

Report on the Final CONTESSA Conference in Cambodia, 17 August 2022

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Introduction

The Contemporary Teaching Skills for South Asia (CONTESSA) project is an EU-funded Erasmus+ programme for Capacity Building in Higher Education. It aims to promote learner-centred teaching practice: rather than being a top-down instructor, the teacher should try to be a guide and facilitator for the personal development of individual students.

The project has been coordinated by the University of Graz (UG) in Austria with the Technical University of Dresden (TUD) in Germany. The University of Cambodia and Paññāsāstra University (PUC) have been the Cambodian partners in this enterprise and there are two Sri Lankan universities also actively involved.

Partner universities were required to prepare course material for degree programs and Train-the-Trainers Workshops (TTTWs) to allow trainee and existing teachers to further develop and upgrade their pedagogical skills. The material which has been developed covers best practices related to E-Education, subject and learner-centered teaching methods, the role of teachers in the educational sphere, diversity in the classroom and other topics crucial to modern-day teaching.

The conference included presentations by some of the major participants in the project: unfortunately Dr. Sandra Hummel from the University of Graz could not attend because of Sars-2 infection. There were also presentations by major stakeholders, including representatives from MoEYS and one of their regional Teacher-Training Centres, who outlined the potential future benefits for the educational sector in Cambodia.

The conference was well-attended, with an audience of more than 100 attendees. The universal feedback was that the Conference had attracted a lot of interested and had promoted further understanding of the aims of the project as a sustainable product of the EU Erasmus+ initiative.

The reach of the Conference was also expanded by coverage on SEA-TV.

In conclusion, two private universities in Cambodia are very grateful to the EU Erasmus+ initiative for the opportunity for the opportunity to gain meaningful learning experiences and the downstream ability to contribute to the future development of the education sector and capacity-building in Cambodia.

Program for Final CONTESSA Conference in Cambodia

17 August 2022, 8:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

The Dr. Handa Hall, The University of Cambodia

7:30 - 8:30	Registration	
8:30 - 8:35	National Anthem	
8:35 - 8:45	Welcoming Remarks	Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, President of The University of Cambodia
8:45 - 8:55	Welcoming Remarks	Dr. Sam-Ang Sam, Chancellor of Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia
8:55 - 9:05	Education and cooperation between Cambodia and the EU	Mr. Bryan Fornari, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation
9:05 - 9:25	Joint Movements Towards Pedagogical Professionalization	Prof. Meas Nearyroth, Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia and CONTESSA National Coordinator
9:25 - 9:50	An Overview of the Development and Implementation of the CONTESSA Program in Cambodia	Dr. Angus D. Munro, The University of Cambodia and CONTESSA Institutional Coordinator
9:50 - 10:15	Coffee break and refreshments	
10:15 - 10:30	Briefing from MoEYS	Dr. Nith Bunlay, Deputy Director-General of Higher Education Department
10:30 - 10:45	The linkage between primary education and project implementation.	Dr. Kann Puthy, Deputy Director, Primary Education Department
10:45 - 11:00	The Integration of CONTESSA modules with IBL and LS methods at Siem Reap Provincial Training College	Ms. Hun Makara, Vice Director, Siem Reap Regional Teacher Education Center
11:00 - 11:15	The Lessons Learned from CONTESSA Modules	Mr. Chey Khav, Paññāsāstra International School
11:15 - 11:35	Organizing educational relations in a hybrid international network	Dr. Thomas Köhler and Mr. Orkhan Jalilov, Technical University of Dresden and project advisors
11:35 - 11:45	Closing remarks	Prof. Gina V. Lopez, The University of Cambodia

The Presentations

Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, President of The University of Cambodia

Dr. Kao opened by welcoming all Cambodian and international guests to The University of Cambodia, as host for the Final Conference of CONTESSA in Cambodia. He noted that the past four years have involved much time and effort for those involved in a project which aims to further the development of teaching skills in Cambodia and Sri Lanka. The result is a teacher training programme which provides high-quality contemporary education that will ultimately equip current and future teachers with the digital and other skills needed to develop a wide range of didactic methods which they can in turn use to engage, empower and educate their students. He thanked the EU and Erasmus+ for their generous support in helping to achieve this goal.

Dr. Sam-Ang Sam, Chancellor of Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia

Dr. Sam expressed his gratitude to the EU Erasmus+ and the CONTESSA team for developing the 5 modules, saying that they will be essential materials to make teacher education in Cambodia more effective. He noted that there are four pillars to the education system in Cambodia: the transfer of knowledge, skills, jobs and living. The CONTESSA programme marks an important component in reinforcing these, and thus will benefit students and build capacity for the future.

Mr. Bryan Fornari, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation

Mr. Fornari reported that the EU together with its member states has played an important part in helping to support education and other sectors in Cambodia since the 1990s, to help the empowerment of her people. Thus the EU has contributed over €240 million over the past 20 years in grants as well as the support of large projects, one of the latest of which is the CONTESSA project. Cambodians now have almost universal access to education, despite the recent impact of COVID-19; now the emphasis is on the need to improve the quality of teaching, from the primary level upwards.

Reflecting its being named after a Dutch humanist philosopher who travelled extensively throughout western Europe in the 15th century Renaissance, the original aim of the Erasmus system was to provide support for exchange students to travel within the EU, as a means to increase a sense of unity and integration. It was subsequently expanded to include other countries. Thus 47 Cambodian students have had the opportunity to join exchange programmes with EU countries since 2015. Also programmes involving 30 Cambodian universities have allowed these to engage with others in the region and in Europe, thereby enhancing connectivity.

Mr. Fornari was very pleased that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport was actively involved in realising the project. He encouraged all Cambodian educational institutions to apply for other EU-funded projects to make sure that Cambodia can benefit from the opportunities available.

Prof. Meas Nearyroth, Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia and CONTESSA National Coordinator

This slot was originally scheduled for Dr. Sandra Hummel, overall CONTESSA Project Coordinator; however she was unfortunately not able to attend due to being infected with SARS-2. The original slide presentation is in Annex III.

Speaking in Khmer, Prof. Meas noted that PUC hosted the Kick-Off event which got the project off the ground. This was followed by a period where team members from Cambodia and Europe visited primary schools to meet the teachers and see the classroom environment, as part of a needs analysis. After helping to prepare parts of some of the modules, these have been integrated into parts of PUC's BA in TESOL programme. After meetings of the PUC and UC teams with the management boards of the Departments of Teacher Training and Primary Education at MoEYS, there was a very encouraging meeting with the minister, Dr. Hang Chhoun Naron. Based on this, partners are working with MoEYS to finalise the Khmer version of each module.

Dr. Angus Munro, The University of Cambodia and CONTESSA Institutional Coordinator

Dr. Munro provided a brief overview of the development and some aspects of the implementation of the CONTESSA project in Cambodia over the past four years. The slide presentation is in Annex IV.

Dr. Nith Bunlay, Deputy Director-General of Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

Dr. Nith noted that the CONTESSA project fits in well with MoEYS' Vision 2030 and 2050 and the drive towards emphasising the quality rather than the quantity of graduating students: those who will help to further boost Cambodia's growth and development. He also noted that it was encouraging that this project was the first to involve higher education institutions in the private sector, with increased connectivity and the ability to work together with other overseas universities to develop a product which can be implemented to develop the capacity of the primary education subsector. The results promise to be very beneficial once the Khmer translations are finalised: the material is on-line and open-source, so that it can be customised to suit teachers' needs.

He concluded that the project fits in well with what MoEYS aims to achieve and thanked the team, hoping that they will maintain the momentum and continue with future projects. MoEYS will be sure to provide technical and other support to help to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Dr. Kann Puthy, Deputy Director, Primary Education Department, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

Speaking in Khmer, Dr. Kann said that the project was very good for not only new but also existing teachers to further develop their abilities. This is especially the case given the drive since 2013 to improve teaching standards; the CONTESSA project provides one way to achieve this important objective. However he noted that the translations of the Khmer versions of the CONTESSA modules needed to be updated: his and the CONTESSA teams are working on ensuring that the correct technical terms and phrases are used in order to make sure that readers can understand the texts easily.

Mrs. Hun Makara, Vice Director, Siem Reap Regional Teacher Education Center

Speaking in Khmer, Mrs. Hun Makara said that, based on the workshop which PUC and UC held at her RTEC, the CONTESSA programme could be integrated into the teaching with IBL and LS there. She was very happy because the teacher trainers and trainees now can have more choices for efficient and effective teaching and learning practices. Thus those involved in the project had tried to understand the present primary education system and provided constructive ideas about how to further improve it through creative teaching approaches.

Mr. Chey Khav, Paññāsāstra International School

Speaking in Khmer, Mr. Chay Khav described how the CONTESSA programme was helping in teaching practice at the primary school level and ways to promote student-centered learning effectively.

Dr. Thomas Köhler, Technical University of Dresden and project advisor

Dr. Köhler noted that COVID-19 had accelerated the development of virtual teaching-learning environments. He moved on to consider some of the theoretical issues relating to the move towards ICT and the resulting organisational ones which have emerged as a result of this transition to 21st century teaching and learning. Such virtual projects require the development of suitable platforms. Achieving this needs patterns of cooperation in order to be sustainable: with the likes of the CONTESSA project, this requires multinational, multilocal and multilingual coordination with the development of a hybrid on-line network to meet different partners' needs.

However there are various issues arising. Most notable are the different layers of involvement in establishing and sustaining such an initiative, whether at the global or just the local level. Thus effective networking

involves not just teachers and their students but also administration and management oversight to accommodate this extra dimension to existing practices.

The shared slide presentation of Dr. Köhler and Mr. Jalilov is in Annex V.

Mr. Orkhan Jalilov, Technical University of Dresden and project advisor

Following on this, Mr. Jalilov briefly considered the means for technical implementation and testing of an e-learning course in such a virtual environment. First there is the need to develop the appropriate courseware, so that the content can help teachers to understand and develop their skills with regard to learner-centred education practices. Thereafter, there is the need to gather feedback about these pilot courses in order to further fine-tune them based on users' experiences and identifying what needs improving before the materials are finalised for general use.

Prof. Gina Lopez, The University of Cambodia

In her brief closing remarks, Prof Lopez noted that the CONTESSA project had been timely in that would help Cambodia to develop her human resources for the new business environment through encouraging independent learning and the development of entrepreneurship. It was also timely with the move towards distance learning as a result of COVID-19. She concluded by thanking the EU and Erasmus+ for their financial support for the project; and the organisers and presenters for a most productive and insightful conference.

Annex I

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The University of Cambodia

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Press Release

On

Final CONTESSA Conference in Cambodia

Colleges/Schools

- Arts and Humanities
- Education
- Law
- Science and Technology
- Social Sciences
- Media and Communications
- Tony Fernandes School of Business
- School of Foreign Languages
- School of Creative Arts
- Techo Sen School of Government and International Relations

Institutes

- Institute of Research and Advanced Studies
- Institute of Technical and Professional Training

Centers/Council

- Center for ASEAN and East Asian Studies
- Center for International Studies
- ASEAN Study Center
- Skills and Career Development Center
- Asia Leadership Center
- Council for Research and Creativity

The University of Cambodia will host the Final CONTESSA Conference in Cambodia on 17 August 2022 at 8:30 a.m. in the Dr. Handa Hall.

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The project is coordinated by the University of Graz (UG) in Austria with the Technical University of Dresden (TUD) in Germany. The University of Cambodia and Pannāsāstra University (PUC) have been the Cambodian partners in this enterprise and there are two Sri Lankan universities also actively involved.

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The material which has been developed covers best practices related to E-Education, subject and learner-centered teaching methods, the role of teachers in the educational sphere, diversity in the classroom and other topics crucial to modern-day teaching.

Thus, upon completion of the TTTW programme, participants will be able to implement their newly-acquired contemporary teaching skills to engage all students in classroom activities and thus learn new ways to help students reach their full potential.

His Excellency Dr. Hang Chuon Naron has given strong support for the project's output to be incorporated into his ministry's overall plans to further enhancing the education system, including through not only the better preparation of trainee teachers but also the upgrading of existing teachers' skills.

The content of particular modules is also very relevant to the upgrading of existing courses in undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Thus Module 5 (Digital Teaching and Learning) has provided a useful supplement to the running of EDC404 (Uses of ITC in Education) at The University of Cambodia.

The conference will provide attendees with a background on the CONTESSA project and what it has delivered. Representatives from MoEYS, a regional Teacher-Training Centre and a primary school will consider the potential future benefits for the educational sector in Cambodia.

Phnom Penh, 17 August 2022



UC Main Campus: Northbridge Road, Sangkat Toek Thla, Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Mailing Address: P. O. Box 917, Phnom Penh 12000, Cambodia; Central Office Phone: (855-23) 993274, Fax: (855-23) 993284, Information: (855-23) 993276; Email: info@uc.edu.kh, admissions@uc.edu.kh, library@uc.edu.kh, Website: www.uc.edu.kh