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Article

Pre-service Teacher Training Program at Provincial Teacher Training Centers in Cambodia: A Case Study in Four Provinces

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Abstract

This research examines how MoEYS can address the challenges faced by the PTTCs. The researchers have collected data from different stakeholders including those involved with teacher training college (TTC) development. These sources include the TTC directors and Teacher Training Department (TTD) officials as well as non-government organizations (NGOs) who are working in the education sector. Some information was also obtained from recent graduates from various TTCs throughout Cambodia through semi-structured focus group discussions. The research methods which were utilized to generate this data included focus group discussions with various groups of teacher trainers, teacher trainees and TTC management, key information interviews, and field observations during June to August 2018. The research has three major findings. First, provisional teacher training college (PTTC) management is relatively weak in regard to the smooth operations of teacher training programs. The PTTC board does not currently have the power to recruit new staff or dismiss low-performing ones. Some directors strongly request the authority to manage staff as they see fit in order to deliver a high standard of teacher training. It appears that the management team has lower capacity to lead these institutions due to the lack of a clear strategic plan and general directions designed by MoEYS. Secondly, teacher

trainers face three major issues: 1) limited capacity in terms of content knowledge, as in 21st century teaching and learning, and ICT skills to be able to update and upgrade their capacity, 2) conducting research projects for the sake of improving teaching and learning at TTCs, and 3) the mentoring of recent graduate student-teachers to ensure their competence.

Key Words: Teacher training, 21st century teaching and learning, Cambodia education, Inquiry-based teaching, teacher trainee, curriculum.

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Introduction

The workforce of the 21st century requires a particular set of knowledge and skills. Hang-Chuon (2017, p. 6) states that, ‘A child today will have to change jobs at least seven times over the course of their lives – and five of those jobs do not exist yet’. He notes that the children who will soon make up the workforce must acquire cognitive and non-cognitive skills while they are at school. To prepare the workforce for 21st century employment – that is, employment in the fourth industrial revolution – the education sector must be well prepared, especially in the teaching and learning of pupils.

In recent years, the Cambodian government has made a consistent effort to improve teacher trainees and teachers, there is evidence showing that the quality of the teacher training program (approaches and materials) has yet to improve at any of the teacher training centers in Cambodia, including at the National Institute of Education (NIE International, 2017; Phin, 2014; Tandon & Fukao, 2015). A study by Phin (2014) found that some teachers have not had any pedagogical training and that the in-service training did not address the needs of teachers. A study by Tandon and Fukao (2015) also indicated that teacher preparation (pre-service) did not allow the trainee to master the content and that they lacked exposure to student-centered pedagogical environments. The authors also found that teachers lacked peer-to-peer best-practice sharing. Williams *et al.* (2016) argued that teacher trainees in Cambodia received more information on subject content than psychological and pedagogical training. The authors

found that only 82 percent of student teachers who plan to teach for rest of their careers thought that they were adequately prepared to become a teacher. Being aware of the low quality of teacher trainees, teacher education has been prioritized in the teacher reform plan by the MoEYS, as stated in the Teacher Policy elaborated in Teacher Policy Action Plan (MoEYS, 2013, 2015). Among the aims stated in the Teacher Policy are ensuing the high quality of pre-service teacher training, especially addressing the shortcomings previously stated.

Because the government is promoting the quality of education, fewer teachers are enrolling/existing teachers are stopping teachers or is the lack of teachers a problem that exists alongside the issue of quality. For example, in 2002 there were only 48,474 teachers, more than 10,000 teachers short of the 58,898 teachers needed in the country (Duthilleul, 2005). As a result, some teachers worked two shifts, combined grades, and hired contracted teachers (Duthilleul, 2005; Geeves & Bredenberg, 2004). Another study by the World Bank Group in 2008 found there was an insufficient teaching force in rural areas and a teacher surplus in urban areas. Overall, demand of teacher in 2008 was about 30 percent in secondary school teachers (Benveniste, Marshall, & Araujo, 2008). The lack of a teaching force mainly in rural areas continued until 2011 (Tandon & Fukao, 2015). Given these findings, we conclude that Cambodia has failed to attract enough students to become teachers.

So far, we have identified four major premises that complicate the issues of teachers in Cambodia: 1) insufficient teaching forces in both quantity and quality (with not enough teachers overall and low-performing teacher graduates joining the workforce); 2) teacher training institutions failing to provide enough content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge; 3) the teaching and learning in Cambodia still practicing a teacher-centered approach (knowledge transferred), which does not meet the teaching and learning best practices” or “which is not consistent with current teaching and learning standards practiced in other parts of the world; and 4) Cambodia needing to provide its citizens with the skills and knowledge to work in the fourth industrial world.

Cambodian Teacher Training Center Context

Currently, there are different types of teacher education institutions in Cambodia depending on the levels of teaching: pre-school teaching is studied in the Phnom Penh Preschool Teacher Training Center (PSTTC), primary teaching is studied in a Provincial Teacher Training Center

(PTTC), lower secondary teaching is studied in a Regional Teacher Training Center (RTTC), and upper secondary school teachers study at the National Institution of Education (NIE). It should be noted that there are one preschool TTC, 18 PTTCs, and six RTTCs in Cambodia. Four teacher training centers – the Battambang and Phnom Penh PTTCs and RTTCs – combined to become the Teacher Education College (TEC) in 2018 in response to the reform suggested in the Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP). This makes another inclusive type of teacher education. The aims of having a TEC is that teacher education will be based on 12 years of general education and four years of teacher education; thus, teacher trainees will become teachers without going through the NIE (Table 1).

Table 1: Teacher Education in Cambodia for General Education

Teacher Institution	Level of Education	Years of Training	Teaching Level	Salary Scale
PSTTC	12	1	Pre-school	C
PTTC	12	2	Primary School	C
RTTC	12	2	Lower Secondary	B
NIE	BA	1	Upper Secondary	A
TEC	12	4	Any	A

There is various anecdotal evidence about teachers in Cambodia, ranging from the entry to pre-service education to providing educational services to children. Regarding the entrance to PTTC, it was reported the lowest performing upper secondary school graduates would choose to study at a teacher training center (TTC) as their last option. In the past, PTTCs admitted students who finished Grade 7 and provided training so they could become a teacher. The teacher training was of the following durations: one year between 1983–98 (known as 7+1), one year between 1988–90 (known as 8+1 because [explain the change to 8 from 7]), for two years between 1990–94 (known as 8+2), for two years between 1994–1998 (known as 11+2 [explain the change to 11 from 8]), and from 1997 to present two years (known as 12+2 [explain the change to 11 from 12]). Between 1997 and 2012, students who failed the BAC II exam (grade 12 exam) could also sit the PTTC exam and became teachers if they passed. The requirements to obtain a teacher qualification are increasing (Table 1)

and that it will be the same qualification if the new reform is adopted by MoEYS (Dy, 2017; MoEYS, 2015). Based on Table 2, RTTC and PTTC have been recruiting the same batch of students since 1994 which mean that students would sit for RTTC exam first and if they failed, they would take another exam at PTTC. This illustrates that lower performing students could easily become primary school teachers, which is not positive if the aim is to enhance the quality of education, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 2: Level of education requirement to be admitted to a TTC in Cambodia

Year	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary
1983 to 1987	7 + 1 (4+1)	8 + 3	10 + 3
1988 to 1990	8 + 1 (5+3)	8 + 3	10 + 4
1991 to 1993	8 + 2 (5+3)	11 + 2	10 + 4
1994 to 2014	11 + 2 (9+2)	11 + 2	BA + 1
2015 to present	12 + 2	12 + 2	BA + 1
New reform*	12 + 4	12 + 4	12 + 4

Note: Number in parentheses indicate the requirement of admission for indigenous teacher trainees

Research suggests that a teaching career is often not attractive for high-performing graduates. A study by the World Bank found that Cambodia TTC normally received applicants with grade E and D about 85 percent (Tandon & Fukao, 2015) and that applicants who failed Grade 12 were also allowed to sit for an exam for PTTC admittance; however, the latter practice was stopped in 2015. It should be noted that in 2015 the government exempted grade 12 graduates with a grade C and above score to do the entrance exam to study at TTC, yet the exemption did not attract any grade A students to join the teaching force and the exemption was cancelled in the following year.

While there are many reasons for not having high-performing graduates join the teaching force, the most cited factor is low salary. It has been found that in Cambodia teaching career received a salary that was 60 percent less than other professional careers with the same level of

education (Tandon & Fukao, 2015). To address this issue, the Cambodian government has been increasing teachers' salary so that now even the Level C salary scale of teachers is more or less equivalent to other professions with a similar level of education. Another interesting fact is that there are many applicants who applied for teaching career and less than 5% of total applicants were admitted to TTC during the past few years.

While the quality of student teacher graduates has historically been poor as a teaching career has not been very attractive among BAC II graduates, there are other issues in Cambodia's teaching system, TTC is riddled with low performance in terms of infrastructure, teacher trainers, and management. The World Bank found that TTC teacher trainers were under-satisfied qualified as trainers and could not deliver content knowledge to students (Tandon & Fukao, 2015). Realizing the inadequate performance of TTCs, the MoEYS issued the Teacher Education Provider Standards (TEPS) in 2016. The Standards provide criteria so that higher institutions could prepare themselves to serve as teacher education institutions if they gained the Certificate of Institutional Accreditation from the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia. By 2019, there are two Teacher Education Colleges (TEC) in Phnom Penh and Battambang.

Overview of quality of education in Cambodia

The quality of primary education in Cambodia remains a concern even though most of the primary school teachers in the past five years were better trained and better paid. According to the MoEYS-EMIS 2016–2017, primary education completion rate was almost 80 percent. Of those 80 percent, 85 percent managed to move up to Grade 7 in the new school year of 2017–2018. This demonstrates the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system in Cambodia, as it was able to provide a quality education so that these students could complete their nine-year basic education, as enshrined in the Constitution. However, it is worth asking whether a shortage of lower secondary schools and classes in their neighborhood or the students and/or parents not valuing staying longer in the school system after primary education contributed to students not continuing their education past the primary states.

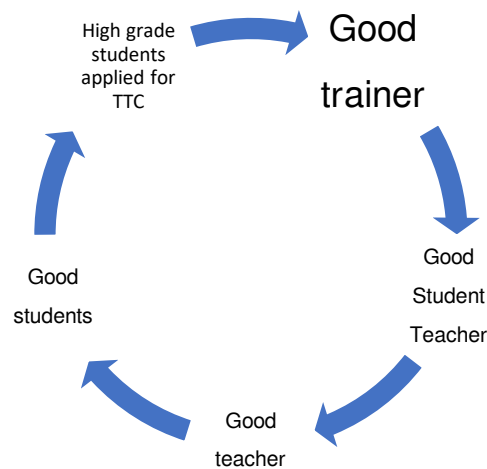
Early school life in the primary education sub-sector, from Grades 1 to 6, determines the journey of each student toward their further learning. If they have not been educated well from the beginning of their first day at school, they tend to lose impetus to learn or will not be able to do well

after primary level of their schooling. The first three years of each student's educational life is important to enhance their basic understanding of the educational environment and to develop socialization skills and the motivation to learn and live outside their family. The first teacher they meet has tremendous impact on their school life, hence well trained and committed teachers in primary schools are extremely important people who will have long impact on their students' educational path (as illustrated in Figure 1).

Primary school teachers should be well trained and supported after they are placed in schools. Support systems in the form of improved economic status, professional development and school-based support from their senior colleagues at school are important to ensure the quality of the service that they will offer. In school, the teachers and school principals are responsible for ensuring students know how to learn and learn well.

Every student wants to have good teachers and attend a good school. A successful school system relies heavily on quality of teachers and school principals, with guiding support from the policy-makers who understand school operations and issues. Building a good school culture of teamwork, Green and Clean will enable the teachers and students to respect each other and be molded by their surroundings. However, over 50 percent of the teaching staff currently working in rural areas only hold a lower secondary certificate and below. It is unfair for the students in rural areas who are taught by teachers who are poorly trained or having a lesser understanding of subjects and methods than their urban counterparts.

Figure 1: The cycle of potential quality of education



Sources: by Authors

Century teaching and learning

In the 21st century, teachers in the classroom are no longer the main source of knowledge. There is a tremendous amount of information outside the classroom that students can easily access. The role of the teacher is no longer to simply impart knowledge to students but to be the facilitator who helps them learn to analyze and evaluate in a way that fosters their creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication skills. The heart of 21st century learning is student-centric (student-centered). The teachers' role is to help students, validate, synthesize information, communicate information, collaborate with peers and problem-solve. In the 21st century, the classroom must be as engaging, responsive, and dynamic as the world around us

There are different organizations that prepare students for the 21st century. For example, Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2010) advocates for 21st century teaching and learning for every student. The framework identifies life and career skills, learning and innovation skills and information and media and technologies skills. These skills should be at the forefront as we plan instructional strategies.

Based on Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) standards, students must master both content and skills as part of their education. So, teacher graduates should be able to model and teach mastery of academic subjects and possess interdisciplinary understanding along with other 21st century skills. To meet these requirements, teacher graduates are expected to be environmentally literate, health literate, financially literate, civically engaged, and globally competent. They should be flexible, responsible, and adaptable. P21 also outlines other skills such as the 3Rs and 4Cs. The 3Rs – reading, writing, and arithmetic – used to be the most important skills to have; however, in today's world, if we only know how to read, write and calculate, we will not be able to function well. What is important now is that students should be able to demonstrate the 4Cs skills, such as creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration, and communication skills. In other words, they need to think critically, collaborate with others, know how to clearly communicate ideas, and be creative and confident.

Teacher graduates are supposed to be able to use technologies fluently and in pedagogically appropriate ways in all content areas in their daily practice. Graduates should be adjusted to and act as advocates for the emotional, physical and education needs of all their students. Instructional

strategies for the 21st century center on collaboration and differentiation. Collaboration usually revolves around Professional Learning Community (PLC), a focus on learning and results, data-driven decision-making, sharing lessons, strategies, and expertise. Differentiation means teachers need to meet the needs of the individual students, students get to choose what they want to learn and how to learn, assessing them by not only using summative assessment but also formative assessment that provides information on how teachers can meet the needs of individual students. In addition to standardized tests, students and teachers can be assessed on the 4Cs and their digital literacy skills.

Research methods and the scope of the research

The literature suggests that ensuring the quality of education must start with the teachers. There are at least four major inputs to ensure that there are high-quality teachers working in all schools across the country. Those inputs are the quality of students who apply to study at teacher training institutions, the quality of teacher trainers, the quality of teaching programs, and the presence of supporting mechanisms to ensure that the student teachers will maximize their learning.

This study is conducted at four provincial teacher training institutions located in Kampong Cham, Takeo, Kampong Speu and Kampot province. The fieldwork was conducted between June and August 2018. The school director and deputy of each PTTC were interviewed to understand the overall performance of the PTTC related to management and academic affairs. Teacher trainers were also invited to group interviews related to their teaching methods, teaching materials and student assessments. We also interviewed teacher trainees in order to understand their teaching and learning, practicums, and their living conditions in the dormitories.

School principals and teachers at Application and Cooperation School were also invited for the cross-examining to explore their opinion, their reflection on student-teachers' performances during practicum and the cooperation between those schools and the PTTCs.

New teachers who had graduated from PTTCs between one- and five-years prior were also invited to take part in the study. Having meeting with them aimed to understand their challenges and best practices of teachers after graduating from a PTTC. It is expected that the information

obtained from those graduates will help to redesign the teaching methods and other activities in order to improve the teaching and learning at PTTCs in the future.

Officials from the Teacher Training Department (TTD) were interviewed to explore how PTTCs were managed, the development of the training curriculum for pre-service, in-service, and other materials for teacher trainers' capacity development. Any assessment reports made by TTD were reviewed to understand how PTTCs have changed over time.

Demographic data of teacher trainers was also collected from TTD to understand the distribution teachers' age and years of experience working as teacher trainers in certain PTTCs. We also collected the application data of teacher candidates and admitted candidates from TTD to understand how many students applied for PTTC and if this number changed over time. The quality of the applicants was also examined.

Research findings

The overall findings of this research are related to the quality of PTTC performance ranging from management issues to teaching and learning facilities and extends to the full employment of student teachers. The major finding is that PTTCs are facing tremendous challenges due to weak management, the limited capacity of teacher trainers, the low quality of student teacher graduates, a confusing curriculum, the low confidence of recent graduates from PTTC, and insufficient amenities at the PTTC. In addition to this, there was a lack of looking forward to ascertain the best teaching and learning practices for the coming decades. The ability to strengthen the quality of PTTCs to deliver inquiry-based learning is still questionable.

The quality of the PTTCs is mainly related to three major factors: teacher trainers, teaching materials and teaching methods (as shown in Figure 2). However, it should be noted that there are additional factors that very critical to the quality of the PTTCs and they are all reinforced each other.

Teacher trainers

The study showed that quality of teacher trainers is limited in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical skills, research, and information and communications technology (ICT) skills. Before the introduction of a new curriculum based on a credit system that occurred from 2018, trainers were doing relatively well with content knowledge. However, since the change

in curriculum they find it difficult to understand the content of subjects (especially mathematics) and hard to find proper materials to teach, let alone knowing how to teach.

Figure 2: The cycle of learning at Pedagogical Schools



PTTC was perceived as a bridge or a temporary place for teachers who cannot teach at high schools either because of their limited capacity or because their specialization; for example, psychology is not required in high schools. This has significant implications for their teaching performance at the PTTC.

In general, trainers at PTTCs can be categorized into two groups: trainers in professional qualification cadre A or B (គ្រូកម្រិតមូលដ្ឋានក្របខណ្ឌខ និងគ្រូកម្រិតខ្ពស់ ក្របខណ្ឌក). The trainers are approximately equally divided between cadre A and B (50% per cadre). Regarding educational qualification, per PTTC, there are a few trainers without a bachelor degree, some with a Bachelor of Art, and very few master’s degree holders (even though some of the master’s degrees held are not relevant for their current specialization). Therefore, the qualification of trainers varied. Those who have not had higher learning found it hard to teach subject content which is higher than their capacity or at a bachelor’s degree level.

Three out of the five trainers interviewed have never taught in primary schools. Some trainers do not have classroom teaching experience at primary schools or experience dealing with young learners. They only experience real classroom teaching environments when they visit

Cooperation Schools during practicum. Therefore, they lack exposure to real classroom and school environments as well as experience dealing with young learners, parents and the community.

Teacher trainers are also required to teach research skills to the trainees in semester 2 of year 1 and semester 1 of year 2. However, the research capacity of trainers is limited; they mainly taught what they learnt at universities or at NIE and they do not follow proper research processes. None of them knew what action research is. The PTTC management team has already requested MoEYS/TTD offer research skills training to teacher trainers; however, at the time of conducting the fieldwork, there had not been any response. Some trainers have master's degrees but they lack knowledge concerning research and publications, even if they are the main trainers or national core trainers with whom VVOB, an NGO prepare teaching materials. A VVOB staff member mentioned that when they provided training to trainers, they were usually required to prepare thorough and step-by-step guides for the trainers to follow.

ICT skills are one of the most important elements in the 21st century classroom. Teachers need to know how to balance content, pedagogy, and technology, which is related to technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK). A deputy director commented that trainers know basic computer skills such as how to use Microsoft Word and Excel; however, only three out of 10 teacher trainers knew ICT and applied it in classroom, while the rest opted to use paper and blackboards. The ability to search for documents on the internet and use mobile technologies in aiding the learning process is also limited. PTTC also lacks LCD projectors and laptops. Some trainers did not know how to do Google searches and did not have their own computer.

Teacher trainers acknowledged their limited capacity, saying they are hesitant to teach since the introduction of the new credit systems curriculum. They requested MOEYS provide them with upgraded training or fast track programs for PTTC teachers, especially those in Cadre B.

Teaching materials

Before 2018 the Curricular Program for Year 1 and 2 at PTTC comprised of 23 subjects. The following year this was reduced to 17, but trainers still believe it is a lot for students to handle and that some subjects are not necessary or are too broad. Teacher trainers did not seem to comprehend the newly introduced curriculum based on a credit system and claim to have training provisions or teacher manuals.

The new curriculum framework is based on credit for 12+2: trainers are only given the syllabus and need to create their own teaching documents and lesson materials by searching the internet or the library. Teacher trainers perceived the content in the new curriculum is deeper and more difficult than before. They are having difficulty in implementing the new curriculum, and are not being provided any help from MoEYS/TTD.

The teacher trainers argue that since they were only given topics, it is difficult to teach. They report not being able to find lessons and materials by themselves. This could be due to a lack of willingness to do research and find material to teach, insufficient time allocated for lesson preparation, and not being clear about their teaching. In addition to this, teacher trainers are worried that if they were to use their own teaching materials, trainees will not be able to comprehend and pass the exit exam, where test papers are mixed with other PTTCs at a national level.

Teacher trainers reported they have already compiled some materials to teach the subjects. However, while they are becoming accustomed to the new system, they have limited capacity in technology (e.g., searching the internet). In relation to ICT, trainers' pedagogical skills and subject knowledge are limited.

Access to references from the library

PTTC libraries are generally not conducive places for learning activities. They mostly contain out-of-date, dusty books which are not helpful. They appear to not have a librarian taking care of them or have proper library management, in contrast to some primary schools which have good libraries that are supported by different NGOs.

PTTC libraries do not provide a great variety of books. Student teachers do not come to read and do assignments in there; they mainly just visit the library on occasion to borrow books related to teaching methods, main textbooks, history and storybooks.

From library book-borrowing record, for one academic year, a trainer borrowed three to four books on average from library on subjects related to their specialization. However, there is lack of teaching documents and references on for research on some subjects.

Traditional teaching methods

The teaching methods used at PTTC are not innovative. Trainers seem to lack understanding of new teaching methods; e.g., they have never heard of problem-based or project-based approaches. At the time of fieldwork, they had only been provided training on inquiry-based learning (IBL) two months previously. Out of five respondents, only an English teacher had introduced IBL to her teacher students. She described the process as follows: posting two questions, asking students to guess or estimate the answer; then find and/or comparing answers by looking them up on the internet. This describes the basic level of IBL, where teachers post the questions and set the experiments for students. With the highest level of IBL, students have to develop their own enquiries and questions and set up their own means to find answers and draw conclusions.

The teacher trainers believe IBL is easy to apply in science and math, but not in Khmer or social studies. There are challenges of introducing IBL in social studies on how to make conclusion or Hypothesis. Despite that, teachers are trying to integrate IBL steps in other subjects.

Trainers in general were observed to show a lack of initiative concerning adjusting their teaching methods, changing teaching practices, and following up or researching new teacher trainees/teaching methods. Informants reported they do not produce videos for education purposes or sharing.

A trainee from a PTTC stated that the only classes where teachers often use modern teaching methods are English and social studies. They said that only 30% of the teachers have interesting teaching approaches. The rest usually use blackboards, call out text for students to copy into their notebooks, ask students to copy lessons from the textbook into their notebooks at home, or have limited usage of teaching aids that help student better comprehend the subject matter.

Other factors

Given the Provincial Department of Education Youth and Sport is involved with PTTCs and/or RTTCs, there is room to improve. The most pressing area to be considered is the connection between the management institution and the student teachers. The connection could be made in various forms but we would suggest that a representative from the PoE, e.g., a director and/or technical person (who may often contact with teacher) should teach some subjects at a TTC. The most relevant subjects are the Code of Conduct for Teachers and Education Administration. This teaching could be regarded as initial communications with prospective

teachers and it could establish the fundamental relationship between educational leaders and subordinates.

There are strong tendencies among the student teachers and newly graduated primary school teachers to look for opportunities to transfer their Level B teaching certificate (teaching at primary school) to a Level A certificate (teaching at upper secondary school). This is evident when 1) they sit for the Regional Teacher Training Center (RTTC) exam before passing the PTTC exam; and 2) they are doing their bachelor degree at a local university.

It worth discussing that more than 70 percent of student teachers have studied at a higher education institution such as the Royal University of Phnom Penh and dropped out from those institutions to pursue the study at a PTTC. The reasons behind this decision are 1) there is secure employment after graduating from a PTTC; 2) the cost of living in the capital is high but their family is poor; and 3) encouragement from parents who want their children to become teachers.

There are some solutions to encourage primary school teachers to remain in the primary school teaching profession. The first is related to salary, which should be of similar salary scale and teaching burden as secondary school teaching. It was also suggested that primary school teachers should teach different subjects to reduce their contacting time with students; for example, science, Khmer and mathematics. By doing so, teachers could reduce their workload and have more time to focus on slow learners and/or giving more detailed feedback to students.

The Primary Education Department (PED) employs teachers from PTTCs. Therefore, PED should know what skill sets they need from new graduates from PTTC. However, they have not communicated with PTTCs to request the skill sets that would equip student teachers before leaving the TTC. Also, PED may not have the annual report on teacher performance and understand what degree of knowledge and skills teachers currently possessed. The report could serve as the guideline for teacher capacity development.

Conclusion

The aim of this research is to gain an up-to-date understanding of the current status of provincial teacher training centers (PTTC). The investigation ranges from the MoEYS level to the primary schools where

fresh graduate student teachers are working. At the PTTC, we explored how it operated and what facilities were present to support its operations.

Our major finding is that the PTTCs have low performance. First, PTTC has little authority to manage its staff. Staff were sent to PTTCs by PoE and PTTCs have limited authority to refuse the given staff. There is a commonly told anecdote that the PTTC is the parking lot for unqualified teachers who are not able to teach in any high schools within the province. This suggests that there are few qualified trainers teaching at the institution.

The PTTC is still running in a traditional mode in that they are generally operating as ordered by PoE and/or Teacher Training Department (TTD). There is no strategic plan but there is an annual operation plan (which is based on central plan or routine activities). This could be attributed to initiatives taken by the directors and/or rule and regulation set from the MoEYS/TTD.

This main limitation of the study is that it failed to capture the opinion of political leaders at the ministerial level. This is because the authors wanted to instead hear the perspectives and reflections of the people at the technical and implementation levels, including the trainers and trainee. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, quantitative research should be conducted and key informant interview with senior official from MoEYS should be done.

Recommendations

Primary education is the heart of the education system. When the students have a strong basis in education at the ages of 6 to 11, they will be able to do better at the later education levels. Thus, the capacity of primary teachers and teacher educators must be high. The study found that the individual and institutional capacity of the teacher trainers and the PTTCs needs a considerable improvement in both administration and academic issues. Thus, the study has the following reflections and recommendations.

Competency standards for teacher Educators: MoEYS should consider implementing teacher educator competency standards to meet the TEPS. Similarly to the Competency Standards for Directors of Teacher Training Center, professional/competency standards for teacher educators should highlight the competency/capacity of the teacher trainers, especially for basic and professional education. The trainers should hold at least a master's degree in their respective fields and a teaching license. If these

standards are available, about half of the challenges faced by the TTC would be addressed; e.g., low-quality teachers being transferred to the institution, the poor capacity to master the content knowledge required to implement the new curriculum, and the research and publication abilities of the teacher trainers.

Upgrading TTC libraries: The current libraries are underperforming. Reference books, computers and internet connections as well as printing and photocopying should be available in all TTC libraries. In the 21st century education context, the library is the major facility to enable students to learn. Any major investment on TTC should start with the library. The most urgent aspects of the library to upgrade are the IT infrastructure and reference materials for teaching the new curriculum.

Upgrade and update teacher trainers' knowledge and skills: Low educational background, poor ITC skills and limited English prevent the trainers from delivering a high-quality education to student teachers. It is strongly recommended that the trainers receive a systematic training program, not just workshop-based capacity development, as is currently done. Improving research skills should also be prioritized among those trainers. It should be noted that the Competency Standards for Directors of Teacher Training Centers notes the need to build the capacity of teacher trainers.

Empower TTCs: TTCs have two major institutions supervising their day-to-day operation: PoE and TTD. It has been observed that TTD is the implementing agency rather than executive one. With more highly qualified directors, TTC could be an academic and social institution where teaching, learning, and academic networks are established. Therefore, providing more executive power to TTC would yield better results.

Promote research and development at TTCs: Research and development (R&D) is very critical for 21st century learning and teaching. Research found that the trainers are not capable of conducting research, writing report, and publishing articles. R&D initiatives could create new learning environments for the trainers. Teacher trainers should be encouraged to join professional learning communities or a professional society for their professional development in their areas of expertise and scopes of work. Special research seminars should be regularly organized at the PTTCs to enhance the capacity of research by demonstrating simple research teaching, simple research paper-writing and the usefulness of research and development.

Orientation for new teacher graduates: Before allowing fresh graduates to host a classroom, there should be an orientation session at TTC. This kind of school-based induction training builds confidence and a support system for new teachers and they feel more warm and secure in the beginning stage of being a new teacher. The sessions should cover topics ranging from classroom management to building networking among teacher communities. This orientation could be done at the school level and/or the cluster level. The new teacher, moreover, should share what they learned from the TTC with senior teachers, so in turn the senior teachers may pass on the lessons learned to other teachers. The new teachers should be guided on what resources and support are available at their school and how to improve their career development under the framework of the teacher career pathway.

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