

Work Package 1 – Preparation

Environmental Project Analysis: Cambodia

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1. Introduction

This report results from the project **CONTESSA–Contemporary Skills for South Asia**. CONTESSA is a three-year project (11/2018-10/21) funded by the European Union’s Erasmus+ Programme covering four countries in Europe and Asia.

The aim of CONTESSA is to establish a teacher education program that supports current and future teachers developing skills to use a wide range of teaching and learning methods which, in turns, help engaging, empowering and educating their students and thus contributes to high-quality schooling in Cambodia’s primary education.

It addresses three target groups all of them involved with teacher education at primary level:

- **teacher educators**, also called **teacher trainers**, i.e. those professionals who educate and train future teachers at tertiary levels;
- **in-service teachers**, i.e. those teachers who are fully qualified professionals and who teach in primary schools;
- **pre-service teachers**, also called future teachers or trainee teachers, i.e. students who will become teachers and currently pursue a University degree to become fully qualified teachers.

CONTESSA is run by a consortium of six project partner institutions and seven associated partner institutions across four countries:

Project Partner Institutions	Associated Partner Institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – University of Graz (Graz, Austria), Project Coordinator – University of Cambodia (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) – Pannasastra University of Cambodia (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) – Technische Universitaet Dresden, (Dresden, Germany) – University of Colombo (Colombo Western Province, Sri Lanka) – The Open University of Sri Lanka (Colombo Western Province, Sri Lanka) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – University of Jaffna (Jaffna, Sri Lanka) – University College of Teacher Education Styria (Graz, Austria) – National Institute of Education (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) – National Institute of Education (Maharagama, Sri Lanka) – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) – University Grants Commission (Colombo, Sri Lanka) – Little Smile Association (Koslanda, Sri Lanka)

The report provides an overview of the project environment of one of the project countries, Cambodia, and is the fundament for other parts of the project including the development of e-learning and blended learning courses on contemporary teaching skills. The report covers an analysis of the project environment including general country information. This is followed by an overview of relevant structures of primary education and teacher education in primary education as well as a stakeholder analysis.

The report is based on desk research, information provided by the project partners and findings from focus group interviews conducted in Cambodia (and Sri Lanka) in March 2019. The focus group interviews were run with pre-service teachers, teachers and teacher educators. In sum, 29 persons from Cambodia participated in the interviews and additional in-depth information on teacher training structures and needs was provided by project team members who work as professionals in the field of teacher training in Cambodia (3 persons). Again, interviews with professionals aimed at an in-depth understanding of the project environment and a situational analysis of teacher training and teaching in primary schools in Cambodia.¹

2. Project environment: Cambodia

2.1 General country information

With currently approx. 16 million inhabitants and a population increase of 1.5% annually, Cambodia has enjoyed increasing economic stability and growth in the past years.² After the Khmer Rouge period and the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991, it became one of the fastest growing economies worldwide and ‘one of the best performers in terms of reducing poverty’ (OECD 2018a: 15). According to the World Bank, it has transited from a developing towards a middle-income country. Among the many reasons for this development is the privatisation of most state-owned enterprises and few restrictions for foreign investment.

Life expectancy has massively increased from 54 years (1990) to currently 69 years while at the same time mortality rates of those below five years and fertility rates have massively decreased (currently at 2.6 compared to 5.4 in 1990).

However, several serious challenges still need to be addressed. This includes a serious infrastructure gap referring to insufficient electricity supplies, weak internet connectivity and poor access to general and transport infrastructure – particularly with respect to the country’s rural regions. Moreover, 25% of Cambodia’s population (3.8 million people out of 16.005 million inhabitants in 2017) do not have access to improved water, and 44% (6.8 million people) did not have access to improved sanitation. In 2019, health and education are still two key

¹ More detailed information on the interviews is provided in the Report ‘Training Needs Analysis. Work Package 2 – Development’.

² All data in the following sections are based on the World Bank’s database. If not otherwise indicated, data refer to 2017.

priorities in the country even though participation in primary education increased from 82% in 1997 to 97% in 2016. Compared to Asian countries enrolment rates and completion rates in lower secondary education are low (57% in 2017) with refers to both, a comparatively low intake rate of primary education graduates and high dropout rates in secondary education (OECD 2018a: 71). Also, investment in education in Cambodia is still quite low compared to other Asian countries:

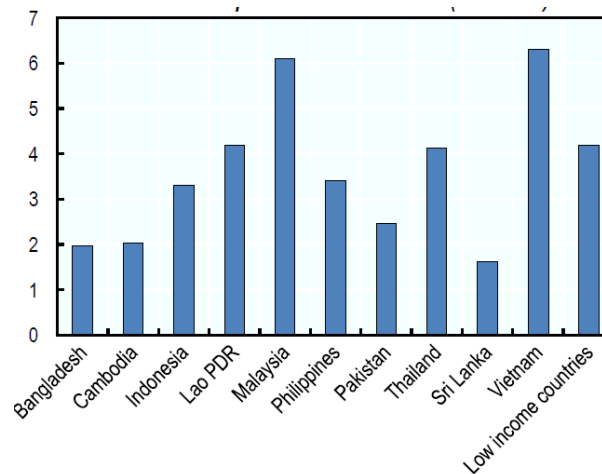


Table 1: Government expenditure on education (% of GDP). Data sources: World Development Indicators, World Bank, and UNESCO Statistics. Graph: OCED 2018: 70. Reference years: Indonesia and Lao: 2014; Viet Nam: 2011; all other countries: 2013. Net enrolment data refers to 2013 for Bangladesh and Philippines and 2014 for all other countries.

Moreover, compared to other Asian countries including China, India, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, Cambodia spends less on higher education and training (OECD 2018a: 68).

These issues are closely linked with improving public governance, which, in turns, demands for capacity-building of human resources in the public sectors (including officials, teachers etc.) and a reduction of corruption as well as clear procedures of public regulations and legislation (OECD 2018a: 17). Current shortages of qualified human resources both, in the public sector but also in the private sector are not only a result ('legacy') of the Khmer Rouge Regime but also a result from the governments' policy to give this topic a low priority over decades. In addition, the country's loss of high-skilled inhabitants (tertiary educated population) is only slowly reducing.³

³ This rate was at 22.5% in 1990 and at 18.3% in 2010 (Data based on the Unesco's global Monitoring Report 2019: http://gem-report-2019.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Cambodia-2019_factsheet.pdf).

2.2 Structure of primary education

Primary education commonly starts at age 6 and lasts 6 years. It is embedded in a 6 + 3 + 3 structure of general education including

- 6 years of primary education (Grades 1–6; compulsory).
- 3 years of lower secondary education (Grades 7–9; compulsory).
- 3 years of upper secondary education (Grades 10–12; eligible).

In 2017, there were 7,144 primary schools across the country plus another 96 primary schools for disadvantaged students. 2,022,061 children including 974,231 girls were attending primary school. In the same period, 46,149 staff was teaching in primary education including 25,713 female teachers (MoEYS 2017: Table 1).

Since 1993, primary schools in Cambodia have been organised in clusters; each cluster includes a Core School, several so-called Satellite Schools and – in some cases – additional Annex Schools which are also part of this system: While the Satellite Schools are Primary Schools that are directly linked with the Core Schools, Annex Schools are linked with Satellite Schools only and can be distinguished from these as they do not provide all schools grade and are typical found in remote areas.

Each cluster commonly spans six to seven schools (excluding Annex Schools). The idea of this policy is to improve school quality by sharing financial and management resources as well as experience with managing schools by networking and initiating professional discussions among staff and teachers⁴ (Pellini & Bredenberg 2015: 421–422). In the MoEYS' Cluster School Guidelines Cluster Schools are defined as “an effective working mechanism to provide direct support for the community in order to promote educational access for children” (MoEYS 2000: 5).

There are currently 1,253 Core Schools and 5,891 Satellite Schools in place (MoEYS 2017: Table 1). In addition, there are 682 Annex Schools. Primary schools that are not part of a cluster currently do not exist. However, there are 1,030 additional Schools in Pagodas which are located on the premises of Pagodas and which are not part of the above-described system.

The development of Core Schools is closely linked with Cambodia's Child Friendly School Policy which was initiated in 2001 by UNICEF (UNICEF 2009). It was adopted and implemented by the MoEYS from 2007 onwards (King 20018b: 19; MoEYS 2007). Since then, it was amended and strengthened several times (MoEYS 2007; 2014). Cambodia's CFS policy has adopted the core ideas of UNICEF's CFS policy and spans six dimensions:

- All children have access to schooling (schools are inclusive).
- Effective learning.
- Health, safety and protection of children.
- Gender responsiveness.
- Children, families and communities participate in running their local school.

⁴ Excluding Annex Schools.

- The National Education System supports and encourages schools to become more child-friendly (MoEYS 2007: 5–6).

Based on these dimensions, the MoEYS has initiated numerous activities all of which aim at improving educational quality in a holistic way. Moreover, some of them directly aim at improving the quality of teaching and learning as e.g. dimension 2 (effective learning) which includes student-centred teaching, attractive classroom environment, support of slow learners or school libraries (MoEYS 2007: 7).

Cambodia's teaching approach that is resulting from the CFS policy is called Effective Teaching and Learning (ETL). Though easy to understand at first sight it may demand teachers to amend their understanding of teaching and their teaching values completely, thus leading to a enormous challenge to teaching training and to teachers' professional development: 'Instead of teachers depositing knowledge into children's minds, ETL advocates more interactive ways of teaching and learning that are based on a constructivist approach to knowledge. They emphasize creative and critical thinking as the most advanced level of learning that will equip students with skills and attitudes necessary to reach their fullest potential. ETL, in short, is not only to change how teaching and learning is actually organized but also to change fundamental ideas about knowledge and how knowledge can be acquired' (Ogisu 2016: 60).

A recent enhancement of the CFS policy and the ETL approach is the establishment of New Generation Schools (NGS). NGS aim at fostering STEM⁵ education and independent learning. Though NGS are hoped to provide a new standard for schools for both, urban and rural schools, this 'seems unlikely for the latter considering that it requires a significant investment from the government' (OECD 2018b: 139)

Initiatives and activities resulting from the MoEYS child-friendly and student-centred policies and the development of NGS were addressed in numerous studies (e.g. King 2018b; Ogisu 2018; Prigent 2018) all of them pointing at the difficulties with the risk of neglecting subject knowledge while over-emphasizing pedagogical skills. In general, all the initiatives aimed at shifting the focus from a teacher-oriented teaching style forwards involving students more actively and learning to deal with real-world tasks. As a consequence, such initiatives – most of them initiated and realised by the support of NGOs envisaged four aims: '(1) more flexible and relevant curricula; (2) activity as the core of learning; (3) placing learners at the centre of education; and (4) constructivist epistemology' (Ogisu 2018: 769; see also Tabulawa 2003).

Also, while these studies point at numerous changes and improvement with respect to teaching styles, they also indicate that the teaching praxis is still often 'primarily focused on frontal teaching and rote learning' (Benveniste et al. 2008: 72).

With respect to the curriculum, primary education covers basic skills in literacy and numeracy as well as arts (drawing, cutting and folding of paper, dances, games etc.). The following table provides an overview of the timetables and subjects in primary education:

⁵ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Subjects	G 1	G 2	G 3	G 4	G 5	G 6
Khmer	14	12	12	11	8	8
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5
Science	2	3	3	3	3	3
Social Studies	6	7	7	8	8	8
Physical Education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Special Activities	1	1	1	1	1	1
Foreign Languages	0	0	0	0	3	3
TOTAL	30	30	30	30	30	30

Table 2: Overview of subjects and timetables in primary education in Cambodia based on information provided by Cambodian project partners.

Class sizes massively vary between urban and rural areas and between public and private schools. While classes in private education are limited to approx. 25 students at primary level and cover approx. 17-20 students at lower secondary level, public school classes in primary education can cover up to 100 students and approx. 36–42 students at lower secondary level. Across all ages of students and school types, the average number of students per teacher is 30 (OECD 2018b: 99).

	Urban Areas	Rural Areas
Public Schools	approx. 50	50–100
Private Schools	approx. 25	approx. 25

Table 3: Average numbers of students per class in primary education in Cambodia. Source: Information provided by Cambodian project partners and interviewees.⁶

In public schools, teaching material is often restricted to chalk and board and schools lack sufficient and up-to-date teaching material. In comparison, private schools seem to have sufficient teaching material including resources for e-learning (depending on the school and level of teaching). In both types of schools, students have textbooks and coursebooks and some of the books are provided by the MoEYS. The language of instruction in primary education is Khmer with some foreign language teaching (mostly English) starting from Grade 5.

The use of e-learning is not common in primary education, particularly with respect to public schools. With respect to the overall aims of the project, schools and students could not benefit from blended-learning offers directly as schools in primary education would not have the infrastructure to participate in e-learning or blended learning.

⁶ Similar findings are reported by OECD (2018: 99).

2.3 Structure of teacher training

In Cambodia, a grade 12 certificate and the passing of an entrance examination are the common entry qualifications to become a teacher in primary education in public schools. Indeed, more than 80% of all primary education teachers in Cambodia have passed at least upper secondary education:

Qualification levels	All Teachers		Teachers in primary Education	
		%		%
Primary education	1,779	1,66	1,104	2,39
Lower secondary education	19,267	18,00	12,521	27,21
Upper secondary education	51,820	48,43	28,701	62,38
Graduate	18,034	16,86	3,585	7,79
Post-Graduate	1,092	1,02	95	0,20
PhD	15	0,01	3	0,006
Total	106,992	100	46,009	100

Table 4: Qualification levels of teaching staff in Cambodia. Data: MoEYS (2017; reference years: 2016/2017).

There are several reasons for the comparatively high numbers of teachers with qualifications at lower secondary levels: One of the reasons is the low attractiveness of teaching in rural and remote areas for those teachers with at least upper secondary qualifications. One of the core reasons for the low attractiveness of the teaching profession lies in the low salaries of teachers “which despite periodic revisions have been constantly eroded by inflation and have remained inadequate to meet the living costs of a typical married teacher with two children” (see also Bray et al. 2018: 440; Tandon & Fukao, 2015: 19).

Commonly, novice teachers (less than 5 years of professional experience) with low test scores are posted to rural and remote schools and are likely to move back to the urban areas as soon they gained sufficient work experience to be eligible to apply for posts in urban areas (OECD 2018b: 78).

Though this system ensures that young teachers are posted to rural and remote schools it also results in a scarcity of more experienced (primary) teachers in these areas. As a consequence, in 2007/08, Cambodia implemented a second track to primary teaching for those who leave school after grade 9 as they are more likely to stay in the rural areas where they and their families come from (King 2018a: 21).

Another reason lies in Cambodia’s history where the civil war (1970-1974) and the Khmer Rouge Regime (1975-1979) resulting in either a systematic persecution of “educated” persons including teaching professionals or disrupted education careers for those born before 1970 (King 2018a: 22). After this period, the country was facing the challenge to quickly re-establish the education system including an “emergency-recruited teaching force” (King 2018a: 22).

Moreover, minimum access qualifications for the teaching profession refer to public schools only while teaching in private schools does not require a particular qualification.

As a result, less than 8% of teachers in primary education received at least a Bachelor degree. Associate Degrees in Teacher Training (below Bachelor level) do exist but are very uncommon. Higher Education Degrees for teachers (Associate Degrees, BA, MA, PhD) are offered by public and private Universities, and the Teacher Training Curriculum at Higher Education level has to be approved by the Ministry of Education. Particularly with respect to teaching in primary education, teacher training is provided by Regional Teacher Training Centres which offer courses below higher education levels. Those who attend teacher training with the Regional Teacher Training Centres have to pass a national exam for primary teachers at the end of the training.

While the teacher training programs (for teaching in primary schools) at Universities include a two-months-internship at a public school, the training that is offered at the Regional Teacher Training Centres does not cover an internship. Instead, the Training is followed by a one-year-internship which is under the responsibility of the National Institute of Education.

With respect to career development, promotion and becoming e.g. a school principal seems difficult, particularly with respect to public schools. Interviewees pointed at the wide-spread problem of corruption in public schools and reported that salaries and promotion opportunities were higher in private schools. It was felt that the additional value of a higher education teaching degree mainly refers to improving chances to receive higher salaries and increasing opportunities to be promoted to an administrative position. However, interviewees and project team members also reported that the majority of teacher training graduates at Bachelor level (or higher) do actually not become teacher but rather seek for labour market positions that seem more attractive.

Another core problem that was reported in the interviews was the common model of studying at two universities in parallel, i.e. students may study at the University of Cambodia in the morning and at Pannasastra University of Cambodia in the afternoon. This phenomenon is not restricted to teacher training but rather seems to be a general way of studying to increase job opportunities: Students who e.g. study English and law in parallel are expected to be more likely to find a position in either field, and thus, students are willing to take (up to) ten courses per week. As a consequence, interviewees stated that working and studying seven days a week or working from Monday to Friday, studying at the weekends and a lack of weekends off are common models of pursuing a degree which puts high pressure on future. The double burden demands a high price even though the majority of students are still supported by their parents *and* most of them are on scholarships at both universities: Students often feel highly overworked and the heavy workload of students often results in a lack of adequate preparation of each class.

In Cambodia, while all day-school is common in all types of schools, working and teaching hours in schools depend on the type of school (private versus public) and on the type of occupation (administration versus teaching).

	School Administration	Teaching
Public Schools	6.30 a.m.–7 p.m. (including a one-hour break)	6.30 a.m.–10.30 a.m. 1.30 p.m.–4.30 p.m.
Private Schools	7.30 a.m.–11 a.m. 4 p.m.–6 p.m.	

Table 5: Working times according to school type and type of occupation. Source: Information provided by Cambodian project partners and interviewees.

Improving teacher training has been at the core of numerous initiatives, many of them funded by donors co-operating with the MoEYS and dealing with e.g. curriculum development, teaching methods, child-centred teaching, pedagogical issues, but also issues such as hygiene, gender issues or special needs education (Prigent 2018: 7). His findings indicate that actually changing the underlying assumptions and values of Cambodian teacher education harbour the risk of resulting in a ‘paradox [that] means that the education values that underpin these international programs are unlikely to reach most Cambodian pupils’ (Prigent 2018: 169).

2.4 Stakeholder analysis

Cambodia’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport plays a crucial role in teacher education and in the provision of primary education including teacher education and providing high-quality schooling. Among the many responsibilities of the Ministry are:

- Developing the Education Strategic Plans (current version: 2014-2018)
- Providing the biannual report on Education Statistics and Indicators
- Developing guidelines and tools for improving school quality and teaching quality (e.g. School Inspection Handbook, School Health Policy)
- Ensuring that the country’s national strategies and development plans are reflected in the further development of the education and training systems as well as implemented at national, regional and community levels.

Given the Ministry’s Involvement with developing and fostering child-friendly schools and improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning, the Ministry is most of all interested in improving (changing) teacher education and increasing the attractiveness of teacher education and the teaching profession.

Moreover, the MoEYS is responsible for developing the national curricula for teacher training (‘teacher education’) at University level. National curricula are developed and revised by external experts, many of them coming from other national environments (Anglosphere community/US). Revisions are conducted approx. every 4 years and usually take 3–6 months.

The National Institute of Education is mainly responsible for teacher training at secondary levels (High School Teachers), for training Educational Administration Officials, for school principals' training, and for the training of educational inspectors responsible for the systemic school inspection (and school monitoring). With respect to teacher training, it is responsible for both, pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher training. In details, it provides training for high school teachers.

Cambodia's **Education Quality Assurance Department (EQAD)** is responsible for quality assurance and school inspection in Cambodia which are based on 4 criteria and a process following guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education (MEYS, 2016):

- a) leadership and management;
- b) teaching and learning;
- c) students' results and achievement;
- d) school self-assessment.

However, school visits seem to be rarely realised even though this is mandatory according to the guidelines (Sopha et al. 2015) and corruption is reported in the context of school inspection as well (Unesco & Hossain 2017: 10). These findings are in line with statements by our interviewees indicating that corruption seems a major problem (mostly in public schools) that affects the attractiveness of a teaching career as career planning and promotion conditions become unpredictable.

There are **8 Regional Teacher Training Centres**. They provide teacher training at primary level for those teacher who do not pursue a higher education degree and provide the national exams for primary teachers.

Provincial Offices of Education (POE) act under the auspices of the MoEYS. Its main role is the provision of teacher training courses for in-service teachers and the provision of class materials but they are also involved with e.g. school monitoring and school quality assurance.

Next to the POEs, there are several **District Offices of Education (DOE)** whose main task is to support the implementation of MoEYS's policies and strategies as well as to support the implementation of the work of the Provincial Offices of Education.

International stakeholders and NGOs play a major role in Cambodia's education system. As the country has the highest number of NGOs per inhabitant in Southeast Asia Prigent (2018: 2) it is not by surprise that the landscapes of initiatives and programs seems somewhat fragmented and is hard to review.

Stakeholder	Program or initiative (examples)
Asian Development Bank	Basic Education Textbook Project (BETP, 1996; with UNICEF)
Cambodian Action for Primary Education (NGO)	Executing a program to promote capacity-building among primary school teachers, head teachers, and to mobilise parents and communities in support of schools (funded by USAID)
European Commission	supply of equipment to local authorities to promote the quality of teaching and training in the 'Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs de la Confemen (PASEC)'
Friends (NGO) & Pour un Sourire d'enfant (NGO)	protection program for urban street children and deprived children (together with NGO 'Pour un Sourire d'enfant')
Save the Children (NGO)	development of schooling by financing the building of infrastructure (classrooms, latrines, wells and so on), contributing to teacher training and setting up a system for cluster schools.[...]
UNESCO & UNDP	national seminar on education reform in January 1994
UNICEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — development of schooling, financing school infrastructure and teacher training; developing a system for cluster schools — setting up a per diem system which allowed state employees in education to earn extra income during in-service training given in the capital or in provincial centres
United States Development Agency (USAID)	(US\$30 million) to the Cambodian Action for Primary Education to promote capacity-building among primary school teachers and head teachers, and to mobilise parents and communities in support of schools
The World Bank	Education Quality Improvement Program to improve teacher training and school leaders (1999)

Table 6: Overview of main international stakeholders and NGOs in Cambodia based on findings from Prigent (2018: 4–5).

Additional stakeholders that were active in Cambodia – though not all of them in the field of primary education and teacher training included e.g. agents from Belgium, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Sweden and Norway – the latter ones mainly contributing to financing and realizing 'Education For All' (Prigent 2018: 6).

3. Recommendations for developing CONTESSA courses

Primary education in Cambodia is challenged by several factors that should be considered for developing e-learning courses or blended learning courses on contemporary teaching skills in Cambodia. Such challenges include:

Restrict e-learning/blended-learning to teacher training

As indicated in the previous sections, limited financing is one of the main challenges to Cambodia's education and training system. For example, the current version of the Education Strategy Plan includes the policy goal "that no potential students will be excluded from access to education and training opportunities due to inability to pay formal or informal charges or contributions" (MoEYS 2014: 69). Though the report does not indicate the spending on primary education in the previous years it provides an estimation of resources needed and available resources between 2014 and 2018 indicating a funding shortage of approx. 80 Million USD for the overall education system (MoEYS 2014: 70).

Though the project can cover acquisition of some technical infrastructure it is clear that this will not improve the lack of technical infrastructure and thus the access to it in the schools. As a consequence, the courses should focus on empowering pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and teacher trainers to improve lesson planning and delivering high-quality teaching rather than applying e-learning in primary education.

Considering issues with the teacher training and teaching delivery

While the teaching profession in Cambodia at first sight seemed quite unattractive it turned out that its attractiveness is much dependent on teachers' age and experience. Also, shortages of teachers, particularly in remote areas, much depends on the score system that is used to allocate young teachers to teaching positions once they have passed the national test.

However, interviewees stated that planning and conducting high-quality teaching is hard to realise given the existing resources in schools, i.e. insufficient or outdated study material, a lack of or poor technological infrastructure, but also little participation from communities and parents.

As a consequence, the image of the teaching profession should be addressed in the courses and e-learning courses or blended-learning courses including cross-national perspectives on teacher training could help teachers to develop a better understanding of their own professional identity and the challenges of this profession per se.

Aligning the courses with previous initiatives

Cambodia's schooling and teacher training environment has undergone numerous reform initiatives, some of them by the national government, some of them by international stakeholders and many of them by donors and NGOs.

Previous research and evaluations of initiatives that aim at improving the teaching quality and the quality of teacher training (e.g. King 2018a; 2018b; Pellini & Bredenberg 2015; Prigent 2018) indicate that activities in this field should consider several issues including the need to align the courses with the MoEYS' activities and strategies, to focus on both, subject knowledge and pedagogical skills and to consider the role and activities of NGOs and donors.

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