16 already.

Acceptability of education services

The vast majority of students and parents groups were satisfied with the quality of education. However, satisfaction must be considered in relation to expectations. If expectations of quality are very low, then a good quality of education is not required for people to be satisfied. **Two student groups said that they feel that they have a good quality of education because they can read and write. Nearly all children interviewed who had dropped out before grade 9 said that the quality of education they experienced was good, but only half said that they were numerate. It appears that expectations are limited to being able to read and write.** Additionally, parents of children

with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities in consultative workshop said that the quality of education is not good.

Most parents and students, except the group of children with disabilities, were satisfied with the quality of teachers in their school. When students who believed that they are receiving a good education were asked why this was so, the most common answer by far was they had a good teacher. However, one student group blamed a poor quality of education on poor teachers saying that teachers rarely explain lessons, write too much on the blackboard and do not use exercises as examples. Parents and students in Siem Reap and Rattanakiri raised concerns about the use of contract teachers, teachers doing double shifts and multi-grade teaching in their communities. Some in Siem Reap even said that teachers were having to teach two classes at the same time in different rooms. These practices can adversely impact the quality of education.

If students or parents were dissatisfied with teachers, it was more likely to do with the behaviour of teachers regarding absenteeism or collection of informal fees. Whilst most parents and students felt that all students were treated equally, there were six parent groups that said some teachers favored children who paid for extra classes or those whose parents gave money to the teachers to pass exams.

According to students, the second most influential factor affecting the quality of education was student behaviour; student willingness and ability to learn; and students supporting each other. Supporting this, the most common reason (given by five student groups) for students not keeping up with lessons was because of student indiscipline in class although the groups said that most students were committed to learning. Only four student groups blamed an inability to follow lessons on teachers not giving good explanations or considering slower learners.

Slightly more than half of the students groups said that they were able to follow the lessons of the teachers, and an important factor appeared to be whether students felt that they could ask teachers to give the explanation again or in a slightly different way.

Half of the student groups who identified textbooks and teaching materials as being important for quality education advised that there was a lack of these. **However, no student group mentioned textbooks/teaching materials as being the cause of them having a good, average or poor quality of education. Also, no student group advised that students could not keep up with the lessons because of a lack of textbooks or teaching materials.**

Adaptabilities of Education Service

Parents and students reported that children who are blind, deaf and/or mute, have epilepsy or an intellectual disability were mostly not attending school and schools have neither provided any support to get them to school nor assisted parents to provide education at home. Two of the main reasons that these types of children did not go to school were because the school do not have any facilities for these types of children and teachers could not adapt teaching methods to the needs of these children.

Parents and students said that it was more likely for children who are physically impaired or had limited hearing to attend school and receive support such as scholarships, bicycles or learning materials. In one Kampot school, visually impaired children have excelled at school due to the school making small adjustments such as enabling them to sit at the front of the class, providing large font textbooks and appropriate glasses. The school has been assisted by Krousar Thmey (an NGO) but other schools do not have that support and only 11 of 84 interviewed teachers advised that they had received training on inclusive education. **The lack of in-service training is compounded by the use of contract teachers who have not received pre-service training that could help them adapt their teaching for different students, including those from ethnic minority groups whose first language is not Khmer.**

Parents in Rattanakiri advised that often Khmer teachers could not speak the local language well enough to teach children in that language. Whereas if teaching in Khmer, students from ethnic minority groups did not understand the words the teachers used when giving explanations. Students advised that their lack of understanding of the in-depth meaning of Khmer words limits their ability to read and do homework. Regarding culture, parents believed that some Khmer teachers did not properly respect the culture of the ethnic minority or try to adapt their teaching to help students understand.

MoEYS with support from CARE and International Cooperation Cambodia are providing bilingual education in primary schools. Two parent groups in Rattanakiri were happy that their children had learned to read and write Khmer as a result of attending bilingual education.

Most parent and student groups and teachers said that the subjects currently in the curriculum are relevant to the needs of the children; citing their ability to read, write and count. Students said that the life skills lessons were useful to their daily life and home gardening could save them money by reducing consumption of vegetable from markets. However, ten student groups reported that they had not learned any skill that would be useful for them and/or family yet, which was a particular concern for children in lower secondary schools. Students and teachers have identified additional subjects that may be important to them such as learning to use computers and foreign languages. It is noteworthy that **no student group felt that they could propose what topics they wanted to learn during life-skill classes because they felt that they did not have the right to do this.**

Conclusions

Virtually everybody that we spoke to felt that accessing school now was easier than it was five years ago, and this included children with disabilities and their parents, and people from ethnic minority groups. This reflects undoubted progress that has been made in Cambodia, particularly in primary education, and should not be forgotten during discussions of remaining challenges.

The most common reason given by children for dropping out of school was poverty, which limits their ability to purchase bicycles and learning materials that enable them to access school. It also makes it more likely that they will choose to leave school to care for siblings, work with their parents or find a job. Students also thought that poverty was a main cause of drop out, although parents did to a lesser extent. It was noticeable that most of the children who had dropped out of school had started grade 1 older than age 6. Half of children who dropped out during primary school were aged 14-16 when they did, which is

an age that they become more able to work at home or to earn money therefore increasing the opportunity costs of attending school.

The most challenging costs of attending school were purchasing learning materials and transport i.e. a bicycle, which were repeatedly mentioned by all groups as causes of dropping out or not attending school regularly. MoEYS should continue with its policy of expanding scholarships as there is noticeable impact on dropout rates in primary and lower secondary school, even when amounts are relatively low (\$50 - \$60 p/a).

Most parents and students were satisfied with the quality of education, although children with disabilities were not. However, expectation levels are limited to being able to read and write. The quality of education is being harmed by a lack of teachers resulting in some teachers teaching classes in two different rooms at the same time. There is also a concern amongst students that they are not learning skills that will help them find a job or earn an income.

Children with disabilities and their parents frequently said that teachers were unable to adapt their teaching to help them. An option would be to have a resource centre in every province that can provide training to teachers who do have children with disabilities or can provide information/advice. The resource centre could have staff that visit schools to assist teachers and provide training during Thursday Technical Meetings.

Students from ethnic minority groups also advised that teachers were unable to adapt their teaching to assist them, for instance using Khmer words which they did not understand. More bilingual teachers could be recruited and it could be that when teacher trainee places are being allocated, a quota for bi-lingual teachers could be reserved. These teachers could do the normal two year pre-service training with two months extra at the end to focus on teaching in the indigenous language.

Recommendations

- MoEYS should provide transport and dormitories to lower secondary school students from poor families who live far from schools.
- MoEYS should continue with its policy of expanding scholarships to help students purchase learning material, school uniforms or bicycles.
- MoEYS should recruit more teachers, especially in rural areas and greatly expand inservice training to build the capacity of teachers including contract teachers.
- MoEYS should set up special classes for children with disabilities within a public school in every district.
- MoEYS should allocate a quota for bi-lingual teachers during teacher recruitment and existing teachers in bi-lingual schools should become full civil servants rather than contract teachers.
- MoEYS should take over responsibility for printing textbooks of bilingual education and textbooks for children with disabilities.

1. Introduction

This study of Right to Education in Cambodia is part of a global project of UNESCO to review national legal and policy frameworks regarding the right to education. In the Asia-Pacific region, the project is coordinated by UNESCO Bangkok with studies conducted in Cambodia and Thailand in 2013.

In Cambodia, VSO is partnering with the NGO Education Partnership (NEP) to complete the community-level research. A representative of UNESCO-Phnom Penh Office is a member of the research advisory group formed by VSO and NEP to oversee this research. NEP, UNESCO and VSO have agreed the scope of the research as following:

- The research will focus on basic education (Grade 1-9).
- The research will identify successes and challenges in the implementation of policies related to Right to Education.
- The research will produce recommendations to governments to create norms and policies that are in accordance with international standards related to Right to Education.

The research will focus on the RTE within the basic education sector and analysis will be structured using the four A's framework developed by Prof. Katarina Tomaševski¹³:

Accessibility: Educational institutions have to be available in sufficient quantity including sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinkable water, trained teachers receiving domestically competitive salaries, and provision of teaching materials.

Acceptability: The form and substance of education have to be acceptable to students and parents. It should be relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality.

Availability: Educational institutions have to be accessible to everyone, without discrimination, in law and in fact.

Adaptability: Education has to be flexible, adapting to the needs of changing societies and students within their diverse social and cultural settings.

2. Method

2.1 Sample locations

The research was undertaken in three provinces, Rattanakiri, Siem Reap and Kampot. These three different provinces reflect economic, social and cultural diversity in Cambodia and can enable the research to highlight key issues arising from unique geographical factors. In each province, we visited 4 communes which were a mix of remote, rural and semi-urban areas, reflecting Cambodia generally. Available time and resources meant that we could not research Phnom Penh, which is very different from other areas in Cambodia and may have a different set of challenges.

Rattanakiri is a remote province bordering Vietnam in the north-east where most people are reliant on natural resources such as subsistence farming, non-timber forestry products (e.g. fruit, mushrooms), fishing and agro-industrial crops such as cashew nuts. Recently, there

¹³ Prof. Katarina Tomasevski was a former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

has been a growth in industries extracting natural resources, such as wood, changing the socio-economic situation. It is a province which has many ethnic minority communities which have different languages to Khmer.

Siem Reap is a predominantly agricultural province in the north-west, which has seen significant tourism growth due to Angkor Wat but still remains one of the poorer provinces beyond the provincial capital. Siem Reap has also seen a growth in population due to inwards migration. Kampot is a coastal province in the south, with fishing and rice as the main sources of income, although there has been recent growth in the tourism sector. It also has a sizeable Cham community.

2.2 Interview and focus group size and selection

Two focus group discussions with 10-12 community people were completed in each commune, one focusing on primary schools communities and the other focusing on lower secondary schools communities. The participants were school support committee (SSC) members and parents of students within the school catchment areas. They were identified through guidance from local authorities and NGOs working in each commune. NEP's research team with assistance from village chiefs and host NGOs invited communities to attend focus group discussions prior to the actual data collection.

There were two types of focus group discussions with between 8 and 10 students in each group; one with children attending primary school and one with lower secondary school students. For both, we had an aim of equal participation between males and females who were aged 10-16 years-old.

We aimed to interview two to three children per district who had left school before grade 9 within the past 5 years, were living in the selected communes, and aged between 10 and 18 year-old at the time of interview. We also considered children who had never attended school children as potential interviewees.

The research team encountered some difficulties in finding children who had dropped out of or never attended school to interview. Frequently, they were engaged with income generating activities – farming, labor and collecting non-timber forestry products outside the village. Some children who had dropped out did not want to speak with the research team and other children had difficulty communicating, such as those children with learning disabilities. To limit these problems, the team made appointments with children outside of their working hours and asked for support from guardians, where needed and appropriate. Seven teachers from primary and lower secondary schools in each commune were interviewed. Teachers were selected by using the convenience sampling method and by contacting school directors. The NEP team asked for permission from all participants before interviewing them in order to get their voluntary participation in providing information.

Table 3: Number of respondents in the study areas

Data collection methods	# in FGD/ interviews in Siem Reap	# in FGD/ interviews in Kampot	# in FGD/ interviews in Rattanakiri	Total
FGD with parents of primary school students	4	4	4	12
FGD with parents of primary school students	4	4	4	12
FGD with Primary school student	4	4	4	12
FGD with Primary school student	4	4	4	12
Interview with drop out students	9	12	16	37
Interview with children who had never been to school	0	1	1	2
Interview with primary school teacher interviews	14	16	13	43
Interview with lower secondary school teacher	14	12	15	41

A consultative workshop was organized to collect more information from children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities, their parents and NGOs – all from the three study provinces. There were 6 ethnic minority children; 10 children with disabilities; 3 parents from ethnic minority groups; 10 parents of children with disabilities; and 5 NGO representatives.

2.3 Research advisory group

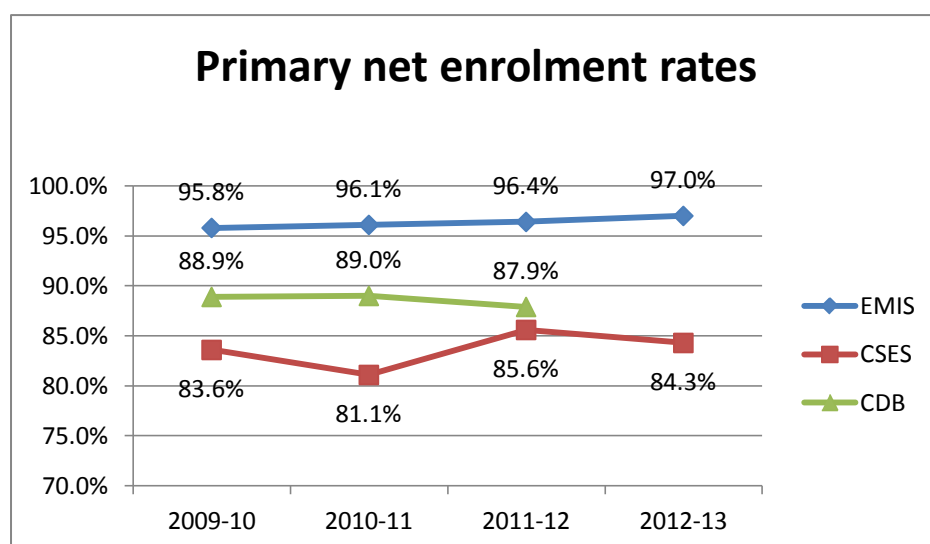
NEP formed a Research Advisory Group that consisted of six members, representing Royal University of Phnom Penh, UNESCO Cambodia, VSO Cambodia, Action Aid and teachers. The advisory group members provided feedbacks and comments at all key stages of the research to make sure it meets the requirements of UNESCO and VSO in Cambodia. There were five meetings of the research advisory group and some members provided additional information and recommendations outside of meetings.

3. An Analysis of the Current Situation and Existing Evidence

3.1 Access to education

The net enrolment rate in primary school has increased from 95.8% in 2009-2010 to 97% in 2012-2013¹⁴. However, information obtained from the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) and the Commune Database for the same period indicates that participation in primary education may not be quite as high.¹⁵

Figure 1: Net enrolment rates in primary schools

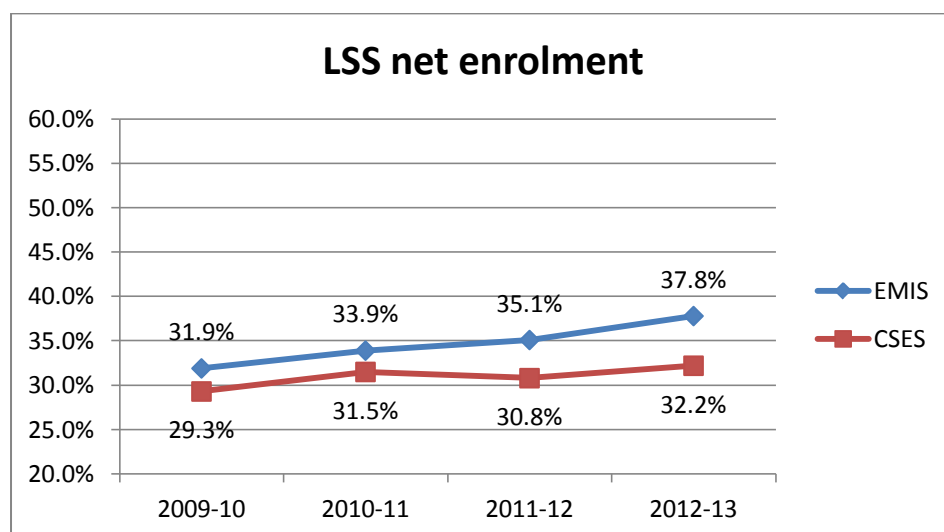


The net enrolment rate for lower secondary education has been low, which is a result of many children aged 12– 14 still being in primary school after beginning primary school late and/or repeating grades. EMIS and CSES provided slightly different statistics from 2009-2010 to 2012-2013 as is depicted in figure 2.

¹⁴ Department of Planning (2013), *Education Statistics and Indicators, 2012-13*. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport: Phnom Penh. The figures from 2009 to 2011 were taken from EMIS 2009/10, EMIS 2010/11 and EMIS 2011/12

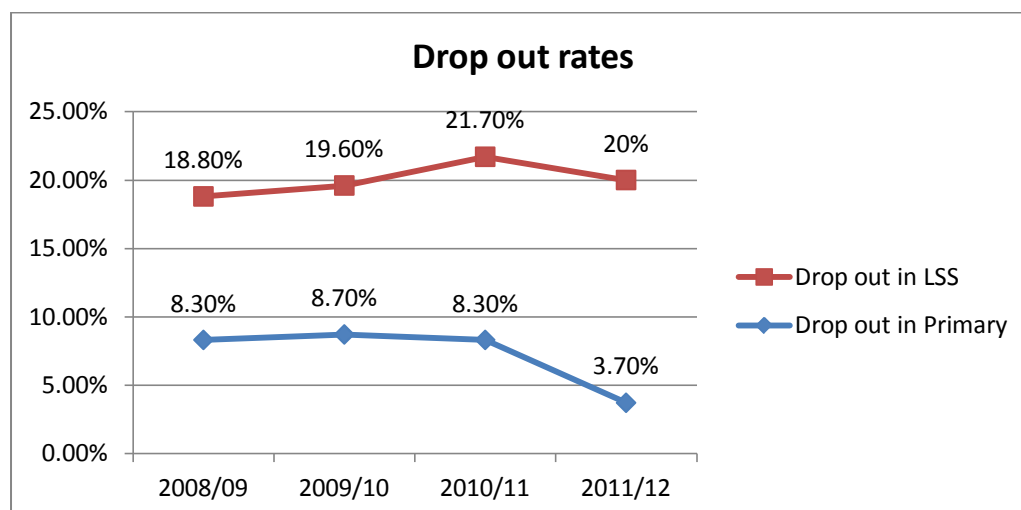
¹⁵ CSES and Commune Database figures are collected by the Ministry of Planning. Figures for 2009 and 2010 from the Commune Database were downloaded on 20th August 2013 from <http://db.ncdd.gov.kh/cdbonline/home/index.castle>. The 2011 figure was taken from a presentation given by Peter De Vries, then Head of Education Cambodia, UNICEF on 11th April 2013 at a meeting of the Education Sector Working Group. The CSES figures were downloaded on 9th December 2013 from: <http://www.nis.gov.kh/index.php/social-statistics/cses/cses-tables>

Figure 2: Net enrolment rates in lower secondary schools



Over the same period an annual average of 118,000 children entered grade 1 older than aged 6, which is the appropriate age should begin schooling¹⁶. This indicates that there are significant numbers of children who are not accessing primary education when they should be and that there is still a problem regarding access. Coupled with significant drop out rates at primary and lower secondary level in every grade, although the rates have fallen since the years before 2006, it is clear that attaining Education For All (EFA) is still a challenge.

Figure 3: Dropout rates in primary schools (EMIS)¹⁷



To increase access to education, MoEYS has been building schools at all levels; 345 new primary schools and 42 new lower secondary schools between 2009/10 and 2012/13 with

¹⁶ Department of Planning (2013). *Education Statistics and Indicators 2012-13*. Phnom Penh: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and versions published between 2009-12. See Appendix 1 for analysis of the number of children beginning grade 1 after the age of 6 which indicates that the net enrolment rate may be lower than 97%.

¹⁷ Department of Planning (2013), *Education Statistics and Indicators, 2012-13*. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport: Phnom Penh. The figures from 2009 to 2011 were taken from EMIS 2009/10, EMIS 2010/11 and EMIS 2011/12. See Appendix 2 for a discussion of the reported drop out rate and why it is likely to be much higher, probably 7.6%.

about half of each being built in rural areas and half in urban areas. However, the number of lower secondary schools is still lower in 2012/13 than it was in 2010/11¹⁸.

MoEYS has provided scholarships to assist access and to reduce school dropout, especially among poorer children. In the school year 2013/2014, 56,477 scholarships worth \$45 per annum were granted to students in LSSs in the amount of \$45¹⁹. The dropout rates of scholarship students at grades 7 and 8 in 2012/13 are significantly lower than for the entire population at the same grades in 2011/12, which shows a significant contribution of scholarships in promoting access to education. However, the dropout rate of scholarship students in grade 9 remains as high as for all students.

Table 4: Dropout rates among scholarship students

Descriptions	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Dropout rates among scholarship students (2012/13)	5.01%	11.90%	23%
Dropout rates nationwide (2011/12)	24.21%	22.3%	22.7%

NGOs have also provided scholarships. In 2010, 49 NGOs provided study materials to 19,524 primary school students in 18 provinces and Phnom Penh municipality; 24 NGOs provided cash scholarships to 2313 primary and secondary students in 9 provinces and Phnom Penh municipality; three NGOs provided study materials and money to 215 primary students in three provinces; and 13 NGOs provided bicycles to 5,004 secondary students in 11 provinces²⁰.

The World Food Programme has been running scholarship programmes for almost 10 years. The scholarship programmes (food or cash) are provided to very poor families with children in grades four to six. The government's 'Identification of Poor Households' system (ID Poor) is used to select poor households. The monthly food scholarship provides 10kg of rice per month for 10 school months while the cash scholarship provides an equivalent sum based on the local market price of rice i.e. 20,000 Khmer Riel per month (200,000KHR/\$50 per school year) with a condition that children receiving scholarships must maintain an attendance rate of at least 80%, which is measured on a monthly basis.

The food scholarship programme has been running since 2004 and cash scholarships were introduced for the first time in late 2011. In the school year 2012-13, the programmes have covered 97,000 students (88,000 food, 9,000 cash) in 4,275 primary schools (62%) in 15 provinces. The dropout rate for the cash scholarship programme was 2.37%, which is lower

¹⁸ Department of Planning (2013). *Education Statistics and Indicators 2012-13*. Phnom Penh: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and versions published between 2009-12. All information in figure 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are taken from this source.

¹⁹ MoEYS, Presentation called *Scholarship Program for Secondary Education*, Delivered during the annual MoEYS retreat, 23rd to 25th Jan, 2014.

²⁰ NEP, 2011, *2010 Education NGO Report*, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

than the national dropout rate despite this being amongst the group of children that would be expected to have a higher than average dropout rate²¹.

Although cash scholarship students are encouraged to spend their cash on food to improve household food security, they have freedom to choose to spend on other items. Forty one children and their guardians were interviewed during a programme assessment and gave information about the items purchased using the cash scholarship²². **Every child/guardian used the money to purchase learning materials, which is interesting as a lack of these was frequently highlighted during this research as being a reason for children leaving school before grade 9.**

Table 5: Scholarship expenditure items

Items	% of interviewees who have spent money on that item	Amount spent on that item as a % of total amount spent
School stationery (learning materials)	100%	20%
School uniform	90%	21%
Food	83%	56%
Health care	22%	3%
Miscellaneous	12%	1%

Building on existing scholarship schemes at primary and lower secondary level, MoEYS will establish a national scholarship program for Grades 4 to 9 that will support 133,000 children every year from 2014-2017. For Grades 4 through 6, 70,000 students from 1,000 primary schools in every province²³ will be eligible for a US\$30 annual scholarship and 63,000 lower secondary students from 1,700 lower secondary schools in every province will be eligible for a US\$60 annual scholarship. In both cases, students will only receive the scholarship as long as they remain enrolled and receive adequate school marks²⁴. Students will be selected depending on their score on a dropout risk index.

The facilities available at school can also affect access, without latrines or clean water people may be deterred from going and sometimes go back home when they need to use facilities during school hours and do not return. **It is concerning that Government statistics show that there was a higher percentage of schools without clean water**

²¹ Email correspondence between Kong Kannitha, World Programme, and Gordon Conochie, VSO Adviser to NEP on 12th February 2014.

²² World Food Programme: *Findings of a Rapid Assessment on New Cash Scholarships Pilot with AMK*. Unpublished

²³ There will be no overlap with students who receive a scholarship through the World Food Programme.

²⁴ The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will support the primary education scholarship program for the 2014-2015 academic year. The grade 4 to 6 national scholarship program will be financed by MoEYS' Program Budget from 2015 onwards. GPE will provide an additional US\$15 to the current US\$45 per student funded by the national lower secondary scholarship program budget (in total, US\$60 annual). Total GPE finding equals \$4m. The national lower secondary scholarship program will be financed by MoEYS' program budget from 2017 onwards.

and latrines in 2012/13 than there were in 2009/10²⁵. In the provinces that we are studying in this report, Rattanakiri was much more likely to have schools without clean water and latrines than the national average. Interestingly, there is not much of a gap between rural and urban areas.

Figure 4: Percentages of schools with water supply

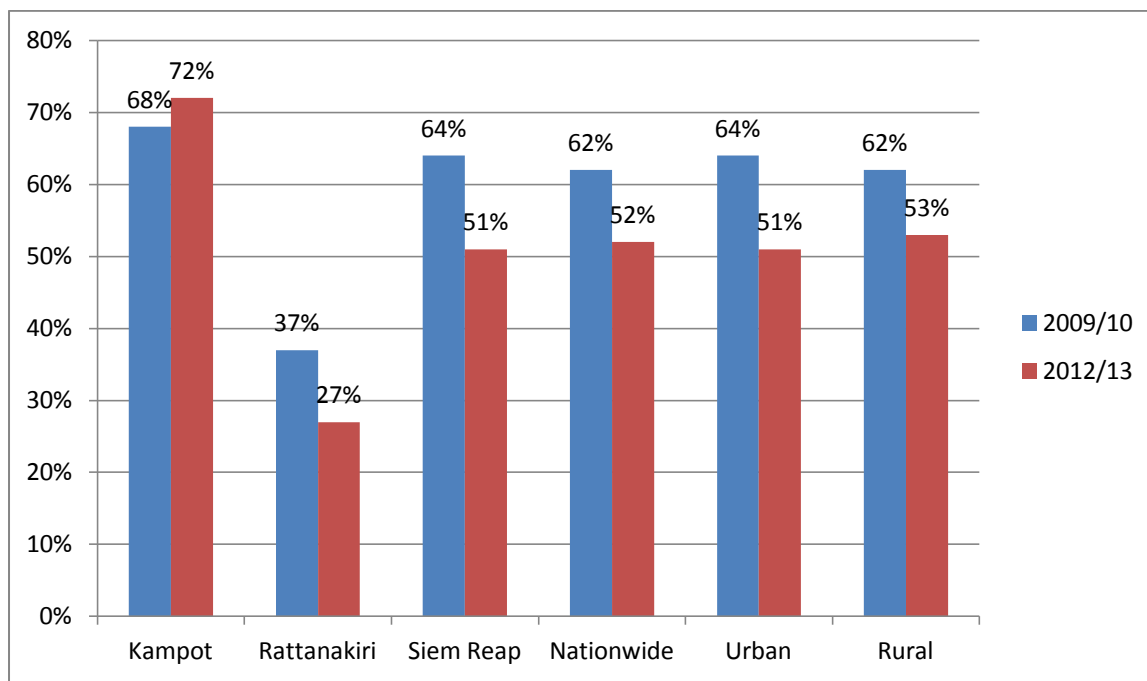
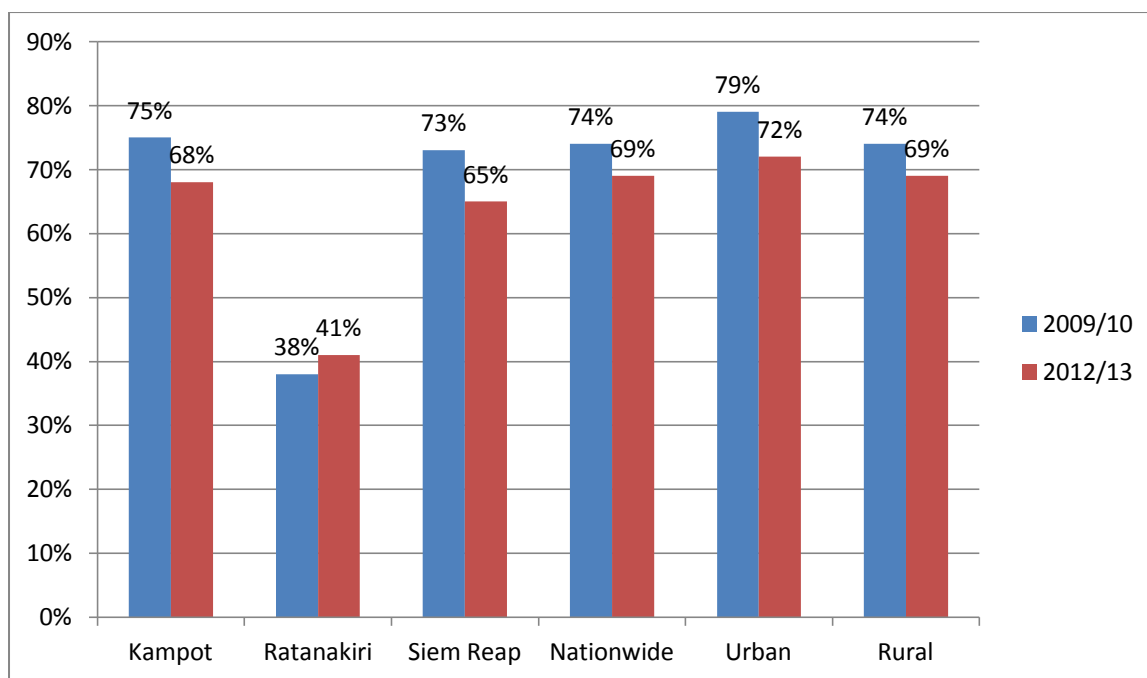


Figure 5: Percentage of schools with latrines



²⁵ Department of Planning (2013), 'Education Statistics and Indicators, 2012-13'. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport: Phnom Penh. The figures from 2009 to 2011 were taken from EMIS 2009/10, EMIS 2010/11 and EMIS 2011/12

A possible barrier to accessing education could be the existence of informal school fees. Although people are entitled to nine years of free education in Cambodia, NEP's research in 2012 found that 53% of student respondents incurred costs when attending school and 67% of interviewed parents advised that they incurred costs when their children go to schools. These are often for items that you would expect to be the responsibility of schools and MoEYS²⁶.

Table 6: Frequency of informal school fees

Types of expense	% of students paying (urban)	% of students paying (rural)	% of students paying (remote)
Stationery for teacher	23%	15%	18%
Present for teacher	21%	7%	3%
Examination Fee	22%	13%	22%
Teacher's Note	20%	12%	10%
Daily Teacher's Fee	25%	8%	3%
Appraisal Record Book	41%	22%	11%
Extra tuition outside of school	32%	14%	11%
Extra tuition inside of school	56%	22%	16%

Table 7: Amounts of informal school fees

Types of expense	Student responses: Mean average of expenditure (Riels)	Parent responses: Mean average of expenditure (Riels)
Teacher's learning materials/stationery	1400 per time	6870 per time
Present for Teacher	6800 per year	
Examination fee	2300 per time	2500 per time
Teacher's note	1800 per time	3090 per time
Teacher's fee	13200 per month	16200 per month
Appraisal record book	1200 per month	1100 per month
Extra tuition fee inside of school	12500 per month	12,480 per month
Extra tuition fee outside of school	18400 per month	16410 per month

26 Ang, S. & Conochie, G. (2012). *Promoting Rights in School*, NEP: Phnom Penh

Unsurprisingly, the same research found that students in urban areas are more likely to pay fees, which are also likely to be higher. For instance, the average expenditure on examination fees was 3500 riels per time for a student in urban areas, compared to only 950 riels for a student in rural areas. **Furthermore, in Phnom Penh, nearly 90% of students reported paying a daily fee to teachers whereas such fees were rare in other provinces. Additionally, over 90% of students in Phnom Penh were asked to pay monthly performance appraisal fees, which again was much higher than in other provinces.**

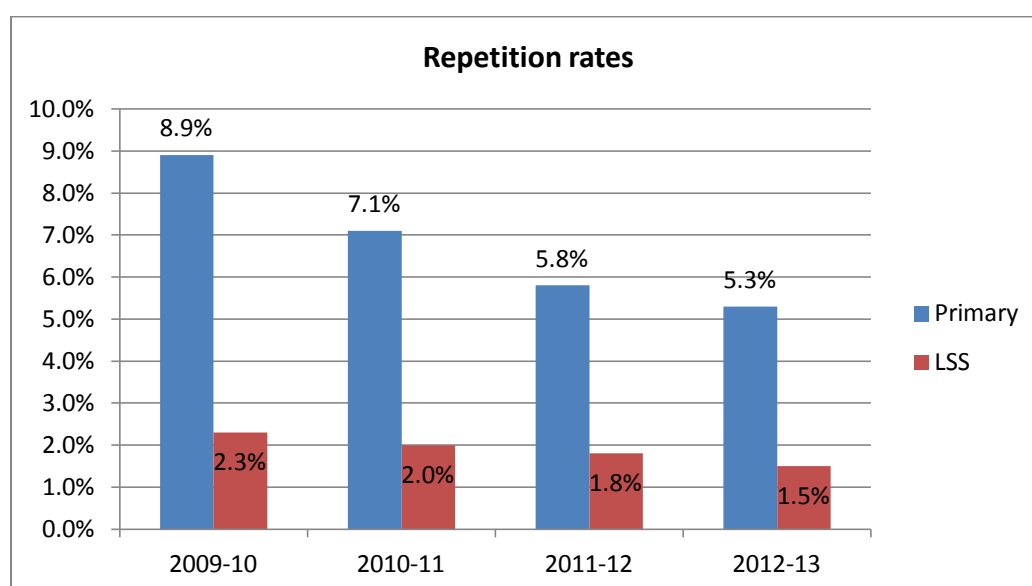
3.2 Quality of education

In this review, we consider the following indicators – repetition rate, teacher-student ratio, and teacher educational background, pedagogy training and in service training to be indicators of the quality of education.

An indicator that Cambodia has challenges with is the high repetition rate in primary school, and to a certain extent repetition in lower secondary school. A cause of students receiving a poor education can be a lack of teachers and Cambodia has suffered from a lack of teachers since the 1980s. The high teacher-student ratios, especially in rural areas, can seriously affect learning.

UNESCO advises that a pupil-to-teacher ratio greater than 40:1 can indicate an overstretched workforce²⁷. In Cambodia, the pupil-to-teacher ratio in primary schools is 48.5:1²⁸ that is the 16th highest pupil-to-teacher ratio of 202 countries that UNESCO has information for, and is the highest outside of Africa²⁹.

Figure 6: Repetition rates in primary and lower secondary schools

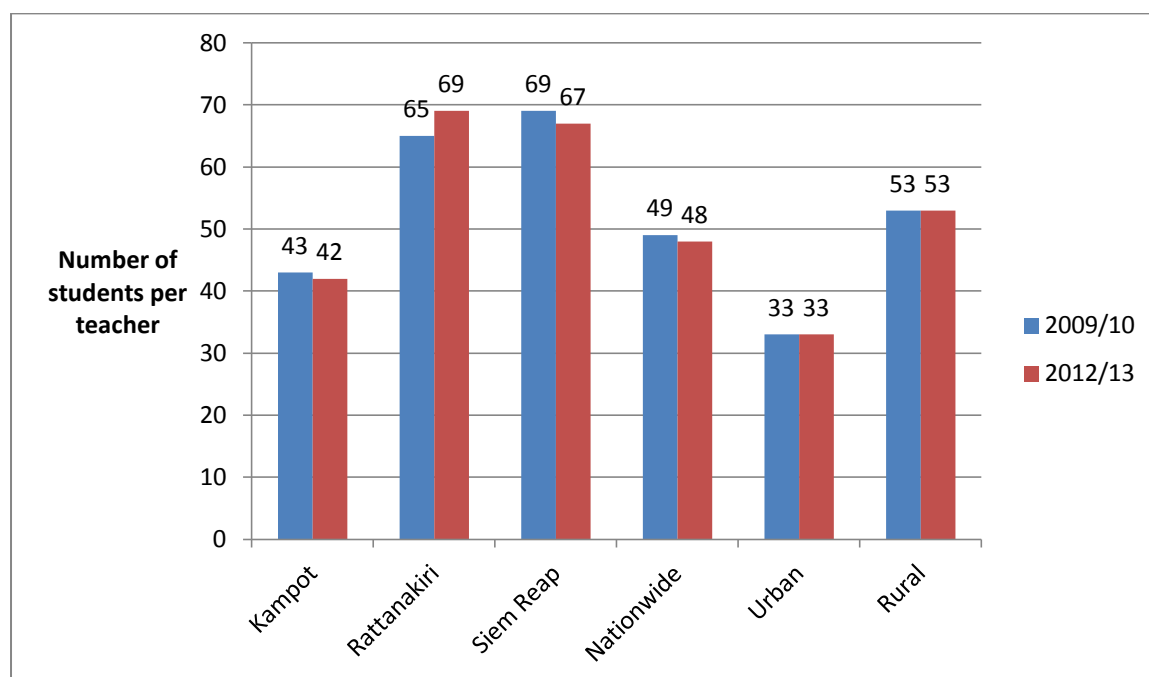


²⁷ UNESCO Institute of Statistics. (n.d.). *Education-Teachers*. Retrieved March 31, 2013, from <http://www.uis.UNESCO.org/Education/Pages/Teacher-statistics.aspx>.

²⁸ Department of Planning (2013), *Education Statistics and Indicators 2012-13*. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport: Phnom Penh

²⁹ UNESCO Institute of Statistics. (n.d.). UNESCO eAtlas of Teachers. Retrieved March 31, 2013, from UNESCO Institute of Statistics: <http://www.app.collinsindicate.com/uis-atlas-teachers/en-us>

Figure 7: Teacher-student ratios in primary schools



A previous NEP report also highlighted that the number of primary teachers has fallen by 671 since 2008/09 due to more people leaving the profession than being recruited³⁰. **This study projected that MoEYS would have needed 54,335 primary schools teachers to achieve a ratio of 40 students for every teacher in 2013. Therefore, it means that MoEYS needs 9495 teachers in addition to what they had in 2013.**

There are currently four ways to manage this shortage of teachers, all of which are being practiced in Cambodia and all have negative effects on children's learning:

- High teacher-pupil ratio in classes
- Teachers doing two classes in one day (double shift): NEP's research found that 18.5% of surveyed teachers in primary school teach a double shift³¹.
- Teachers teaching multi-grade classes: statistics from the Department of Personnel in 2012 showed that 3.8% of primary teacher teach multi-grade classes³².
- Recruitment of contract teachers: In 2013, there were 3,455 contract teachers, 1852 of whom were in schools with another 1184 teaching literacy classes. The number of contract teachers in schools has actually increased from 1429 in 2010/11³³.

Currently, MoEYS require primary and lower secondary teacher trainee candidates to have completed grade 12, although Rattanakiri and Mondolkiri have a special dispensation which allow them to accept primary teacher trainee candidates who have completed grade 9. This dispensation will end in 2015. However, only 54% of existing primary teachers have completed grade 12 and 3% of primary teachers have only completed primary school.

³⁰ Leng, T. & Conochie, G. (2013), *Every Child Needs A Qualified Teacher*, Phnom Penh, NEP

³¹ Ang, S ; Friend-Pereira, J ; Nsubuga, D and Chhum, S. (2012), *Assessing the Impact of Incentives on Teacher Motivation*. NEP : Phnom Penh

³² Leng, T. & Conochie, G. (2013), *Every Child Needs A Qualified Teacher*, Phnom Penh, NEP

³³ A Summary Report of The Education, Youth and Sport Performance in the Academic Year 2012-2014

Only 3% of primary teachers are graduates or post graduates and MoEYS have announced that they plan to require all primary and lower secondary teachers to have a bachelor degree in the future.

Table 8: Education levels of primary school teachers (2012/13)

	Primary level	LSS level	USS level	Graduate / Post graduate
Kampot	1%	30%	65%	4%
Rattanakiri	20%	46%	33%	1%
Siem Reap	5%	39%	55%	2%
Nationwide	3%	42%	52%	3%
Urban	2%	36%	57%	5%
Rural	4%	44%	50%	2%

Table 9: Education levels of secondary school teachers (2012/13)

	Primary level	LSS level	USS level	Graduate/Post graduate
Kampot	0%	14%	55%	31%
Rattanakiri	0%	2%	68%	30%
Siem Reap	1%	14%	57%	28%
Nationwide	1%	17%	55%	27%
Urban	1%	15%	46%	38%
Rural	1%	17%	60%	21%

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Availability and Accessibility of Education Services

At the most basic level accessibility can be restricted by having a difficult or costly enrolment process. Parents overwhelmingly reported that enrolment in school was an easy process. All groups advised that a birth certificate was required and some said that a family book was also required or could be given instead. Many parents advised that teachers or the school director helped to fill out the forms making the process easy.

Parents did not advise that having to produce a birth certificate was a problem although students in one group spoke about this as a problem from their own experience. There were no reports of parents having to pay to enroll in school. In addition, only 7% of teachers said that there were some associated fees during the school enrolment.

4.1.1 Factors affecting accessibility

The table below shows the factors parents and students most frequently cited as being important to make it easy for children to access school. They are in order of most frequently cited.

Table 10: Factors affecting accessibility:

Parents	Students
Learning Materials (notebooks, pens)	Learning Materials (notebooks, pens)
Students having transport	Students having transport
Schools being close to students' homes	Schools being close to students' homes
Having enough teachers	Parental behavior and encouragement
Clean water and toilets	Teacher behavior – attendance, accepting fees, treatment of students
Students having enough money to spend at school	Teacher quality
Students having school uniforms	Students having school uniforms

It is interesting to note the agreement amongst parents and students of the top three factors. **Whilst parents regarded having enough teachers as important, this was mentioned less frequently by students who focused more on teacher behavior and the quality of teachers. Having clean water and toilets were hardly mentioned by students.**

Other factors mentioned included having sufficient school provisions (textbooks, desks, chairs) and good access roads; roads were a particular concern in Rattanakiri during rainy season as sometimes bikes cannot be used on the muddy roads. Some parental focus groups did mention the importance of parental encouragement and some students thought that the availability of playgrounds, swings and toys was important.

Parents and teachers in Rattanakiri also mentioned dormitories and scholarships as being important, probably due to the low population density and distance from schools, whilst there were not mentioned by parents in other provinces.

It is interesting that children from ethnic minorities, Cham from Kampot and Krung from Rattanakiri who attended the consultative workshop, identified similar factors to other children as noted in Table 10: **Factors affecting accessibility**. The five factors identified during the workshop were:

- Students have transportation to travel to school
- Learning materials
- School being close to students' homes
- Schools have clean water, toilets and hygiene
- Good teachers that come to school regularly and provide clear explanations to students

Children with disabilities identified five factors that made it easy for them to access school, three of which were the same as the first three factors identified by children from ethnic minorities. The other two factors were encouragement from parents and encouragement from society. Encouragement from society can be from teachers and students and a non-discriminatory atmosphere.



A focus group discussion with students in Chhouk district, Kampot province

4.1.2. Learning materials

Parents, particularly in Banteay Srei district (rural Siem Reap), advised that there was a lack of learning materials and students cited a lack of learning materials more frequently than many other factors when considering what factors made it difficult for children to attend school. Every student focus group in Rattanakiri mentioned this as did groups in both urban and rural Kampot. It is noteworthy that a majority of teachers identified learning materials as an important factor contributing to accessing education; 42 teachers advised that these existed, whilst 15 others said that there was an absence of these.

However, when students were asked why some children had dropped out of school or never attended, a lack of learning materials was never explicitly cited. This is in contrast to both parents and children who had dropped out of school. **Eight of the 37 children interviewed who had left school before grade 9 said that not having student learning materials was a cause and a lack of learning materials was one of the most frequently cited causes of children dropping out of school by parents.** Parents said that a lack of learning materials was making it difficult for children to regularly attend school.

4.1.3 School uniforms

A small minority of parents, mainly in Rattanakiri, advised that requiring children to wear a school uniform made it difficult for some children to attend school, and that it was a reason that some children dropped out of school.

A lack of a school uniform was raised in a few student focus groups, again particularly in rural Rattanakiri, and some children had personal experience of having difficulties to attend school because of this. However, students did not identify a lack of school uniforms as one of the main reasons for children not attending school regularly or dropping out of school. Additionally, only one child who had left school before grade 9 said that not having a school uniform was a reason.

4.1.4 Transport and proximity to school

We considered these two factors together given their relationship to each other. **Students discussing their own experience advised that a lack of transport was the biggest difficulty they faced in terms of regularly attending school, and schools being too far away were also highlighted frequently as being a barrier to attending school.** Parents identified a lack of transport and the school being too far away as two of the most frequent reasons that children find it difficult to attend school. 39% of teachers said that transportation is important to students, and 18% mentioned that some of their students lacked transportation.

Unsurprisingly, these two factors were more frequently cited in rural areas. Parents in Kampot were more likely to specifically cite the lack of transport as a problem whilst parents in Rattanakiri were more likely to cite the distance to school as a problem. Some lower secondary schools in Rattanakiri have established dormitories providing breakfast and rice

to children who live very far from school. These were valued by students and parents where they existed.

Distance to school and a lack of transport were also more likely to be cited in reference to lower secondary schools rather than primary schools; some lower secondary schools were further than 20km away. Although it is clear that distance to school and lack of transport are real problems for some people, it should be noted that some people cited schools 1.5km away as being too far and that lower secondary schools not having vans or cars to take children to school constituted a lack of transport.

Interestingly, students and parents disagreed about whether living too far from school and not having transport were the causes of students actually dropping out of school. Students mentioned these much less frequently than other factors, but parents cited these two causes more frequently than any others. Children who left school before grade 9 agreed with parents that a lack of transport and schools being too far away were important factors causing drop out. Twelve (of 37) children advised that the school being too far was a cause of them leaving school, particularly regarding lower secondary schools, and 11 children advised that a lack of transport was a reason.

Five parent focus groups advised that the lack of good roads did make it difficult for some children to attend school but this was never given as a reason for children dropping out of school. Parents in Siem Reap and Kampot towns expressed their concern about potential accidents to their children because the schools are located along busy roads. Parents suggested a guard to direct traffic and to help students cross the road. Students in Rattanakiri spoke about their own difficulties of using roads during the wet season. However, like parents, no student group advised that bad roads were a reason for students dropping out of school.

4.1.5 Teachers – quantity, quality and behavior

Students cited sufficiency of teachers, their quality and their behavior regarding informal school fees and attendance as being important factors that could affect children's access to school. However, only a few students mentioned any of these as being important reasons that prevent students from attending regularly.

Two student groups mentioned that a lack of teachers and a failure of teachers to respect regulations prevented some children from enrolling. Only one student group advised that teachers charging money for lessons was a cause of children not being in school. Teachers being violent (to slow learners in this case) was mentioned once in relation to why some children don't come to school.

Students advised that students who would be late getting to school often choose to miss school instead because they are scared of receiving a punishment such as standing on one leg, collecting water or running around the school buildings. Indeed, potential latecomers choosing to not attend was the third most frequent reason given for children not regularly attending school.

The view of parents regarding teachers is quite different from students. Parents commonly complained of not having enough teachers although they did not say it was a factor that caused children to drop out of school. However, three parent focus groups in Rattanakiri did say that teachers being absent was a reason for children dropping out of school. Parents in Banteay Srei (Siem Reap) complained about teachers not being good enough and some parents in Siem Reap city complained that teachers in lower secondary schools collected money which made it harder for children to attend school.

One group advised that the biggest complication was that teachers demand 200 riels from students on a daily basis, and at the end of the month, the students have to pay 1,000 riels. Moreover, if the students leave school at the middle of the academic year and wish to re-attend the class, the school demands 60,000-80,000 riels from the students. However, only one parent focus group advised that teachers demanding money was the reason for children dropping out of school. From the focus groups it does not appear that students or parents think that teacher quality, quantity or behavior are the main reasons for children not attending schools.

It is no surprise that teachers have different views from parents and students group regarding their ethic, moral and performance. The majority of them said that there are enough teachers whilst most of them have good ethics, are punctual and competent.

4.1.6 School infrastructure

Parents frequently cited clean water and toilets as being important factors that would make it easy for children to attend school and most were satisfied that local schools had clean water and toilets. It was only in Rattanakiri where parents reported an absence of clean water. There were no parental or student focus groups where a lack of clean water or toilets were important factors causing students to be regularly absent or causing children to be out of school.

The school environment was also discussed on occasions with students mentioning about having good playgrounds and sports areas with some also wanting gardens and trees that provide shade.

4.1.7 Student behavior

Parents and students highlighted student behavior when discussing reasons for children not being in school. For students, other children being lazy or unable to learn anything was the second most common reason given for children being outside of school. Even when combining distance from school and lack of transport, students still believe that children's lack of motivation and ability is a greater cause of children being outside of school.

Teachers in Rattanakiri advise that children who were "slow learners" were also less likely to attend school as most of them drop out of schools whilst aged 13-15 years-old.

Parents did cite these same factors as reasons for children being out of school, and felt that this was a more common cause than parental behavior. However, student behavior was not cited as commonly as they were by students. Parents were more likely to discuss distance to school, lack of transport, lack of money and lack of materials.

4.1.8 Parental behavior

Of the 37 children who had left school before grade 9, 30 of them said that it was their decision to drop out of school, and only 7 said that it was their parents who had made the decision. Some children even said that they made the decision despite parents allowing/wishing them to go to school. Recent research in ethnic minority groups in Rattanakiri also found this to be the case in ethnic minority groups, although some said that their parents did force them to go to school³⁴.

Parents only rarely mentioned the importance of their own behavior, which is concerning, although three of four parent focus groups in Banteay Srei advised that parental behavior caused children to be out of school. Half of all student groups in Kampot advised that parental encouragement was an important factor influencing student attendance at school. Whilst no students said that a lack of parental encouragement was a reason for students dropping out of school, parental behavior was, along with working at home or in a job, the most frequently cited reason that prevent children from attending school regularly. As well as parental encouragement, students also advised that parental violence towards them was a reason for children not attending school. In two groups, students spoke about their own experience of this. Students explained that this can damage children's confidence and self belief making them reluctant to go to school. One parent focus group also thought that parental violence towards children caused children to drop out of school. It was explained that students would be embarrassed attending school with signs of being beaten evident.

A minority of teachers (14) thought that parents had an important role in their children education and 11 of them said that parents did pay attention to their child's education.

4.1.9 Students working

The influence of parents is also evident by the number of parents and students advising that children do not attend school for reasons that require tacit or explicit permission of parents:

- they look after siblings or parents
- they work with their parents (including migrating with them)
- they have a job.

For students, caring for siblings, working with parents or having a job was the most frequently cited reason that causes students to be out of school. It was common to hear students advised that some children have to work as "coolies" (unskilled labourers) or help with farming activities. These factors were also the most frequently cited reason preventing students from attending regularly. Two student groups in Rattanakiri also said that during

³⁴ Strickler, C (2012). *Gender and Power Analysis Report*. CARE International: Unpublished.

the rainy season, parents take their children away to work in the rice fields. **One group said that regular attendance at school decreased from 70% in the dry season to 50% in the wet season.**

For children who had dropped out of school before grade 9, helping at home was the second most frequently cited reason for having left school; 15 of 37 children mentioned this. Of these 15 children, 7 of them actually said it was because their parents were sick that required them to help at home rather than to be at school. As would be expected, it was more common for children who dropped out in lower secondary school rather than at primary school to cite this reason as being the cause.

Ten children also advised that they left school because they began to work, six of them with their family and four of them to find a job. Despite leaving school before grade 9, many children were already of working age. Twelve of the fourteen children we interviewed who had left school at lower secondary level were aged between 16 and 19 when they left school. **None of the children who had left primary school were aged older than 16 when they left school but nearly half of them were aged 14-16; which is when they begin to become more able to help/earn income.**

Of the 22 children interviewed who dropped out during primary school, only one of them began school aged 6. Regarding children who left school at lower secondary level, half of them began school aged older than 6. This indicates that beginning school late i.e. aged older than 6, reduces the number of grades that the child will complete, which again highlights the influence of parental behavior. Other research in rural schools Cambodian schools found that late school entry was found to be positively correlated with the odds of dropout in grade 5. The researchers concluded³⁵:

“Any policy formulated to reduce the primary school drop out rates in rural Cambodia should first attract children of school ages to school as early as possible”

Parents agreed that caring for siblings or working with parents was the most frequent cause of children being unable to attend school regularly. However, parents were less likely to say that these reasons were the cause of children having dropped out of school. Other factors such as distance to school and transport, a lack of money and learning materials were cited much more frequently. It should be noted that migration as a specific factor was not mentioned in any district apart from Banteay Srei (Siem Reap).

4.1.10 Poverty

Parents and students differentiated between being poor and not having money to spend at school. Both were commonly cited by students as factors making it difficult to attend school regularly, with many speaking from their own experience. However, students said that a lack of money to spend at school was a reason for children being out of school only twice,

³⁵ No, Sam & Kirakawa (2012), *Revisiting primary school dropout in rural Cambodia*. Seoul: Asia Pacific Education Review, Vol. 13

and never blamed poverty in general. Parents cited these factors frequently and if added together was the third most common reason for children being out of school.

Nearly half of the children (18 of 37) who had dropped out of school before grade 9 said that a cause of this was being poor. This was the reason most commonly cited by them. Given that ten children who had dropped out had cited working as a reason for dropping out, it appears that for some families, the opportunity cost of going to school is too high because the extra income from work is required.

Box 1: Too poor for school

A 17 year-old girl living in Siem Reap town, Siem Reap province dropped out from school when she was 13 because of a combination of poor learning and economic factors. She lives with her widowed mother who tried to feed and provide education to four children. When the girl was at grade 4 in Kok Ta Chan primary school, she did not have money to go to school as her mother did not have any source of income. Her teacher collected 200 riels per day from students without exception. If the girl didn't pay, the fees were accumulated to next day. In addition, her teacher always wrote lessons on the blackboard with little or no explanations and left students to copy them. She could not read and write well until she was at grade 6 when her teacher worked hard to improve her reading and writing. When she finished grade 6, she decided to drop out of school as she knew that to study in lower secondary school was even more costly than at primary school.

When families are calculating the cost of children going to school, having money to spend at school is also important. Considering that school is legally free, we asked what children would need money for to attend school. We have grouped their answers in 4 themes:

- Required inputs from students e.g. school uniform, learning materials
- Optional inputs from students e.g. food at school
- Potential inputs from students e.g. transport, accommodation near school
- Illegitimate costs placed upon the student e.g. teachers requesting money

Considering analysis of these factors above, it appears that finding money for learning materials and transport are two of the greatest challenges facing parents/children and causes children to be out of school.

Whilst conditions of poverty are creating effects that cause children to be out of school, solutions to this problem lie outside of education sector management. It would be very difficult for Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) to change the conditions of families so that they would no longer require children to help at home or work. This indicates that MoEYS should concentrate on reducing the costs of attending school.

One method of doing this would be to provide scholarships, which parents/students could use to purchase a bicycle or learning materials and as discussed in section 3, current programmes are linked with lower dropout rates in Cambodian primary and lower secondary schools. In Rattanakiri, parents in six focus groups advised that scholarships

(provision of food at school or cash) were important factors that could assist access to school. Some spoke from their own experience of receiving scholarships.

4.1.11 Children with disabilities

Focus groups in all communes visited in Kampot and Siem Reap advised that there were children with disabilities in their commune and that the majority of children with disabilities were not attending school. Indeed, parents at our consultative workshop advised that some schools refuse to accept children with intellectual disabilities. After poor children and children who live far away or lack transport, teachers most commonly said that children with disabilities were less likely to attend schools, slightly more than children affected by migration (into the community and temporarily or permanently away from the community).

Three children with intellectual disabilities who attended the consultative workshop said that they no longer attend public school because they could not follow lessons as other children could do. They felt that the teachers did not know how to teach them and didn't understand their needs, which is discussed in greater detail in the Adaptability section.

When discussing children with disabilities, parents often included children with illnesses, such as meningitis and epilepsy³⁶. **A parent group in Siem Reap said that an epileptic boy in their commune could not go to school due to the nature of his illness and that there is no support to help him access to school.** During a visit to one primary school, researchers met a young boy in the school grounds who had epilepsy. Researchers spoke to him, his mother, teachers and other children and found that he had previously attended school frequently but that now he was not attending school. This is partly because he has difficulty in learning and he also has frequent epileptic episodes. Children with epilepsy rarely get any health support and teachers can be unsure how to deal with epileptic episodes. This was witnessed by researchers during our visit when the boy had an epileptic fit in the playground but nobody was sure how to, or even whether to, help the boy. Parents advised that schools did not do enough to support children with illness or disabilities to attend school or to help their parents educate them at home.

Parents of children with disabilities who attended the consultative workshop cited the same factors that restricted access as parents in general focus groups i.e. the school being far away from home and lack of transportation. The only difference that was mentioned was a lack of a health centre close to their home. Children with disabilities at the consultative meeting did raise different factors from what other children raised such as teachers not paying attention to them. Whilst some children and parents reported discrimination, other children and parents advised that access is possible because teachers and students have encouraged them.

Parents of children with disabilities gave different reasons from other parents why their children dropped out of schools:

³⁶ Seizures can be controlled in about 70% of the cases with appropriate medical treatment, regularly revised. The School Health department could play a very important role in such cases.

- Students have intellectual difficulties so they could not continue their study at a higher level
- No special classes for disabled children in the public schools
- Children with disabilities suffered from discrimination from friends and community
- No scholarship program to support children with disabilities
- Children with disabilities felt embarrassed and disappointed in school

Like other children, children with disabilities said that a lack of learning materials and transportation were factors that caused them to drop out of school. Reasons given that were specific to their situation were not being able to follow lessons because they were often a slow learner and a lack of facilities, such as ramps, appropriate chairs and latrines.

A study on children with disabilities in rural Cambodia found that 55% of school-aged children with disabilities had attended schools, but most of them had only attended one or two grades. The remaining 45% did not attend school at all³⁷. Another study on intellectual disabilities in rural Cambodia found a similar school attendance rate of 54% among children with disabilities³⁸, much lower than the national average. Of the children, 7% attended special education classes for deaf or blind people provided by an NGO³⁹.

The study on children with disabilities in rural Cambodia cited estimated that 4.7% of the population had a disability. It is noteworthy from the study that, 25% had difficulty seeing but only 2% wore glasses. 42% had difficulty with movement, but only half of the group used a mobility aid. Some children can be identified as visually impaired, such as having low vision, but in fact need only appropriate glasses⁴⁰.

Some children might have disabilities, but they are not identified because their disabilities are not obvious and a lack of cooperation amongst ministries/agencies. Part of the problem is a lack of health services even if a problem was identified. In Cambodia, there are several NGOs – Krousar Thmey, New Humanity, Handicap International, Veteran International, Rabbit School and Epic Arts - working to provide health and/or special education services to children with disabilities (see *Box 2: Krousar Thmey Schools for Children with Disabilities*). As well as providing their own services, some NGOs also working closely with schools and MoEYS to improve access to education. For instance, in Krong Kampot primary school, Krousar Thmey has been working with the school to enable children with low vision to be included in the classes and to provide magnifiers, stands for books with clip on lights, and large font textbooks. Krousar Thmey found that after initial training, such as helping teachers understand the importance of a child with low vision sitting at the front of the class, follow up coaching was beneficial. This is an example of how simple identification and assessment of children who can be having difficulties are assisted easily.

³⁷ Betsy VanLeit, Samol Channa, Prum Rithy, 2007, *Children with Disabilities in Rural Cambodia*, PASIFIC DISABILITY REHABILITATION JOURNAL Vol. 18 No.2

³⁸ Moreira, R. (2011), *Intellectual Disability in Rural Cambodia, Cultural Perceptions & Families' Challenges*, Phnom Penh, New Humanity

³⁹ Betsy Van Leit, Samol Channa, Prum Rithy, 2007, *Children with Disabilities in Rural Cambodia*, PASIFIC DISABILITY REHABILITATION JOURNAL Vol. 18 No.2

⁴⁰ Krousar Thmey advised during the consultation workshop that in the framework of a pilot project in Kampot, around 25 children were initially identified as having low vision. However, after further assessments, it appeared that 19 of them needed only spectacles to see properly.

Box 2: Krousar Thmey Schools for Children with Disabilities

Krousar Thmey is a local NGO managing 5 schools around Cambodia that provide education to deaf or blind children. If a child is blind or has low vision, the child will study in grade 1 over two years in a Krousar Thmey school then in grade 2 for one year before entering a state school at grade 3. Once in the state school, the child goes to class for half a day, like all students in Cambodia, and then does a further half day learning in a Krousar Thmey school. For deaf children, the first two grades follow the same process as blind children but continue in Krousar Thmey schools until grade 4 and then continue following the same path as blind children. Deaf children remain in Krousar Thmey schools longer because it takes them longer to master sign language than it takes blind children to learn Braille.

Schools in Cambodia have little or almost no special equipment for children with disabilities. For instance, the production of Braille textbooks for blind children, and sign language textbooks for deaf children, all of them following the official MoEYS curriculum, is fully ensured by Krousar Thmey. MoEYS provides some proofreading⁴¹.

NGOs that we met supported the aims of inclusive education – children with disabilities being educated in standard classes. However, they also advised that there were some children for whom separate and more specialised education would be better. These separate classes could still be integrated in a standard school though. The low population density of children with disabilities makes it difficult to build special schools in locations near to each of the homes, so it was suggested to build dormitories for children with disabilities at special schools. Such changes could help change the fact that currently the education system is not helping children with disabilities attend school.

4.1.12 Children from ethnic minority groups

Despite speaking to people from ethnic minority groups in Kampot and Rattanakiri during our focus group discussions, children from ethnic minority groups were never mentioned as a particular group of children who would be less likely to attend school. Of course, when considering their own community only, they are not from an ethnic minority so would be unlikely to single out ethnicity as being a reason why some children go to school and some do not.

What was clear was that all parent groups and parents in our consultative workshop thought that it was easier for children from ethnic minority groups to attend school than five years ago. Parents in the workshop believed that students were enjoying going to school and gaining knowledge thus encouraging others to attend. These parents also advised that NGOs had helped to promote education. Students felt that more children had transportation and learning materials and that schools had a water supply and toilet.

⁴¹ Krousar Thmey is closely working with the MoEYS and hopefully in the future the ministry will take greater responsibilities in the provision of appropriate books for deaf or blind children

A lot of the difficulties reported during the workshop were ones that are common to other children: lack of money to buy materials, the school being far away and/or lacking transport. Even when there are dormitories for students who live far away, students advised that they can sometimes be too small – 40 students in one room. One different factor was that parents from an ethnic minority advised that females can leave school early because of getting married at a quite young age. Another difference was that parents complained that the poor quality of teachers and their inability to speak the local language was causing children to drop out of school, which students also mentioned. **However, other research in Rattanakiri lower secondary schools found that the lack of teachers who speak the local language is not the cause of drop out but that the actual process of learning in Khmer was the most common contributing, if not deciding, factor that caused drop out⁴².**

An NGO related how people believe that more education does not put more rice on the table. If a child goes to school they have the same rice on the table as if they went to the field. This lack of a quality education was cited as being the most important cause of drop out during research of children in school in highland communities in Rattanakiri⁴³. This was because teachers were not supporting less able students. It could be that it is not just poor quality that is partly causing children to drop out but that difficulties in relations with teachers are also causing children to leave school.⁴⁴ One NGO thought that the challenges of learning in Khmer for non-native Khmer speakers and cultural differences between teachers and students were the two main challenges. These issues are discussed in more detail in the Adaptability section.

The problem of distance to school could be exacerbated by changes in Cambodian land use that have reduced the amount of available land/forest near villages meaning that, in some cases, the *Chamkar* (land for cultivation) of indigenous groups are becoming further and further away from villages meaning that they do not return to their village.

Focus groups did advise that the costs of going to school, including paying for extra classes, and especially at lower secondary level, were causing difficulties. NGOs advised that this along with the greater opportunities to earn money was causing problems. Children can now earn \$5 per day working in the wood and rubber industries and are able to falsify their documents to show that they are old enough for work.

⁴² CARE International (2010). *Improving ethnic minority student survival rates in Child Friendly Secondary Schools*. Unpublished.

⁴³ CARE International (2010). *Improving ethnic minority student survival rates in Child Friendly Secondary Schools*. Unpublished.

⁴⁴ CARE International (2010). *Improving ethnic minority student survival rates in Child Friendly Secondary Schools*. Unpublished.



Children from ethnic minorities attended a consultative workshop in Phnom Penh

MoEYS are responding to needs of children from ethnic minority groups and have issued guidance on how to implement bi-lingual education. A five year action plan is also being developed and they are working with CARE to have teacher trainers to teach bilingual teacher trainees. MoEYS also have 52 bi-lingual schools in grades 1 – 3 in four provinces (Rattanakiri, Mondolkiri, Stung Treng, and Kratie) with 4126 students and 205 teachers.

4.1.13 Comparison 2008-2013

Every parent focus group except one thought that it was easier for children to attend school now than it was five years ago. The most frequently given reason for this was that there are more schools, which can be understood to mean that schools are more likely to be closer to people's homes. Having more teachers was the second most frequently mentioned reason. Parents in Kampot and Rattanakiri frequently advised that better roads (or bridges being built) had made it a lot easier. Parents in Kampot also placed great importance on parents doing more to encourage children to go to school whilst parents in Rattanakiri frequently advised that it was easier for their children to access school because more children wanted to learn, specifically citing the desire to learn Khmer.

It is interesting that whilst better roads and more teachers are factors that have made it easier to access school in the last five years, these were not identified as being the factors that are restricting access to school now. Proximity to school is still viewed as being important but rather than needing more schools, it was more common that people wanted transport. This indicates that what has worked in the past should not be assumed to work in

the future. Future activities could focus on helping families with the costs of attending school, such as with learning materials and providing transport to help students physically get to school.

There was one parent focus group that believed it was more difficult now to access school, and this was in Siem Reap town. They advised that it was now more expensive to attend school. Interestingly, the impact of tourists was viewed positively in Siem Reap with both parents and students groups in Banteay Srei advising that tourists giving books or helping with English helped to make it easier for children to stay in school, and one even said that by selling souvenirs the children could attend school.

Parents of children from ethnic minorities with disabilities said that to go to school is easier than five years ago. This was due to the availability of schools in the village, the better road conditions and the improvement of the school facilities.

4.2 Acceptability of Education Services

The vast majority of students reported that they received a good quality of education and most parents also reported satisfaction with the quality of education available in their schools. However, satisfaction levels must be considered in relation to expectation levels. If expectations of quality are very low, then a very good quality of education is not required for people to be satisfied. This could be a partial explanation of these reported high levels of satisfaction as two student groups said that they feel that they have a good quality of education because they can read and write.

Similarly, nearly all children interviewed who had dropped out before grade 9 thought that the quality of education experienced was good, and the vast majority said that they could read and write. However, only about half of children who had dropped out said that they were numerate. It appears that expectations are limited to being able to read and write.

We asked children who had dropped out what job did they want to do. For children who had dropped out at primary level, most of them answered that they didn't know what they wanted to do. This could reflect an understanding amongst them that they did not know what job they could possibly do with such limited education. The next most common answers were that they wanted to become a teacher or a motor mechanic with single people advising jobs such as dressmaker, construction worker, hairdresser and shop seller. Half of the people felt that they had the required education for these jobs.

For children who dropped out at lower secondary school, only two of fifteen people said that they didn't know what job they wanted to do. The two most common answers were to work in a bank or as a teacher. It could be that the topic of the interview (education) influenced people to cite becoming a teacher as a desired job. Two people also wanted to become a doctor and other jobs such as dressmaker and hairdresser were mentioned. Children who had dropped out at lower secondary school wanted jobs that require greater skills than those cited by children who dropped out at primary level. Unfortunately, the ambition was

greater but so was the perceived gap between ambition and reality as most said that they did not have the required education to do the jobs that they wanted to.

4.2.1 Student opinions of teachers

Nearly every student group that we spoke to advised that good teachers were important to enable a good level of quality in education, and parents shared this sentiment. Generally, it appears that both are satisfied with the quality of teachers in their schools, and when students who believed that they are receiving a good education, were asked why this was so, the most common answer by far was because that they had a good teacher.

Even in rural places like Banteay Srei (Siem Reap), every student focus group reported satisfaction with the quality of their teachers. There were a minority of groups who were dissatisfied with the quality of their teachers but this was not particularly common in any province or varied between urban and rural areas. Only one group blamed a poor quality of education on poor teachers, saying that teachers rarely explain lessons, write too much on the board and do not use exercises as examples. One other group advised that they had poor teachers but still managed to have a good level of education because students work hard.

Slightly more than half the students groups said that they were able to follow the lessons of the teachers all of the time. What appeared to be important was whether students felt that they could ask teachers to give the explanation again or in a slightly different way. Four student groups did say that some students did not follow lessons because the teachers did not give good explanations or consider slower learners. However, five students groups said that the reason for students not following lessons was because of student indiscipline in class.

If students or parents were dissatisfied with teachers, it was more likely to do with the behaviour of teachers regarding absenteeism or collection of fees. One group of parents advised that teacher absence occurred because school directors did not enforce regulations, which affected quality.

Parents emphasized that teachers have to take good care of their students, give a clear explanation, regularly monitor student's performance (reading and writing), inhabit good discipline, and guide students to behave morally. In addition to these qualifications, teachers need to have a sense of responsibility. Parents also noted that it is important that teachers build rapport with parents and inform the parents if their children are absent from class.

4.2.2 Teacher supply and demand

As was indicated in section 3, Cambodia lacks enough primary teachers and parents in Khnar Sanday commune (Siem Reap) advised that teachers in both primary and lower secondary schools often have to teach more than one class at the same time; they begin teaching a class in one room, then leave to go to another room. In Rattanakiri, five of 14 primary teachers interviewed taught double shifts and two of them teach multi-grade

classes in the afternoon shift. These are likely to affect their ability to give proper explanations or provide enough attention.

Two student groups that had experience of contract teachers said they generally gave good explanations. However, one group also said that the teacher had previously drunk and smoked whilst teaching and stopped teaching if the students made them angry. They felt that a contract teacher could lack motivation because they knew that their job was temporary.

A teacher in La ak school, Rattanakiri province said that 10 contract teachers were being used in La ak commune and three of them taught in La ak school. When asked about using contract teachers, most teachers said that they had a high commitment to work, come to teach regularly and have enough basic knowledge to teach. In general, teachers had positive feelings toward contract teachers as contract teachers help to reach a large number of unreached children in some areas. However, some teachers raised concern about their limited capacity to prepare lesson plans, to lead classroom activities and lack of pedagogical skill.

4.2.3 Students are responsible for their learning

The next most commonly cited factor by students that influence quality of education, was student willingness and ability to learn. In addition to this, 12 of the 24 student groups said that doing more work at home was important; one group of lower secondary school students even said that they wanted home work three times a week for each subject.

This emphasis on the role of students in their own learning is consistent with students advising that the most common reason for students not keeping up with lessons was because of poor student behaviour. However, student groups predominantly said that students were committed to learning and six groups advised that students helping each other was an important contributor to quality education.

It is interesting to note that students were much more likely to cite student behaviour as being more important than parental support. This is in contrast to student opinion on the role of parents in helping students access school. It seems that students think that parental support is important to help children attend school but that they have less of an impact of the quality of education.

4.2.4 Textbooks and teaching materials

Half of the student groups who identified textbooks and teaching materials as being important for quality education advised that there was a lack of these. However, no student group mentioned teaching materials as being the cause of them having a good, average or poor quality of education. Additionally, no student group advised that students could not keep up with the lessons because of a lack of textbooks or teaching materials.

4.2.5 Value given to education

The value placed on education was clear in the community focus group discussions, where parents expressed many of their expectations of education. These included acquiring knowledge so that their children could get a good job and therefore be able to support themselves and their family. The importance of family was a theme that ran through many of the opinions given, with parents wishing for their children to learn to respect and look after their family and be family successors. Predominantly, however, parents understood that an education was the route to securing a good job.

4.2.6 Treatment of students

Six parent focus groups, three in Siem Reap, advised that not all children were treated equally, which could negatively affect the quality of education received by those students. They advised that teachers favored children who paid for extra classes or those whose parents gave money to the teachers to pass exams. A student group advised that their teacher provided much higher scores to students who had attended their extra class than students who had not, even if their answers in the exam were the same. Extra classes cost 500 riels. One group of parents advised that parents could pay \$80 for their child to be promoted to grade 9 even if the child had not attended school or passed exams. Another group in Siem Reap discussed how exam papers were sold (500 riels).

Previous research by NEP found that 33% of students reported paying for extra tuition inside of schools⁴⁵. That only a minority of students in schools where this is happening pay the fee is likely due to an average cost of 12,500 riel per month, which many families would find prohibitive. Therefore, only children from wealthier families can afford to pay and benefit from this extra tuition, which appears to lead to better student performance⁴⁶.

Teachers are allowed to provide extra tuition and if students are willing to attend extra tuition, this could be seen as valuing education. However, Brehm et al found that **extra tuition classes were used to continue teaching of the national curriculum which would then not be repeated in the classroom, although this was a study of only six schools. It could be that there are students who are not receiving the full curriculum because they cannot afford to pay for it.**

⁴⁵ Ang, S. & Conochie, G. (2012). *Promoting Rights in School*, Phnom Penh, NEP

⁴⁶ Brehm, Silova and Mono (2012, *Hidden Privatization of Public Education in Cambodia: the Impact and Implications of Private Tutoring*, Open Society Foundations



A focus discussion with parents in Banteay Srei district, Siem Reap province

4.3 Adaptability of Education Services

When examining the adaptability of education services, the education levels of teachers and the quality of training that teachers received should be considered. Primary teachers have to teach maths, Khmer, science and social studies (which partly includes life skills), whilst their pedagogical training and content knowledge of these subjects can be limited. This makes it even more difficult for teachers to know how to adapt their teaching of these subjects so that all children can learn, especially given that many teachers have not received training on inclusive education.

4.3.1 Adapting education to meet the needs of children with disabilities

Parent and students groups said that there are groups of children in their communes who might need special interventions to access education. These included children who are deaf and/or mute, blind, physically impaired,, have epilepsy, and children with an intellectual disability. Additionally, parents and students often referred to people who were “slow learners”. Most parent groups said that those physically impaired, had limited hearing or were “slow learners” were attending schools. However, children who are blind, deaf and/or mute, have epilepsy or an intellectual disability were not attending school. In addition, schools have neither provided any support to get them to school nor assisted parents provide education at home.

Box 3: Children with low vision attending School in Kampot

The school director of Krong Kampot primary school reported that there were 15 students with low vision attending grade 2 - 6 in his school. These students passed grade exams every year. Last year, three of these students were among the top five students in their classes. Each of them received an appreciation letter from the school for their learning achievements.

The school director said that major changes were not needed to enable the children to join classes. The children received some assistance such as receiving glasses, magnifying glasses or other equipment to help them to see text clearer. The school provided textbooks and handouts in a version with a larger font size and teachers allowed them to sit in the front row of seats.

The school director felt that the children with low vision were well integrated in the classrooms, had good friends to work and play with, were now more self confident and motivated to learn. Moreover, no discrimination against them was reported.

Some children who are physically impaired, have low vision or are “slow learners” received some support from schools such as a scholarship, bicycle or learning materials. Teachers sometimes supported them by seating them in the first line or with good performing students. Some student groups in Kampot province said that some teachers provide more explanation to slower learners and encourage peer learning and three parents groups said that schools and teachers encourage slow learners to come to classes regularly and provide remedial classes to improve their reading and writing during the school vacation⁴⁷.

However, it was reported that children who are deaf or blind did not go to school. Students gave the following reasons for this: 1) they could not go to school by themselves and their parents could not take them; 2) schools do not have any facilities for this type of children; and 3) teachers could not provide support to deaf or blind children due to a lack of capacity. Generally, public schools do not have specific facilities or materials for children with physical disabilities, although some of the schools visited had ramps and toilets for children with disabilities.

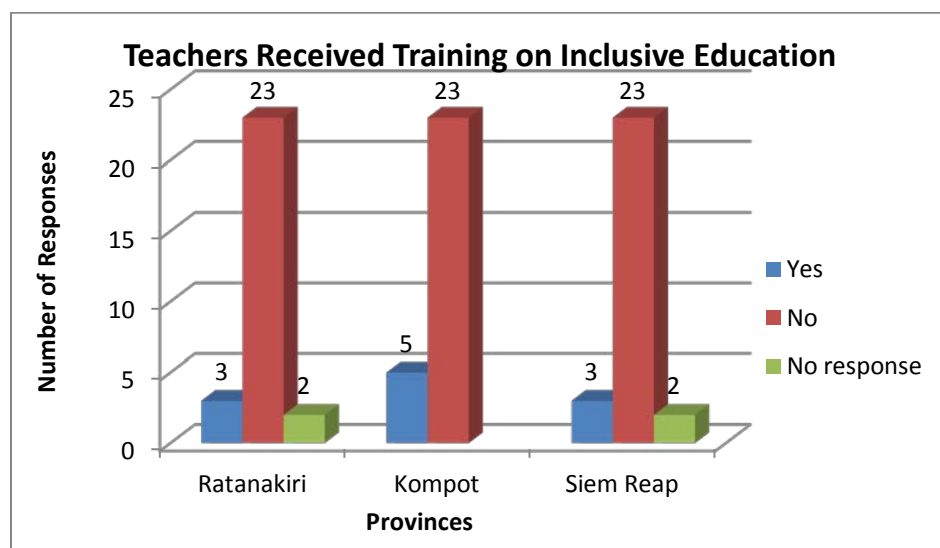
Four student and three parent groups reported that schools did not provide any support to children with physical impairments or children who have low vision. They felt that teachers could not adapt teaching methods to the needs of these children and that these children were likely to leave school early, at around grade 4. Children with intellectual disabilities who attended our workshop also advised that teachers did not understand their needs and could not adapt their teaching method to help them.

MoEYS has inclusive education policies, but only 11 of 84 interviewed teachers advised that they had received training on inclusive education. They also stressed

⁴⁷ Schools can hold classes during vacation between August and October, which are often attended by those who might not be promoted to the next grade. These classes are actually part of a re-entry programme aimed to help children out of school return to school, but they are often predominantly attended by students at risk of not being promoted.

that the training was very short and the contents were complicated, so they were difficult to follow. They advised that they would like to learn more on this subject.

Figure 8: Teacher training on inclusive education



Teachers from a cluster of schools (six to eight) meet every Thursday of the fourth week of each month (Thursday Technical Meetings, TTMs). This technical meeting could be used to discuss inclusive education teaching methods with teachers who have children with disabilities in their class. A structured training module of inclusive teaching methods could be created by the Teacher Training Department and Special Education Office of MoEYS specifically for implementation at the Thursday Technical Meetings.

Additionally, MoEYS could create a resource centre in every province that can provide training to teachers who do have children with disabilities or can provide information/advice. Specially trained staff members could visit schools to provide support and advice to teachers of children with disabilities. This is practiced in other countries such as England. MoEYS and Krousar Thmey have recently started such a new program in 12 districts where Krousar Thmey partners with the District Offices of Education, working in close collaboration with one staff member who will receive extra training regarding education for children with disabilities (specifically low vision, blind and deaf). A Krousar Thmey staff person will visit schools with this DOE person to provide support and after time, it will just be the DOE person.

4.3.2 Adapting education to meet the needs of ethnic minority groups

Parents from an ethnic minority group advised that often Khmer teachers do not speak the local language well enough to teach children in that language. Whereas if teaching in Khmer, students from an ethnic minority group said that sometimes their teachers used words during explanations that the students did not understand. Students advised that their lack of understanding of Khmer words limits their ability to read and do homework. The NGO, CARE, advised that the Khmer language is a very difficult language to learn for non-

native speakers and that this, along with culture, was the main difficulty facing students from ethnic minority groups when trying to learn various subjects.

Bilingual education can play a crucial role in making sure ethnic minority children receive an education⁴⁸ and MoEYS, with support from some NGOs such as CARE and International Cooperation Cambodia, are providing bilingual education in primary school:

- Grade 1: 80% of time in local language and 20% of time in Khmer language
- Grade 2: 60% of time in local language and 40% of time in Khmer language
- Grade 3: 30% of time in local language and 70% of time in Khmer language
- Grade 4 onwards: 100% in Khmer language

Some parents felt that teachers from outside their ethnic minority, i.e. Khmer, did not care if the students understood them or not and therefore did not try to adapt their teaching. Regarding culture, parents believed that some Khmer teachers did not properly respect the culture of the ethnic minority. NGOs advised that the Khmer culture and culture of ethnic minorities can often be very different leading to different expectations and types of behaviour. This can create difficulties between the teacher and student. However, students did say that sometimes the teacher does try to use examples from their own culture to help them understand lessons or common practices in Khmer culture.

A benefit of bi-lingual education is that students are also able to learn Khmer, and two parents group in Rattanakiri were happy that their children had learnt to read and write Khmer as a result of attending bilingual education. There are now 52 bi-lingual schools in grades 1 – 3 in four provinces (Rattanakiri Mondolkiri, Stung Treng, and Kratie) with 4126 students and 205 teachers. However, all of these teachers are contract teachers although they have received extensive training from CARE. CARE has also produced the textbooks in five different languages that follow the official curriculum, and these are used in the bi-lingual schools.

Currently there is a rule that civil servants can only be recruited if they are aged under 25, although dispensations can be made. MoEYS should consider giving dispensation to the contract teachers in the bi-lingual schools so that they can become a recognised public school teacher. MoEYS could also consider dispensing with the requirement to have done two years pedagogical training before qualifying as it would be difficult for these current bilingual teachers to stop teaching and earning a wage for two years. If extra training is required, this could be done during the school vacation in August and September.

⁴⁸ Klaus, D. (2003). *The Use of Indigenous Languages in Early Basic Education in Papua New Guinea*. Language and Education Journal, Vol 17, Issue 2.

Box 4: Special education contract teachers could become full civil servants

Teachers in Krousar Thmey schools were previously employed and paid only by Krousar Thmey. Some of them were already certified teachers but not all. Now all of them have received the status of civil servants, and get their basic salary from MoEYS. They continue to receive an extra-payment from Krousar Thmey. When they were transferred to become civil servants, they did not have to go to teacher training centers or pass exams. Because of their experience and the specific training they received from the organization, special dispensation was given so that they could become civil servants despite being over the age of 25. The same could be done for the existing 205 teachers in bilingual schools.

Areas where there is a higher proportion of ethnic minority groups, such as remote areas in Rattanakiri, are also areas that suffer from teacher shortages. This leads to the use of contract teachers who have not attended the two year pre-service training that state teachers do and are less likely to have attended in-service training. Some parents believed that these teachers were less able to adapt their teaching methods to suit the needs of the children. NGOs who attended the consultative workshop recommended that the government should prioritise providing contract teachers with additional training so that they can become state teachers. They also thought that the government should try to recruit teachers from ethnic minority groups who would understand the culture and the local language. When teacher trainee places are being allocated, a quota for bi-lingual teachers could be reserved. These teachers could do the normal two year pre-service training with two months extra at the end to focus on teaching in the indigenous language.

4.3.3 Teaching content and curriculum

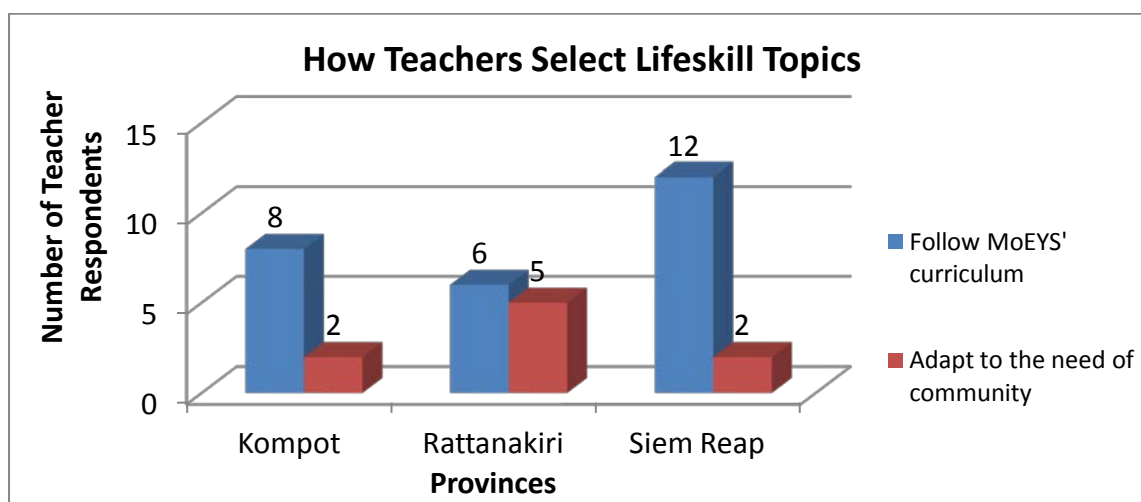
Most parent and student focus groups and teachers said that the subjects currently in the curriculum are relevant to the needs of the children, citing children's ability to read, write and count. Students said that the life skills lessons were useful to their daily life and home gardening could save them money by reducing consumption of vegetables from markets. Parents in Kampot town said that skills learnt enabled their children to assist with the family business. However, ten student groups reported that they had not learned any skill that would be useful for them and/or their family yet. This was a concern for children in lower secondary schools whilst students at primary school felt that they are too young to learn a skill.

Both students and teachers have identified additional subjects that may be important to them such as learning to use computers and other foreign languages. Students in all provinces mentioned English and French as being important, and in Siem Reap, they mentioned Korean and Chinese as well. Beginning in the school year 2013/14, English will be taught from grade 4 instead of grade 7 although many of the primary teachers will require training to enable them to teach the subject. Teaching students how to use computers is restricted by the lack of electricity in most schools and teachers able to use them. However, it is undoubted that these will be important subjects, especially considering integration into ASEAN in 2015. All lower secondary students showed strong interests in picking up a skill that enables them to generate income. Commonly, they are interested in

agriculture, mechanics, electrical repairs, phone repairs, sewing and beauty services. Worryingly, no student group felt that they could propose what topics they wanted to learn from their teachers because they felt that they did not have the right to do this.

Teachers said that they tried to adapt their teaching to meet the need of students but it appears that adaptation was limited by their capacity and the availability of resources. For example, teachers were able to integrate only the basic life skills such as health and hygiene education, and home gardening. **Only 9 of 44 primary teachers interviewed said that they have selected life skills based on the needs of the community, whilst 26 primary teachers said that they followed the textbook curriculum. Five other teachers said that they use the classes to focus on Khmer language whilst the remaining 4 teachers said that they did not teach any life skills lessons.**

Figure 9: Choosing Life Skill Topics



Although the life-skill program has been integrated into the formal school curriculum it does not seem to give learners any specific skills that can be used to help them enter the labour market. Urban students are more likely to have better access to skill development programs than their counterparts in rural communities where there are very few opportunities available. In urban areas, these opportunities are generally organized by private agencies and non-profit organizations.

MoEYS reported that there are 323 active community learning centres across the country and there are 108,93 learners (58% female) engaged in the activities of the centres⁴⁹. This study found that a learning centre existed in most of the communes that we visited, but they seemed to have little benefit to youth and children out of school. The learning centres were not active and most people interviewed, including teachers, were not aware of and have never used them. In Kampot, community members said that the centre benefits only a few people but not poor people who have no potential to set up any business after finishing vocational training. In addition, they mentioned that the centre provides skill training on traditional music which does not help to earn money.

⁴⁹ These figures were taken from a presentation given by H.E Nath Bunroeun, Secretary of State of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, on 19 March, 2014 at Education Congress.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 Availability and Accessibility

Virtually everybody that we spoke to felt that accessing school now was easier than it was five years ago, and this included children with disabilities and their parents, and people from ethnic minority groups. This reflects undoubted progress that Cambodia has made, particularly in primary education, and should not be forgotten during discussions of remaining challenges. Parents most frequently explained that these improvements were due to there being more schools and teachers available, and to a lesser extent better roads. Parents in Kampot also placed great importance on parents doing more to encourage children to go to school whilst parents in Rattanakiri frequently advised that more children wanted to learn, specifically citing the desire to learn Khmer. Parents said that it was a simple process to enrol in school as only a birth certificate or family record is required and no fees were paid. It should be noted that this study was conducted in predominantly rural and semi-rural areas, while the situation may be different in Phnom Penh or other urban centres.

The most common reason given by children for dropping out of school was poverty, which limits their ability to purchase bicycles and learning materials that enable them to access school. It also makes it more likely that they will choose to leave school to care for siblings, work with their parents or find a job. Students also thought that these were the main factors that cause drop out, although parents did to a lesser extent. It was also noticeable that most of the children who had dropped out of school had started grade 1 older than age 6. Twelve of the fourteen children we interviewed who had left school at lower secondary level were aged between 16 and 19 when they left school. Nearly half of the children who had dropped out at primary school did so when aged 14-16. These are ages when they can begin to earn an income. It is important that MoEYS should address the problem of late enrolment.

It appears that it is not just the opportunity to earn money that causes some poorer children to leave school, but that there are costs of attending school which make it difficult for them. **People continually made the distinction between being poor and needing money to spend at school. The most challenging costs of attending school were purchasing learning materials and transport i.e. a bicycle, which were repeatedly mentioned by all groups as causes of dropping out or not attending school regularly.**

MoEYS should continue with its policy of expanding scholarships as there is a noticeable impact on dropout rates in grades 7 and 8, and at primary school. In school year 2012-13, the World Food Programme provided 9,000 cash scholarships (\$50 p/a) to children identified as being the poorest in their communes. The dropout rate for the cash scholarship programme was 2.37%, which is lower than the national dropout rate despite this being amongst the group of children that would be expected to have a higher than average dropout rate. In a review of some of the scholarship students, every child had used the scholarship to purchase learning materials, indicating that there is a need.



A girl from an ethnic minority who attended a consultative workshop in Phnom Penh

Parents and children in all provinces cited that distance from school and lack of transport are a big difficulty in terms of attending school regularly, particularly regarding lower secondary schools. Some communes do not have a lower secondary school, whilst it may have multiple primary schools. Some lower secondary schools in Rattanakiri have established dormitories for poor students which solved problems of transportation to school. To solve the problem of being far away from schools, new schools do not always have to be built; MoEYS could also consider providing transport and/or dormitories.

Although more children have attended school, some particular groups of children, children with a physical, sensory or intellectual disability, have less chance to attend school or are likely to have dropped out. In this report, we have highlighted the situations of children with disabilities and children from ethnic minority groups. It appears that without considerable support from NGOs, their access to school would be limited. For instance, the textbooks for blind children and for children who speak different languages are produced by NGOs rather than by MoEYS. MoEYS have successfully integrated teachers in schools for deaf and blind people into the civil service but have not yet done so with teachers in bi-lingual schools meaning that they are only contract teachers. Transferring them to become full civil servants should be a priority for MoEYS, as should taking over responsibility for producing the various textbooks.

School non-attendance was not limited to children with any particular types of impairments or activity limitations. Clearly, there needs to be increased attention to addressing barriers to school attendance for the many children with disabilities who are not being mainstreamed adequately. In addition, if special education services are available for the group of children with complex or serious disabilities, they remain geographically limited and need to be expanded.

5.1.2 Acceptability

Most parents and students were satisfied with the quality of education. However, satisfaction levels must be considered in relation to expectation levels. If expectations of quality are very low, then a very good quality of education is not required for people to be satisfied. This could be a partial explanation of these reported high levels of satisfaction as two student groups in rural schools of Rattanakiri felt this because they can read and write, which indicates low expectations. Similarly, nearly all children interviewed who had dropped out before grade 9 thought that the quality of education experienced was good. However, only half said that they were numerate. It appears that expectations are limited to being able to read and write.

The children who we spoke to who had dropped out during lower secondary school were not able to find jobs that they wanted because there was a large gap between the skill that they needed and the skills that they had. Most of the children who had dropped out during primary school did not know what job they wanted to do and were doing manual labour/casual work.

Nearly every student and parent group advised that good teachers were important to enable a good level of quality in education and most of them, including in rural areas, reported satisfaction with the quality of teachers in their respective communes. If students or parents were dissatisfied with teachers, it was more likely to do with the behaviour of teachers regarding absenteeism or collection of fees. Parents advised that teachers favored children who paid for extra classes or those whose parents gave money to the teachers to pass exams. Students also advised that their teacher provided much higher scores to students who had attended their extra class than the students who had not, although their answers in the exam were the same.

A lack of teachers was reported, especially in Siem Reap and Rattanakiri. In Siem Reap, teachers in both primary and lower secondary schools often have to teach more than one class at the same time; they begin teaching a class in one room, then leave to go to another room. In Rattanakiri, five of the 14 primary teachers taught double shifts and two of them have multi-grade teaching in the afternoon shift. These are likely to affect their ability to give proper explanations or provide enough attention. Furthermore, there was a high use of untrained teachers in Rattanakiri.

After teachers, students willingness to learn was the most commonly cited factor influencing the quality of education. **Some students even advised that they wanted homework as frequently as three times per week. It is interesting to note that students think that parental support is important to help children attend school but that they have less of an impact of the quality of education.**

Students did advise that there was a lack of textbooks. However, when asked their opinion on the quality of education they received and to give reasons for their judgement, no student group mentioned teaching materials as being the cause of them having a good, average or poor quality of education.

5.1.3 Adaptability

Parents advised that schools did not provide enough support or flexibility to assist children who are blind, deaf, have epilepsy or intellectually disabled attend school. Furthermore, schools had not assisted parents to provide education at home. They felt that schools did not have specific facilities or materials for children with disabilities, although some of the schools visited had ramps and toilets for children with disabilities. It appears that the education system's response to the needs of children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities is limited.

Children with disabilities and their parents frequently said that teachers were unable to adapt their teaching to help them. A small minority of teachers said that they had received training on inclusive education, but that they wanted to learn more. An option would be to have a resource centre in every province that can provide training to teachers who do have students with disabilities or can provide information/advice, and perhaps create a module specifically for Thursday Technical Meetings. Specially trained staff members could visit schools to provide support and advice to teachers of children with disabilities, similar to the itinerant teachers that Handicap International used during a project that they recently implemented and is practiced in other countries such as England. Krousar Thmey have recently started such a new program in 12 districts where Krousar Thmey partners with the District Offices of Education, working in close collaboration with one staff member who will receive extra training regarding education for children with disabilities (specifically low vision, blind and deaf). A Krousar Thmey staff person will visit schools with this DOE person to provide support and after time, it will just be the DOE person.

Students from ethnic minority groups also advised that teachers were unable to adapt their teaching to assist them, for instance using Khmer words which they did not understand. More bilingual teachers could be recruited and it could be that when teacher trainee places are being allocated, a quota for bi-lingual teachers could be reserved. These teachers could do the normal two year pre-service training with two months extra at the end to focus on teaching in the indigenous language.

In terms of adapting content to meet the needs of students, students said that life skills lessons were useful to their daily life and could save them money by reducing consumption of vegetables from markets. Parents also thought that children had learnt useful skills which could help the family business. However, many lower secondary students were concerned that they had not learned any skill that would be useful for them and/or their family yet.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on our research findings and analysis, we make the following recommendations to improve the accessibility, availability, acceptability and adaptability of education in Cambodia.

- MoEYS should provide transport and dormitories, especially for children in lower secondary school to help them remain in school especially at the transition stage to lower secondary school.
- MoEYS should continue with its policy of expanding scholarships to help students purchase learning materials, school uniforms or bicycles.
- MoEYS should conduct campaigns, targeted in rural areas, to persuade parents to enroll children in grade 1 when they are aged 6 rather than age 7 or 8.
- MoEYS should provide capacity building to teachers on inclusive education with specific modules included in the Thursday technical meetings.
- There should be at least one school in each district that provides special classes to children based on the types of their disability.
- MoEYS should identify schools where they can build dormitories and have special classes for children with disabilities in a normal school. This means that children with disabilities can integrate and interact with other children, but have special classes based on their needs.
- Screening for children with disability should be done with the School Health department and in collaboration with line agencies, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Affairs
- MoEYS need to recruit more teachers, especially in rural areas, and develop in-service training programmes to build the capacity of teachers including contract/community teachers.
- More bilingual teachers could be recruited and, a quota for bi-lingual teachers could be reserved. These teachers could do the normal two year pre-service training with two months extra at the end to focus on teaching in the indigenous language.
- MoEYS should transfer community bilingual teachers to become full civil servants.
- MoEYS should take over responsibility for printing textbooks for bilingual education and for children with disabilities. Currently, NGOs produce these and MoEYS should

allocate its education budget to the printing of those documents as well as provide training to teachers.

- There should be opportunities for children to have skill training either in or outside school. Community learning centres should play crucial roles in providing relevant skill trainings to those who are out of school.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Over age admission and primary net enrolment

Every year, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport publishes the:

- number of children aged 6-11 (the appropriate age for primary school)
- net enrolment rate for primary school
- number of children being admitted into grade 1 for the first time
- the % of children being admitted into grade 1 for the first time that are over age (older than 6)

The number of children aged 6 – 11 who are not in primary school is calculated by multiplying the number of children aged 6 – 11 by the net enrolment rate for primary school (A x B). The number of over age children being admitted into grade 1 is calculated by multiplying the number of children being admitted into grade 1 for the first time by the percentage of children being admitted into grade 1 for the first time that are over age (C x D). The results from these calculations have been entered into the table below.

School year	Number of children aged 6-11 not in primary school	Number of over age children being admitted into grade 1
2008/09	104,778	135,060
2009/10	93,007	150,137
2010/11	90,038	94,755
2011/12	62,565	125,095
2012/13	38,086	103,529

In 2008/09, according to the statistics, 104,778 children aged 6 – 11 were not in primary school, however, in 2009/10, 150,137 children who were older than age 6 entered primary school for the first time. It is unexpected that the number of children beginning school aged older than 6 in 2009/10 is larger than the number of children aged 6 -11 who were not in school the year before. Similar unexpected results are found in subsequent years. These statistics can be consistent if there are tens of thousands of children older than age 11 being admitted into grade 1 for the first time.

Appendix 2: Analysis of 2011/12 drop out rates

MoEYS reported a primary school dropout rate for the school year 2011/12 of 3.7% for Cambodia, 5.3% for urban areas and 3.5% for rural areas. This figure appears to be inconsistent with dropout rates for every grade in primary school being higher than 3.7%, and generally around 8%. Using promotion rates for each primary grade and repetition numbers, it is possible to calculate the number of children who dropped out of each grade and thus the total dropout rate for primary school. Doing this calculation produces a primary dropout rate of 7.6% for Cambodia (6.5% for urban and 7.8% for rural areas).

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NGO Education Partnership (NEP) is a membership organization that promotes active collaboration between NGOs working in education and advocates on behalf of its members organisations in policy meetings and discussions with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in Cambodia. Over 100 education NGOs working in Cambodia are members of NEP.

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