The Concept of Quality in Cambodian Teacher Training: A Philosophical Ethnography

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THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY IN CAMBODIAN TEACHER TRAINING:
A PHILOSOPHICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

By

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A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

2016

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Enoch M. Stanfill defended this dissertation on February 24, 2016.

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ABSTRACT

Research shows that quality teachers are the single most significant influence on the quality of education available to students. This recognition of the importance of quality teachers on quality education is reflected in goal 6 of the EFA: Quality Education. EFA proxies for quality, however, are dubious measures of the concept. What does the concept quality mean when applied to the work of teaching or to the business of education? How do we know quality when we see it? Is it the same from culture to culture or does it differ based on the educational aims of different societies?

Despite EFA's emphasis on improving the quality of education, quality education remains elusive in many developing countries. Cambodia, for instance, has enjoyed considerable international assistance for more than four decades, yet the quality of Cambodian education remains low by both Cambodian and international standards. What might explain the failure of decades of assistance to improve education in Cambodia? This study argues that before this question can be answered and more effective steps taken in the development of Cambodian education we must have a clearer understanding of the conceptualization and operationalization of the concept "quality" in the constructs "quality teachers" and "quality education" in the Cambodian context to understand whether and how it differs from that implied in the theory and practice of Cambodia's international donors. Differences may help explain the difficulty encountered in improving the quality of education in Cambodia and point to more effective strategies to achieve this elusive goal. To this end, this inquiry deployed a
hybrid methodology called philosophical ethnography to discover the conceptions of quality held by Khmer teacher training instructors and administrators. This discovery is guided by the idea of dialogue expressed by Jürgen Habermas and implemented by Paolo Freire.

Findings indicate that there is a tension between traditional Khmer conceptions of quality and those emphasized in modern conceptions of quality education. Traditional Cambodian conceptions of quality reflect Buddhist social virtues including of ទំនៃ (tian, generosity), មោត្តារក្បាល (mey-ta, generosity), ករុណា (garunna, compassion), មូតិតកុមារ (mutita, empathetic joy), and ឈឺវ៉េ (upeka, equanimity) to be a good person in a moral sense. This differs from modern conceptions of quality that emphasize equality, individual achievement, and economic drive for education to produce a person with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to do some job that supports the growth of the economic machine.

The results of this study suggest that the introduction of modern ideas of quality in education beginning with the French in the 19th century and continuing today through foreign aid donations have permeated the education sector in Cambodia influence how Cambodian teacher trainers perceive quality education with respect to how day to day operations of education should function and influence contemporary policy decisions. Despite the push to change reform Cambodian education, participants indicate that being a good person (in the Buddhist sense) is still how quality should be measured and should be the primary objective of Cambodian education.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The Problem

A look at Cambodia’s rankings in United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) Education for All Development Index (EDI)\(^1\) in the last decade suggests that Cambodia has been in or near the bottom quartile of all surveyed countries for the better part of the last decade and perhaps even longer considering the political turmoil and civil unrest of the past 30 years (UNESCO, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). Numerous challenges beset Cambodia’s education sector including issues with access, inefficiency, and a lack of quality teaching and learning (Hattori (2009).

According to statistics in UNESCO’s 2010 Global Monitoring Report (GMR), Cambodia ranked 95\(^{th}\) in Primary adjusted Net Enrollment rate (goal 2), 97\(^{th}\) in adult literacy (goal 4), 108\(^{th}\) in the gender specific EFA index (goal 5), and 119\(^{th}\) in students retained to the 5\(^{th}\) grade (goal 6) (UNESCO, 2010). In relation to EFA goals, Cambodia’s lowest ranking (119\(^{th}\) in retention of students to 5\(^{th}\) grade) indicates that the quality of education provided to Cambodian students is perhaps the most noteworthy problem.

\(^{1}\) The EDI rankings emerge by comparing measures about member countries’ education sectors as part of the worldwide Education for All (EFA) initiative.
If Cambodia is to improve the quality of teaching and learning, it must have quality teachers. Additionally, there is an urgent need for teachers in Cambodia. In 2005, Cambodia’s Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) recognized this and indicated that “based on present projections from 2006 onward [it] needs to recruit 5,000 new teachers per annum for 5 years” (MoEYS, 2005a, p. 2). This intense recruitment of teachers represents one part of Cambodia’s attempt to achieve Education for All’s (EFA) goal of universal free primary education for its citizens (UNESCO, 2011a). However, this rapid expansion of the teaching workforce is likely to result in “a reduction in teacher quality” (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005, p. 450). The reduction of teacher quality is significant because many governments and organizations “see teacher quality as the crucial driving force for improving student achievement” (Akiba, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007, p. 369).

Contemporary large-scale quantitative research about education typically draws on data collected for sources in the Western world, including the United States, and demonstrates that teacher quality affects the achievement of students (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1998; Rivkin et al., 2005; Rockoff, 2004; Sanders, 1998). The effectiveness of teachers is not only dependent upon the level and depth of training teachers receive including subject content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom management (Tatto, 2006). Despite this empirical evidence, the conceptualization and evaluation of teacher quality is difficult to capture because of the subjective nature of the inquiry (Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008).
Looking beyond the training that teachers receive is perhaps a way to discern the characteristics that quality teachers possess including personality and context-related characteristics (Ingle, Rutledge, & Bishop, 2011). Thus, to understand quality teachers in a particular setting, an understanding of the teacher education program, including the processes and goals, is necessary. In addition, insight into how a particular culture perceives the image of the ideal teacher is essential (Tatto, 2006).

If uncertainty about conceptualizing and evaluating teacher quality where an immense body of research and literature is available to Western scholars, then in places where a dearth of research exists, the conceptualization of teacher quality is much more ambiguous for Western scholars. This is the case regarding Cambodia. In fact, extant research and literature about teacher quality and teacher education in Cambodia is extremely limited. A keyword search of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) article database for “Cambodia” or “Khmer” in 2010 returned 423 total publications. However, only about 30% of those publications focused exclusively on Cambodian or Khmer American topics or solely relied on Khmer research participants. Removing the publications that centered on Khmer Americans further reduces this number. The number of publications dealing specifically with education in Cambodia tallied 31 (only 7% of the original 423). The same search in ERIC in 2015 resulted in 481 articles indicating an increase in awareness and inclusion of Cambodia in research. However, the percentage of research focused directly on Khmer education in this most recent search only turned up 65 articles. However, after removing those articles not
specifically related to teacher training or primary education, only a handful of articles remain. This demonstrates the lack of explicit research on education in Cambodia.

Most publications on Cambodian education are reports compiled from previously collected data sets or utilize data collected for a specific project that was not designed to address teacher quality specifically (Ayres, 2003; CARE, 2008; Collins, 2009; Tan, 2008; Velasco, 2004). A closer look at research on teachers and teacher education in Cambodia reveal two significant works. The most extensive work comes from Benveniste, Marshall, & Araujo (2008) discussing education and describing the profile, working conditions, and performance of teachers in Cambodia. Another study by Jago (2008) uncovers the perceptions of Khmer teachers about “issues that affect their motivation, morale, and performance, and ultimately the quality of education they can deliver” (p. 8). These articles will be discussed in detail in the section describing the educational context in Cambodia.

The purpose of this study is to add to the literature about teacher quality in Cambodia. The study attempts to understand and reveal the Cambodian conception of quality teachers. Several issues led me to explore this topic. Foremost among the issues were the aforementioned EDI rankings for Cambodia demonstrating poor development of education. This lack of development despite approximately $382 million (US) of foreign aid invested in Cambodia’s education sector from 1999-2007 (UNESCO, 2007, 2007).

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2 “Khmer” refers to the Romanized spelling of the word Cambodians use to self-identify their nationality and social and cultural structures. I will use “Khmer” and “Cambodian” interchangeably when referring to these structures.
2008, 2009, 2010) led me to question why there has been little, if any, improvement despite the additional funding for education.

Some initial responses to this question were 1) the funding was insufficient to make any real difference to Khmer education, 2) perhaps the funds were earmarked for projects that did not directly address educational or teacher quality, or 3) perhaps the funds did not reach the levels or areas for which they were designated. Although exploring these responses are interesting topics for academic research, my philosophical training led me to question not only the implementation of the educational programs this money funded, but the assumptions on which these educational programs were designed. Once I began to ponder these issues more deeply, new questions began to arise including

- What are the goals or purposes of education in the countries supplying the aid?
- Do those goals or purposes align with Cambodian goals or purposes of education?
- Do these externally funded programs provide tools or resources that address the educational problems that the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) has identified?
- Does MoEYS have programs or policies already in place to address the problems facing education in Cambodia?
- Do these externally funded programs enhance current MoEYS policies or programs?
• Do these externally funded programs address the problems in culturally relevant ways?
• What are the goals and purposes of Khmer education?
• How are those goals and purposes understood and achieved?
• What role does the teacher play in achieving these goals and purposes?

Answers to these and similar questions require the resolution of a prior question: What does “quality” mean in the context of contemporary Cambodian education? If the concept of quality as used when describing the sorts of teachers Cambodian society desires differs significantly from that implicit in the reforms promoted by donor agencies, then progress toward achieving either conceptualization of quality teachers is likely to be thwarted. However, if we better understand where these different conceptions of quality differ and overlap, then we might be better able to organize reforms that will be more likely to achieve Cambodia’s goal of improving educational quality.

**Background and Rationale**

Education is a “foundation for satisfactory progress” in many areas of human development (Goldstein, 2004, p. 7). A nation normally experiences progress in several other key areas such as the development of human rights and social and economic development when its citizens receive quality education (Burnett, 2008). Most nations understand this intimate relationship between education and development and have put forth great effort and resources to improve their educational systems. Some
countries have demonstrated great success while others struggle to see improvement. Because of the connection between education and national development, there has been an international push by UNESCO to develop education globally. This worldwide plan is called the Education for All (EFA) initiative.

**Education for All**

The development of the EFA initiative began at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand and continued at the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. The combination of these two conferences led to the development of policies that result in “basic educational ‘standards’” (Goldstein, 2004, p. 7). The six EFA goals seek to help nations meet the learning needs of all people. Those six goals are:

1. Expand early childhood care and education
2. Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
3. Promote lifelong learning/life-skills for young people and adults
4. Increase adult literacy by 50%
5. Achieve gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015

While achievement of EFA is not a requirement per se, the reiteration of EFA goals and the publication of indicators measuring progress “thus applying normative pressure to nation-states and organizations” to conform and achieve (Chabbott, 1998, p. 214). The remainder of this section will discuss each of the six EFA goals and how Cambodia performs in these areas.
Early childhood care and education. The goal of expanding early childhood care and education aims at preparing children for formal schooling. More importantly, this is a time when children develop early psychological and social attitudes. UNESCO (2007) expands on the importance of this pre-school development by stating that, numerous progressive transformations occur in children’s physical, mental, cognitive and socio-emotional facilities from earliest infancy to the beginning of schooling. These transformations mark the acquisition of skills and capacities, ways of relating, communicating, learning and playing. (p. 108)

Despite understanding the importance of early childhood care and education, there are “no benchmarks or quantitative targets for monitoring progress” (UNESCO, 2007). More recent GMRs discuss the related topics of nutrition, vaccination, and the increase of pre-primary programs, yet there remains no consensus on appropriate benchmarks for this goal. Cambodia has attempted to address this goal and has witnessed growth in pre-primary gross enrollment rate (GER) from 5% to 13% from 1999 to 2008 (UNESCO, 2011b).

Universal primary education. Another goal is to provide free and compulsory education for all. This is an important goal because education was declared a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Craissati, Banerjee, King, Lansdown, & Smith, 2007). The importance of universal primary education (UPE) was emphasized at the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. There the conference resolution underscored,
that all children, young people and adults have the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be. It is an education geared to tapping each individual’s talents and potential, and developing learners’ personalities, so that they can improve their lives and transform their societies. (UNESCO, 2000, p. 8)

To calculate achievement of UPE, the EDI examines the primary net enrollment ratio (NER) which calculates the ratio of primary age children enrolled in primary or secondary education (UNESCO, 2010). In the 2011 GMR, the name of the figure changed to primary adjusted net enrollment ratio (ANER), but the calculation of the figure remains unchanged (UNESCO, 2011b). The potential of low-income countries to attain universal primary education (UPE), an ANER of 95%, is growing. According to UNESCO’s 2009 GMR, 10 of 12 countries in the East Asia region saw an increase in net enrolment rate (NER) from 1999 to 2006 (UNESCO, 2009). Some countries, including Cambodia, are close to accomplishing the challenge of attaining UPE. In 2006, Cambodia’s primary NER was 89.9% (UNESCO, 2009).

**Lifelong learning/life-skills.** Another of the EFA goals is promoting lifelong learning, including life skills. This goal focuses on skills that are not readily taught in academic subjects. Although UNESCO includes technical and vocational skills like brick-laying or carpentry as part of this goal, in some places greater emphasis is on abstract life skills such as the development of self-esteem, critical thinking, and communication skills commonly referred to as psycho-social skills (UNESCO, 2006).
Given the data driven results required to verify progress toward EFA and EFAs admitted lack of quantifiable measures to indicate lifelong learning, this goal seems difficult if not impossible for low-income countries to attain. As a result, many governments have given little if any priority to youth’s and adults’ learning needs in their education strategies and policies. Inadequate public funding hampers provision and inadequate monitoring obscures other problems. The fact that no clear quantitative targets were established at Dakar, apart from the main literacy target, may have contributed to a lack of urgency. (UNESCO, 2009, p. 91)

While the development of self-esteem and critical thinking is vital for the development of an educated person, the inclusion of lifelong learning as a quantitatively measurable EFA goal leaves many developing countries puzzled about where to begin developing policies that address lifelong learning. Because there are no quantifiable measures, it is difficult to estimate efforts in Cambodia toward achieving lifelong learning.

**Adult literacy.** The fourth EFA goal is to increase adult literacy by 50%. “Being literate adds value to a person’s life. Literacy can be instrumental in the pursuit of development – at personal, family and community levels, as well as at macro-levels of nations, regions and the world” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 30). The growth in communication technology has exploded in the last 20 years. The introduction of mobile telephones and high-speed internet has made the use of email and text messaging common ways to communicate even in remote areas.
This goal is measured by the literacy rate of people over the age of 15 in a given country (UNESCO, 2011b). UNESCO’s 2009 GMR indicates that progress is being made in developing countries where the adult literacy rate increased from 68% in 1994 to 79% in 2006 (UNESCO, 2009). However, Cambodia remains below the worldwide average with only 78% of people over the age of 15 literate in 2008 (UNESCO, 2011b), representing an increase from the 1990 adult literacy rate of 62% in 1990 (UNESCO, 2006).

**Gender parity and equality.** The fifth EFA goal is gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015. Gender parity refers to an equal number of boys and girls having access to quality education, essentially the ratio is one girl enrolled for every boy enrolled. Gender equity is a more ambitious goal by providing equal access to quality education to all children. “A committed shift towards the creation of gender equality in education can deliver a wide range of associated benefits for economic growth and for other objectives of development policy” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 31).

Achievement of this goal brings benefits not only to education, but to society and the economy as well. The 2003-4 GMR emphasizes that,

> giving priority to educating girls during the move towards EFA is a better way on ensuring [the] future sustainability [of education, the economy, and society] over the years when the present school-age generation will themselves have become parents. (UNESCO, 2003, p. 30)

Measuring gender parity and equality requires a more sophisticated mathematical computation than a basic percentage rate. The GMR labels this
measurement the gender specific EFA index (GEI) and calculates this figure by averaging “the gender parity indexes of the primary and secondary gross enrolment ratios and the adult literacy rate” (UNESCO, 2011b, p. 262). Cambodia has worked hard to resolve issues related to gender parity and equity. However, it ranked 110th of 129 countries in gender parity and equity in the 2009 GMR (UNESCO, 2009).

**Quality education.** The sixth EFA goal is improving the quality of education. Quality education is a key to overcoming socio-economic barriers that perpetuate poverty, illiteracy, and gender inequality. By implementing a quality education program, countries can help their citizens overcome these barriers. The knowledge, skills, and abilities that come from a quality education allow students, young and old, to make informed decisions about how to better themselves, their families, and their country.

However, education is of no value if is not relevant and useful. Schools can be filled with students, but if the quality of the education provided is poor then nothing is accomplished. UNESCO affirms that:

The instrumental roles of schooling – helping individuals achieve their own economic and social and cultural objectives and helping society to be better protected, better served by its leaders and more equitable in important ways – will be strengthened if education is of higher quality. Schooling helps children develop creatively and emotionally and acquire the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes necessary for responsible, active and productive citizenship. (UNESCO, 2005, p. 28)
The quality of education is perhaps the most important and basic of these six goals because even where the other five goals are met, if the education offered is not of good quality then those efforts fail to impact development in other areas, the driving principle for EFA. UNESCO (2005) clarifies, “merely filling spaces called ‘schools’ with children would not address even quantitative objectives if no real education occurred” (pp. 28-29). Thus, this measure is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for quality education. Based on this reasoning, the quality of education is the most basic and foundational of the six EFA goals.

Figure 1: Cambodia’s Ranking Compared to Other EFA Countries in Quality Education (No EDI rankings for 2003)
In the international development literature on educational quality, the concept of quality tends to be articulated indirectly through proxies that are quantifiable and thus useful for national-level reporting and statistical analyses. They are not, however, very meaningful accounts of the concept. UNESCO, for example, considers retention rate to grade 5 the key indicator of quality education. Another proxy examined as an indicator for quality education is pupil-to-teacher ratios (PTR). These proxies are used because many countries have difficulties in measuring and reporting learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2009). However, the proxies chosen are poor indicators of quality education because they fail to measure what is actually taught and learned in the classroom. UNESCO admits this shortcoming when it says “the number of years of school is a practically useful but conceptually dubious proxy for the processes that take place there and the outcomes that result” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 29).

Additionally, the potential for low-income countries to increase the quality of education remains low because “many essential resources taken for granted in developed countries remain scarce in developing countries – including basic infrastructure such as electricity, seats and textbooks” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 3). Despite the weakness of the indictors for quality education, they are the accepted measures used to evaluate progress toward achieving EFA. Quality education also represents the area that Cambodia has demonstrated some of its lowest achievement in the EDI rankings (See Figures 1 and 2).³

³ Data for Figures 1 and 2 was taken from cited sources and figures were created using that data.
Research Questions

Because of the importance of quality education, and the dearth of research on education in Cambodia and more specifically, quality teacher education in Cambodia, this study seeks to uncover Cambodian teacher training administrators’ and teacher trainers’ conception of teacher quality. This inquiry seeks to answer the following four questions and their related sub-questions:

Figure 2: Cambodia’s Retention to 5th grade and Percentile from EDI Rankings (No EDI Rankings for 2003)
1. How do Cambodian educators define quality education?
   a. How do historical, social, and cultural conditions play a role in developing that definition?

2. How is quality conceptualized either implicitly or explicitly in the various components of Cambodian teacher education?

3. How does the practice of teacher education in Cambodia align or not align with the Cambodian conception of quality education?

4. How does the conception of quality in Cambodian education align or not align with the conception of quality in EFA goals?

**Methods**

This study seeks primarily to contribute to literature on education, and particularly teacher training, in Cambodia. It also attempts to develop a theoretical lens as well as a methodological approach to qualitative educational research where key ideas and concepts are unfamiliar. Therefore, it will employ modes of inquiry commonly used in the study of different cultures—ethnography—as well as those used in philosophical inquiry—conceptual analysis. Thus, this is a philosophical ethnography that seeks to understand the concept of teacher quality from the Cambodian perspective.

Such a study raises a number of familiar concerns. One of the most prominent concerns with much of Western scholarship about non-Western thought and practice is that,
all too often [Western scholars] tend to [examine non-Western thought and practice] through a lens that not only colors what they see, but also one that reifies the object of study—making it, in essence, part of ‘the Other’ and hence alien. Reification results not only in the distortion of what one is trying to understand, but also in its subjugation to one’s own preexisting values and norms. (Reagan, 2005, p. 2)

The problem Reagan identifies is important; however, there are both ethnographic and philosophical strategies for attempting to avoid it. For instance, Paulo Freire (2000) emphasizes the use of dialogue with the Other as an iterative process of working toward conceptual agreement that can then form the basis of collaborative action. Similarly, Jürgen Habermas (2008) delineates a role for philosophy as “translation” of critical concepts or ideas as they are understood in differing discursive contexts, thus leading to “the revival of sensibilities, thoughts, and motives that, although they spring from other resources, would remain buried if they were not brought into the light of public reason through philosophical conceptualization” (Habermas, 2008, p. 240). Although the prescriptions for dialogue here speak to differing views within Western ideologies, the application of dialogue involving different cultures is possible and desirable. It is, for instance, the hallmark of comparative philosophy (Feinberg, 1989; McLaughlin, 2004). This pragmatic approach to philosophical dialogue will be critical in avoiding pitfalls of interpretation with the colored and reifying glasses maligned by Reagan and will be elaborated on in a future section.
Participants in this study included administrators and teacher trainers at three Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) in Cambodia. The subjects were purposefully selected using a typical case sampling strategy (Patton, 2002). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and a review of relevant documents. The data was then analyzed to reveal common themes present in Cambodian teacher training administrators’ and teacher trainers’ conceptions of teacher quality.

**Limitations of the Study**

Some limitations emerge when examining the scope of this project. Foremost, this study only seeks, in Freire’s (2000) words, to *decode, evaluate, and identify* some of the contradictions in the Cambodian (non-Western) and EFA (Western) conceptions of quality.

The articulation of a Cambodian conception of quality in education in this inquiry is not intended to be a generalizable finding. It is rather a moment, a turn, in a dialogue. It says, in effect, “this is what you seem to mean when you say ‘quality.’ Is that what you mean?” It ends then with a question rather than a conclusion, a question that invites a response in an ongoing dialogue that may, eventually, lead to a conceptual agreement that can form the basis of collaborative action toward a mutually desired goal: quality education. After this conception has been identified, future research can then be more focused on providing improvement to the education sector in Cambodia on a larger scale.
Summary

In this section, I have indicated that Cambodia is one country that is struggling to meet many EFA goals. More specifically, Cambodia’s poorest performance relative to EFA goals is in the area of quality education. Furthermore, I have discussed the importance of quality education to development in other areas of human life. I have also indicated that the proxies used to measure quality education as part of the EFA initiative may not adequately measure the quality of education received. I propose a philosophical ethnography aimed at understanding Cambodian education administrators’ and teacher trainers’ perceptions of teacher quality and compare those perceptions with internationally accepted findings on improving teacher quality through teacher training and development.

Organization of the Study

Chapter Two reviews the quality education literature by discussing evidence from the United States and internationally regarding the importance of teacher education in improving educational quality and the perceptions of different countries about teacher quality. In addition, Chapter Two details the Cambodia educational context. Chapter Three discusses the methodology and methods used to collect and analyze data, including document reviews, semi-structured interviews, and observations evaluated through an ethnographic lens. Chapter Four presents and
analyzes the data. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes the finding from the data and provides some recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

As discussed in the previous chapter, teacher quality affects the achievement of students (Hanushek et al., 1998; Rivkin et al., 2005; Rockoff, 2004; Sanders, 1998). In this chapter, I will review the relevant literature discussing teacher quality by describing and assessing some of the proxies of teacher quality including teacher certification, teacher coursework, advanced degrees for teachers, teacher exams/test scores, and teacher experience. Additionally, this chapter will review literature discussing some differing strategies of teacher preparation. Although there is a vast literature discussing teacher preparation/training, I will limit this discussion to pre-service methods of training. Most research on teacher quality comes from the United States, but this review will also discuss some of the strategies for teacher training in other countries. More specifically, this review will focus on donors to the education sector of Cambodia including the United States, Japan, and Australia. These conceptions of quality teachers can then be compared to those ideas provided by the Khmer participants to discover how much the ideas of these development partners permeate the Khmer conception. How teachers are selected and trained helps identify implicit conceptions of quality embedded within a specific culture or setting. Training aims to mold teachers into facilitators able to deliver the content, skill, and knowledge deemed vital to the population serve and serves as a proxy for the quality of education provided because quality teachers promote quality education.
Teacher Quality

Part of the difficulty in attending to teacher quality is the fact that “substantive and methodological issues surrounding the conceptualization and evaluation of teacher quality are not well understood” in the United States, much less Cambodia (Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008, p. 5). Ingvarson and Rowe (2008) also assert that “Econometric models fitted to the available, mostly aggregated data, typically fail to conceptualise and ‘measure’ teacher quality in terms of what teachers should know (subject-matter knowledge) and be able to do (pedagogical skill)” (p. 5), which further complicates matters. A major difficulty in the research is finding appropriate measures for a teacher’s knowledge and their ability to teach. When these difficulties arise, researchers often use proxies in place of measurements of the actual inputs. Sometimes these proxies capture the intended measure, other times they fail. The use of the proxy measures of retention to 5th grade and PTR for quality education by UNESCO and other organizations demonstrate this failure to capture the relevant skills and knowledge that translate into quality education.

Hanushek (2002) provides a simple definition of teacher quality, indicating that “good teachers are ones who get large gains in student achievement; bad teachers are just the opposite” (p. 3). Though this is a rather uncomplicated definition, it provides a foundation for understanding teacher quality in a more sophisticated manner. Yet, a critique of this definition prompts some startling practical consequences. It appears that the implementation of this definition is utilitarian in nature, seeking the preferred outcome (higher student achievement) using any means to attain that outcome,
including perhaps bullying or inflicting physical pain on students. Thus, definitions are important, but more important are the standards or guidelines by which these definitions are implemented.

To get teachers to know their subject matter and be able to teach it so that students learn, the United States has implemented a system of teacher certification. The idea behind teacher certification is to require a base set of standards that teachers should meet in order to teach. The hope is that the preparation for teachers leading to certification including its various components will increase student achievement by increasing teacher quality (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000). Those constituents of teacher certification programs discussed in this review of literature are teacher coursework, advanced degrees for teachers, teacher exams/test scores, and teacher experience.

**Teacher Certification**

Teacher certification is the process by which the state deems a teacher “qualified” to teach, a sort of gate to keep the bad ones out and let the good ones in. “Certification always involves exams, often in both general knowledge and teaching skills, and it nearly always involves coursework and practice teaching” (Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2007, p. 45; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000, 2001). Teachers can attain certification by pursuing either a traditional or an alternative route. In the traditional route, prospective teachers enroll in a college of education and complete coursework making them eligible for state certification. Here “course content falls into three broad areas: foundational courses (for example, learning and development, philosophy or history of education, multicultural education); pedagogical courses (for example,
methods of teaching and classroom management); and content or subject-matter knowledge” (Boyd et al., 2007, p. 48). Teachers are also required to complete some type of field experience where they can begin to connect their education with actual classroom teaching (Boyd et al., 2007).

Alternative preparation programs diverge “substantially from the regular certification process in terms of both the standards and methods for teacher preparation and entry” (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 124). Also, there are several routes to alternative certification because there is no “standard” for alternative certification. These routes include the same categories as traditional certification programs but vary in the degree and intensity found in traditional programs. However, one problem with alternative certification is that some teachers may have taken more courses that are content driven because their degree is in a specific field like mathematics, biology, history, etc. However, the alternative route may exclude courses meant to enrich a teacher’s pedagogical knowledge.

Rice (2003) summarizes that “teacher preparation is one of the most popular aspects of teacher quality among policy makers because these qualifications are typically a key component of state licensure, which serves as the gatekeeper for the profession, and because of their broad applicability” (p. 20). Yet, because of these various stages or qualifications, Boyd et al. (2007) assert that certification can be an arduous endeavor. The difficulty in attaining certification along with the list of requirements can actually reduce the size of applicant pool for teachers (Boyd et al., 2007; Hanushek, 2002).
What further complicates the matter is that different universities (where traditional certification takes place) have different requirements for graduation. In many of these institutions, the teacher education curriculum is designed around the certification requirements for the state in which it is located (Dean, Lauer, & Urquhart, 2005). This allows for the possibility that a potential teacher can pass the requirements for graduation at their university, yet be required to take further classes or log more hours of pre-service teaching. The certification process for teachers serves to reduce the number of potential teachers because of its arduous nature and is sometimes ineffective in locating and employing teachers who might be qualified because of the vast differences in teacher certification between states.

Teacher Coursework

Coursework is one strategy that allows teachers to learn what they need to know and how to convey that knowledge to students. This coursework can cover subject matter that the teacher will teach (subjects like math, biology, geography, history, etc.). But, coursework can also cover courses designed to teach pedagogy and classroom management (Kirby, 2006; Rice, 2003; Stone, 2002).

Several studies indicate that “subject specific pedagogical training is a critical component of teacher preparation” (Rice, 2003, p. 35). This is significant because it indicates that teachers who teach specific subjects, usually at and beyond the junior secondary level, utilize different strategies to present class material. For example, a history teacher might show video clips of civil rights protests to show the social and political tension felt in America during the 1960s, while a biology teacher might bring in
various types of fruits to introduce the idea of taxonomic classification of organisms into genus and species. Additional research from Rice (2003) indicates that “past the level of basic subject-area preparation, most research found that additional study of teaching methods had a stronger influence on teacher effectiveness than additional subject-matter preparation” (pp. 37-38). Similar findings are shown in Druva & Anderson (1983), Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnik (1985), and Darling-Hammond (2000).

**Advanced Degrees for Teachers**

One argument for requiring teachers to possess advanced degrees is that teachers with more content knowledge will be able to teach students better. In addition, Andrew (1990) reveals that teachers attending five-year programs entered and remained in teaching longer than teachers from four-year programs. This indicates less attrition and more job satisfaction in teachers who hold advanced degrees.

While teachers with advances degrees may have more job satisfaction, data about the effects of teachers with advanced degrees on student achievement is not as rich. In fact, numerous studies “found no statistically significant effect of teacher degree level on teacher performance as measured by student achievement gains, controlling for student background and other teacher and school characteristics” (Rice, 2003, pp. 25-26). Additional research conducted by Ehrenberg and Brewer (1994) and Rowan, Correnti, & Miller (2002) shows that advanced degrees provide little positive effect on student achievement or have a negative impact on student achievement. However, not all data concerning teachers holding advanced degrees show little or negative impact. The work of Ferguson and Ladd (1996), Goldhaber and Brewer (2000), and Rowan,
Chaing, and Miller (1997) indicate that teachers with advanced degrees positively affect student achievement in mathematics in higher grades. Despite the positive effect at higher grades, it appears that when working with children at the primary school level, teachers with advanced degrees provide no more quality education than those with just a four-year degree.

**Teacher Exams/Test Scores**

Rice (2003) asserts that “teachers’ scores on tests are arguably one of the best indicators of what teachers know and can do because they go beyond measuring exposure to programs and specific courses to actually assessing the knowledge and skills that individuals have acquired” (p. 41). However, Angrist and Guryan (2008) found that “there is little evidence of an impact of testing on teacher quality” (p. 500). While these exams do measure knowledge and skills, the tests fail to capture how a teacher’s knowledge and skills are implemented in the classroom. Because of this limitation, supplemental studies including “systematic classroom observation, portfolios, or comparisons of teacher performance” (Rice, 2003, p. 42) are needed to fill in the gaps to see if good performance or outcomes on these exams indicate quality teachers.

A history of the development of these examinations perhaps suggests why they fail to capture the outcomes that demonstrate teacher quality. Real interest in teacher examinations began in the 1970s with the need for addressing school accountability as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Title I designations for schools (Rice, 2003; Watras, 2003). ESEA and Title I focused on ensuring that students
graduating for high school in the United States learned some “basic academic skills” (p. 74). The idea was to devise an external measure of what students learn and teachers teach based on the idea of quality control instituted in industry (Watras, 2003). Because the federal government was focusing on student learning, many states “considered ways to modify teacher certification practices to incorporate some form of competency based education for prospective teachers” (Watras, 2003, p. 75). This began the development of state sponsored tests as part of the requirements for certification. An additional incentive to begin utilizing teacher examinations came as part of the Equal Employments Opportunity Commission’s charge to public and private employers to provide empirical data that showed the skills people needed to perform specific jobs.

Implicit in this understanding and design of teacher certification is an economic thrust for education and teacher quality. Within this view, education is a tool to create wage earners to create wealth for themselves, their places of employment, and the nation as a whole. Thus, good teachers create good workers.

**Teacher Experience**

Normally, as part of a teacher certification program, some teaching experience is required. The amount of teaching experience can differ from state to state and from college to college. This experience can be a valuable learning tool for prospective teachers, giving them in-class experience. For example, the findings from O’Connor, Fish, and Yasik (2004) show that experienced teachers are better able to connect previous lessons with current lessons and can better adapt lessons to students’ understanding. However, some studies indicate that “field experiences tend to be
disconnected from the other components of teacher education programs, leaving teachers poorly equipped to apply their knowledge from classroom coursework to teaching in the field” (Rice, 2003, p. 38). The disconnect can come from a variety of sources such as teaching an unfamiliar subject or being instructed to teach using unfamiliar or ineffective pedagogical methods. Wherever this disconnect arises from, Goodman (1985) reveals that student-teachers need more field experience and more opportunities to find connections between theory and practice through instructional experimentation. Despite the disconnect, field experience has been shown to be a factor in building knowledge and professional experience for future teachers (Rice, 2003).

The inclusion of field experience for student teachers can lead to an increase in student achievement as well. Here teachers “learn by doing” in a real classroom and this type of learning, some have argued, “has the most pronounced effect on teacher effectiveness” (Rice, 2003, p. 16). However, the effect diminished as teachers gain more experience. In fact, the best results of effectiveness from experience come in the first two to five years of teaching (Rice, 2003). This model emphasizes that people learn in order to DO things, accomplish tasks on a checklist, but another possibility is that learning is for BEING. That our value as humans is not tied to the commodities we produce, but by living a flourishing life (what Plato and Aristotle mean by the Greek eudaimonia).

Because field experience appears to influence the effectiveness of teachers, it seems obvious that field experience should be an early and regular part of the teacher education curriculum. If teachers begin their field experience at an early stage of their preparation, they will have two to three years of teaching experience prior to entering
the job market. But this experience should be focused because “years of teaching experience at a particular grade level was statistically significant, but not total years of teaching” (Huang & Moon, 2009, p. 231).

**Strategies for Teacher Preparation**

Recall that “teacher development makes a difference in what the teacher does in the classroom and what the teacher does in the classroom is positively correlated with pupil achievement” (Tatto, 2002, p. 461). The recent reorganization of education on a global scale has shaped how nations currently view education in general and more specifically, teacher education (Bates, 2008). In many places there is a struggle “to combine technical and economic innovation on the one hand with social and cultural conservation on the other” (Bates, 2008, p. 277). To create this amalgamation of modern innovation that sometimes conflicts with more traditional social and cultural norms requires a delicate balance of adding more global themes and trends while retaining the most relevant and significant social and cultural traditions. Examples of this globalizing initiative can be seen in the Romanization of Europe and Asia, the Indianization of Southeast Asia (still present in Cambodia today), and European colonialism.

An exploration of the training of teachers in various parts of the world provides insight into how these nations view the best way to train quality teachers. After reviewing American teacher education programs, a review of international programs including Japan and Australia will follow. Understanding the model of teacher training
in these countries will shed some light on the formulation of teacher training in Cambodia because they are major donors to Cambodia’s education sector.

The United States

The goal of pre-service teacher training in the U.S. is to prepare future teachers to teach public school students by strengthening the skills of teachers and assisting them to achieve specific goals. This goal is accomplished through several strategies including providing a variety of subject matter coursework, requiring field experience and student teaching, and by holding teacher preparation programs accountable for teacher quality (Loeb, Miller, & Strunk, 2009). However, because each state is responsible for determining the criteria for teacher certification and “state-supported universities produce the majority of teacher candidates” (Loeb et al., 2009, p. 215), states appear to be the law-givers, implementers, and evaluators of teacher education. Given that states are responsible for setting the criteria, providing training for teachers, and evaluating the teacher trainees, the cost of teacher education is massive (Loeb et al., 2009).

Dean, Lauer, and Urquhart (2005) found five key elements included in outstanding teacher education programs as determined by the U.S. Department of Education. Those five elements are “1) licensure requirements, 2) standards, 3) accreditation, 4) P-12 partnerships, and 5) continuous improvement” (p. 285). Outstanding teacher education programs do not just pay attention to teacher licensing requirements; they monitor changes in requirements systematically and adjust program requirements accordingly. In addition, outstanding programs provide curriculum that meets state standards as well as meeting the standards set by the National Council for
Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). These outstanding programs have received NCATE accreditation as well. Because of the requirements of field experience and student teaching, outstanding programs have put forth much time and effort to collaborate with local schools and districts, creating opportunities for student teachers to gain valuable classroom experience. The last key element of outstanding teacher education programs is creating a culture of continuous improvement through sharing best practices between institutions (Dean et al., 2005). This ensures that the institutions keep pace with changing trends in practice and research.

**International Strategies**

Akiba, LeTendre, and Scribner (2007) suggest that while the requirements for teachers vary among countries, the structure and content of many teacher education programs is similar. In addition, many countries find it difficult to increase overall teacher quality while ensuring that all teachers possess “quality” characteristics. Much of the problem is that there is a high demand, but a small supply of teachers. Furthermore, many countries, especially those in the developing world, lack the resources to train teachers to meet specified standards (Akiba et al., 2007).

More research on international teacher development comes from Oplatka (2007), who indicates that in many developing countries research points to “poor qualifications and lack of adequate professional training” (p. 41). More importantly, in many developing countries, teachers are thought to be mere transmitters of knowledge so that students can pass governmental examinations, perpetuating the reliance on the teacher-centered model of lecture teaching (Oplatka, 2007).
In more developed countries however, the program of teacher education is beginning to “combine theory and practice in a continuous process” (Ostinelli, 2009, p. 292). The rest of this section will detail programs of pre-service teacher training in international settings from major donors to the education sector in Cambodia, particularly Japan and Australia.

**Japan.** In Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology oversees the highly centralized teacher education process (Ramírez Carpeño & Mekochi, 2015). To enter a teacher training program requires passage of the National Entrance Exam where prospective teachers are tested in five subject areas including Japanese, a foreign language, mathematics, science, and social science (Wang, Coleman, Coley, & Phelps, 2003). All teacher education programs follow the same national curriculum including coursework in

- Pedagogy- 2 credits
- Basic theories of education- 3-6 credits
- Curriculum and teaching methodologies- 3-22 credits
- Instruction for students and educational counseling- 2-4 credits
- Training for Pedagogical Practice- 2 credits
- Practicum- 2-4 weeks (Ramírez Carpeño & Mekochi, 2015)

However, certification for teachers and hiring is the responsibility of individual prefectures (the Japanese equivalent of U.S. states) where three levels of teacher certificates (from highest to lowest), advanced, first class, and second class (Ingersoll, 2007). Those completing Master’s level coursework receive the advanced certificate.
First class certification goes to teachers who complete undergraduate coursework, and teachers receive second class certification for completing junior college coursework. It should also be noted that acquiring a teaching certificate does not “guarantee employment” (Ingersoll, 2007, p. 43). Ingersoll (2007) also mentions that once a prospective teacher attains certification, they then apply with a prefecture and must pass a battery of tests including “written tests, interviews, proficiency tests, and an essay test” as part of the selection process (p. 43). If the prospective teacher’s scores are appropriate, then their name goes into the pool of qualified applicants. Despite the strenuous criteria to attain certification (that normally lessens the pool of potential teachers), there is a high level of competition for the few open slots because of declining enrollment in Japanese schools overall (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

**Australia.** Australian teacher training closely models the decentralized teacher education programs in the United States, where states and territories oversee teacher education and certification (Wang et al., 2003). This decentralized model is demonstrated by the eight accrediting bodies and over 400 teacher education programs in Australia -(Ingvarson et al., 2014; Mayer, 2014). With several options for teacher education,

selection for teacher education in Australia is based on year 12 results, or first-degree results, in the case of graduate entry programs. Currently, it is not common practice for Faculties to interview or to select students in other ways for teacher education programs. Most who enter teaching do so as Year 12 graduates. (Sim, 2006, p. 2)
Mayer (2014) points out that the teacher education programs in Australia also mirror the general curriculum found in the United States including courses in “professional studies, curriculum studies, and professional experience or practicum” (p. 461). Sim (2006) further explains the general approach to teacher education indicating that specializations in areas like special education, early childhood, or specific subject areas. The length of the professional experience for Australian teachers is a minimum of 16 weeks (Wang et al., 2003).

**Comparing Teacher Education in the US, Japan, and Australia**

Several similarities are observed in comparing the teacher education systems in these three nations. The most significant similarity among the three teacher education programs is the focus on a liberal arts education promoting modern democratic ideals and economic development based on a theory-practice model of instruction (Grossman, 2004; Mayer, 2014; Ramírez Carpeño & Mekochi, 2015).

Additionally, all have seen a desperate need to grow the teaching force following a period of conflict, followed by a period of scarcity of teaching positions, then a reemerging need for teachers as a large portion of the teachers reach retirement age (Dyson, 2005; Grossman, 2004; Ingersoll, 2007; Ramírez Carpeño & Mekochi, 2015). While the conflict in the cases of the US, Japan, and Australia was World War II, the significance lies in the development of education, particularly with respect to teacher training and hiring after the conflict and the population booms that followed. The situation in Cambodia appears to mirror this process.
With the emphasis on democratic ideals and economic development driving research and adjustment to these teacher training models, it seems likely that these points will emerge in the teacher education program in Cambodia. If this is the case, then an underlying conflict between modern Western ideas and traditional Khmer culture will surface.

**Teacher Quality in Donor Countries**

A closer look at the structure of these teacher education systems reveals a utilitarian approach to education where the end result is the creation of a productive economic cog expressed in human capital theory (Schultz, 1961). Implicit in this model is the value of knowledge, knowing things that help one *to do*. In this model students are capital to be invested in, creating a return on investment as they have attained the knowledge and skills provided through education. Here the emphasis is on economic growth through education and teachers who create these productive members of society are deemed good teachers. Teachers, then, are transmitters of knowledge to students. The import here is the accumulation of an applicable body of knowledge and an understanding of how to most effectively disseminate that knowledge to affect change in students, thus achieving the intended goal, economic growth through gainful employment. Standardized testing has become the norm for measuring the body of knowledge attained by students. These test scores, in turn, reflect the quality of teachers. One explicit example of this model of education is the No Child Left Behind policy under President George W. Bush.
Cambodian Educational Context

Chapter One discussed some of the current indicators used to measure progress towards various educational goals. This section will focus on the Cambodian educational sector. To understand Cambodia’s education sector more clearly, several key areas must be addressed. Among those areas are the tension between modernity and tradition in education (Ayres, 2003), the basic education system, and the status of teachers and teacher training in Cambodia. Before a discussion of these areas, a brief outline of the educational history of Cambodia will be useful to establish the significance of these areas. Ayres (2003) indicates that Cambodia’s education system is in the midst of an educational crisis. This crisis has been evident since Cambodia gained independence from France in 1953.

Pre-Colonial

Before Cambodia became a French protectorate in 1863, education took place in the local វតាក (wat, Buddhist monastery)\(^4\) and was only available for males. Here we notice the use of the Khmer word for teacher គួរ (kruu, teacher, literally one who respected or revered) as a derivative of the Pali guru. There was no uniform curriculum and only basic literacy and numeracy were taught. In addition to these basic educational skills, students learned basic vocational skills such as farming, furniture making, or construction (Clayton, 1995; Dy, 2004; Harvey, 2000). A more important

\(^4\) When using Khmer text, I will provide a Romanized pronunciation of the Khmer word in italics followed by an English translation.
function of these schools was to “memorise the principles of Buddhism [and] learn rules of propriety” (Tan, 2008, p. 566). These principles and rules served religious and social purposes. While following these Buddhist principles does lead to spiritual enlightenment, the way to និរវត្ត (nipian, nirvana) is by developing the kind of character that exemplifies these principles. The one who gains enlightenment does not just do moral things, rather they are moral. Buddhists are សីល (sul, moral) when they demonstrate ភូមិ (tian, generosity), សីល (mey-ta, generosity), សុំម (garunna, compassion), មូលន (mutita, empathetic joy), and ឧឌីកា (upeka, equanimity) (Harvey, 2000). Education in the temples was seen as a way to improve one’s status both spiritually by learning how to build បុណ្ណ (bun, merit) and socially by learning to live as a functioning and respected member of society (Dy, 2004; Neau, 2003). The development of one’s character in previous lives then determines the station and circumstances that one will be born into in future incarnations. The more good merit one develops the higher the station and the better the circumstances. The inverse is true when one steers away from meritorious actions and commits បប (bab, sinful actions). Implicit in the discussion of បុណ្ណ and បប is the cultivation of a good person in the way that one tends to a garden. It is a process of development where one cultivates oneself in order to reap the ផល (pahl, fruits of one’s labor (or actions)) of karmic action. The idea that education focuses on the development of a moral person instead of developing a set of skills for a person to perform some task, the idea of education for being rather than education for doing.
The way that one exemplifies these Buddhist virtues is through her relationship and interaction with others. Perhaps the most significant aspect of traditional Khmer society is the social hierarchy. Pyramidal in form, the social hierarchy represents a system of patron-client relationships with the king at the top, followed by his patrons, then the clergy, and finally villagers occupying the base (Ayres, 2003). The proper relations between people in this social hierarchy including pupils and masters, wife and husband, friends and family, and masters and servants/employees has roots in Buddhist texts (Harvey, 2000). The patron-client relationship even existed within levels of the social hierarchy with អាកនមាស (neak me-an, a wealthy person, literally one who has) and អាកនមាន (neak kraw, a poor person, literally one who does not have). “Survival at the bottom of the hierarchy was reliant on securing powerful patrons, while survival at the top depended on establishing a network of clients large enough to neutralize potential rivals” (Ayres, 2003, p. 11).

Table 1: Status and Relationships of Others in Relation to the Speaker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khmer</th>
<th>Romanized</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>បង</td>
<td>bong</td>
<td>older sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>បា-ូន</td>
<td>ba-own</td>
<td>younger sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>មិង</td>
<td>ming</td>
<td>aunt (younger than speaker’s parents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>មួ</td>
<td>puu</td>
<td>uncle (younger than speaker’s parents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>អុំ</td>
<td>ohm</td>
<td>aunt or uncle (older than speaker’s parents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>តាអ</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>យា</td>
<td>yay</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the king’s legitimacy stemmed from Indianized Buddhist conceptions of deva-raja (God-King), the legitimacy of other positions was less rigid. Thus, gaining and maintaining power became a possession to be protected at all costs. Further strengthening the desire to acquire and sustain power was the bottom-up flow of support. Ayres (2003) emphasizes that “those with authority sought to become more powerful while having absolutely no obligation to better the lives of those on whom their authority had been established” (pp. 11-12).

The maintenance of this traditional social hierarchy is present in contemporary Cambodia as demonstrated by the language spoken when referencing or addressing others. In Khmer, references to others and verbs used indicates that person’s relationship with the speaker (see Table 1 for references to others and Table 2 for verb uses).

Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate the preservation of the social hierarchy through the use of language. The use of the first person pronoun ខុម (khñohm, I, literally slave) further

Table 2: Different Levels of Use for To Eat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khmer</th>
<th>Romanized</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>សុី</td>
<td>see</td>
<td>Used for animals (vulgar if used for humans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ញុម</td>
<td>ñam</td>
<td>Informal, used for those younger than the speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ពិស</td>
<td>pisaa</td>
<td>Formal, used for those older than the speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ទទួលទា</td>
<td>totualtian</td>
<td>Respectful form, used for those of a higher status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>បរុភតក</td>
<td>boripoke</td>
<td>Very formal, for royalty and ancestral spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>សេសា</td>
<td>sao-we</td>
<td>Used only for royalty and ancestral spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ឆាន</td>
<td>chan</td>
<td>Used only for Monks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reveals the continuation of the traditional Khmer sociocultural context, revealing the preservation of the Buddhist doctrines emphasizing the helplessness and imperfection of humans. These views are supported by the traditional view of education in Cambodia. Dy (2004) mentions that traditionally, education was seen as “an honest route to better the human condition, intentionally aimed at shaping individuals for a better lifestyle, knowledge, and good manners for living in their respective societies” (p. 93). Thus Buddhism “functions as a social glue to keep the traditional Cambodian society together” (Tan, 2008, p. 566).

**Colonial Cambodia**

When Cambodia became a French protectorate in 1863, little changed in the way education continued for the vast majority of Cambodians. In fact, Ayres (2003) asserts that the French had no real interest to “seriously infiltrate the world of the Cambodian peasantry” (p. 19). Instead, the French chose to continue the use of the monastic system of education with some reform. These reforms centered around ideas “grounded in the deep-seated political and philosophical traditions inherited and absorbed by postrevolutionary France: notions of egalitarianism” (Ayres, 2003, p. 19) and social mobility while maintaining traditional concepts of helplessness, the patron-client

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5 The idea of helplessness in the Buddhist/Cambodian context stems from the notion that birth into some situation based upon the merit earned in previous incarnations and is closely related to the fatalistic views present in Khmer culture. It is not meant as a pejorative term, rather a mindset that represents the exercise of non-attachment and the avoidance of extremes to find the middle path through the exercise of ឈូល. This interpretation differs from a western point of view where one makes a conscious decision and exercises effort to better their position (the ideas that I am the master of my own destiny).
system, and “the importance of appropriate conduct and behavior and of maintaining the correct relationship between members of society” (Ayres, 2003, p. 28).

Schools established by the French in Cambodia were for the use of “children of French residents, members of the Cambodian elite, Chinese merchants, and children of Vietnamese immigrants, recruited by the French to undertake tasks of administration in Cambodia” (Ayres, 2003, p. 23). The introduction of modern schooling combined with the increased geographic mobility allowed Cambodian elites including future leaders of the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot and Ieng Sary to study in Vietnam and France where the ideas of modernity and democracy were being pushed to the far left. Ayres (2003) sums up this period in Cambodian education quite nicely, stating,

> the French never appeared to have been concerned with the “development” or “modernization” of the Cambodian peasantry. Their token efforts at educating the peasantry, with legitimacy rather than development in mind, were never pursued with any vigor, and resulted only in undermining a system of semiformal instruction perceived by its users to be both successful and relevant.

(p. 30)

**Since Independence**

After independence the world was rapidly globalizing. The Second World War had just ended and the Cold War was just beginning. It was a time of great economic, technological, and intellectual development. Part of this development was a growing connection between nations. This interconnectedness gave rise to the idea of globalization. Globalization is
the process whereby Western economic, social and political values, institutions, and intellectual frameworks are disseminated throughout the world. It also describes, implicitly if not explicitly, a reciprocal, though unequal, influence of non-Western cultures and institutions on the West via such avenues as foreign travel, trade, immigration, mass communication, etc. (Milligan, Stanfill, Widyanto, & Zhang, 2011, p. 51)

The rise in globalization brought with it the ideas of modernization including a “global community, mechanization, industrial development, and enlightenment” (Ayres, 2003, p. 36) through scientific endeavor.

Among the most influential theories to emerge at this time was Schultz’s (1961) human capital theory. Human capital theory suggests that the deployment of resources to the education sector is seen as an investment in the economic development of a nation. This connection between education and modernization proved to be the catalyst driving educational development, and all Cambodian leaders since independence regarded education as a powerful tool to spread their political ideology in an attempt to maintain their power, and with the notable exception of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge régime (1975-1979), emphasized expansion and development of the education sector with expenditures sometimes totaling 20% of GDP (Ayres, 2003).

In Cambodia, King Norodom Sihanouk recognized the need for development and believed that a modernized education system could accomplish this goal. A rapid

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expansion of the education sector ensued based on the French model and was lauded by UNESCO where it “praised the foundation of the Cambodian system on the French model, ‘which is one of the best organized in the world,’ stating that ‘Cambodia could indeed be regarded as an example [to other developing nations]’ “ (Ayres, 2003, p. 38). Yet,

[d]espite the expansion, the system was poorly suited to the needs of Cambodia. It continued to reflect the centralized, rigid, and competitive French school system. Like the French system, the fine details of curriculum content were prescribed by regulation, including the number of hours teachers were to spend on each subject per week. The history and geography syllabi failed to provide students with an understanding of Cambodia or the Southeast Asian region, while French was the dominant language of instruction in all but the formative school years. (Ayres, 2003, pp. 39-40)

Along with the change in curriculum was a change in who provided the education. Monks, who had previously been the transmitters of knowledge, were replaced with modern school teachers. These modern teachers drew their authority from the state and imparted “new values of the modern nation” (Ayres, 2003, p. 41), yet continued to transmit traditional moral values. This intermingling of tradition from the past with the forward looking ideas of modernity that began with the French continued until April 17, 1975 when the Khmer Rouge seized control and radically changed the lives of all Cambodian people.
Education under the Khmer Rouge

Although estimates vary to some degree, about 2 million people died under the rule of the Khmer Rouge (Ayres, 1999; Chandler, 2008; Clayton, 1998; Pellini, 2007a; Tan, 2008). Additionally, many scholars assert that the education system was destroyed under the Khmer Rouge (Ayres, 1999; Duggan, 1996; Dy, 2004; Dy & Ninomiya, 2003). Support for this position includes evidence like, “anyone who could speak a foreign language, wore glasses, had received a higher education, or had been a Buddhist monk were specifically targeted for elimination” (Collins, 2009, p. 192), “between 75 and 80% of Cambodia’s teachers and higher education students fled or died” (Duggan, 1996, p. 365), and the elimination of “75% of the teaching force, 96% of tertiary students and 67% of all [elementary and secondary] pupils” (Clayton, 1998, pp. 7-8). These people were marked by the Khmer Rouge because of their attachment to traditional Khmer values closely linked with the bourgeois maligned by Marxist ideology.

While Pol Pot sought to eliminate the vestiges of the ancien régime including traditional education (now run by the state) and the centralized patron-client system represented by the monarchy, he and the rest of the Khmer Rouge did not reject education entirely (Ayres, 1999). More explicitly,

Pol Pot’s plan for the education system comprised three central ideological elements. The first was that education, specifically literacy, ‘to learn letters and numbers,’ was essential only in order to ‘learn technology.’ The second, following from the first, was that technology could not be learned without practice. The third was that learning could only occur swiftly ‘by cultivating
good political consciousness’ at the expense of ‘culture’ in order to demonstrate that the ‘line’ of the party ‘is correct.’ These elements reflected the ideological orientation of Angkar: an emphasis on ‘mastery’ and self-reliance, an emphasis on physical labor, and the elimination of ‘culture’—that is, the old society—in favor of following a desirable revolutionary ‘line’. (Ayres, 2003, p. 106)

This plan was accomplished through a general subject curriculum including “reading and writing, arithmetic, national geography, natural science, physics, and base chemistry, the history of the revolutionary struggle of the people and finally, the party’s politics, consciousness, and organization” (Ayres, 2003, p. 107).

It is here that we see the elimination of traditional Khmer ideology in favor of the ideas of modernity expressed though an extreme left-leaning Marxist lens. Examples that show this appear in the use of language during the rule of the Khmer Rouge, rejecting the hierarchical pronouns and verbs from Figures 1 and 2 in favor of the more generic and equal reference to others as mit (friend) and to eat rice as hope bye. Children were encouraged to call their parents “friends” and to report any friends who appeared to be subversive to the new modern ideology. Furthermore, Pol Pot was referred to as “Brother Number 1” emphasizing the promotion of equality under the Khmer Rouge.

**Contemporary**

Dy and Ninomiya (2003) indicate that basic education,

7 Angkar refers to the name of the singular organization of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, literally the People’s Organization.
must meet the basic learning needs of all human beings. These needs comprise literacy, oral expression, numeracy, problem solving and knowledge, as well as the skills, values and attitudes required by an individual to develop and participate in society. (p. 11)

In Cambodia, basic education includes nine years of education. These nine years includes six years of primary school and three years of lower secondary school following the 6+3+3 model established internationally and adopted by MoEYS in 1996 (RGC, 2007).

The curriculum for primary education in Cambodia looks remarkably similar to curricula from other countries including language (Khmer), mathematics, science, social studies, physical and health education, local life skills, and the introduction of a foreign language at grade 4 (MoEYS, 2011a). The Curriculum Development Policy also specifies how many lessons in each subject area are taught per week. In addition to developing a well-rounded curriculum, MoEYS has devised several policies to help improve the quality of education including the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) (MoEYS, 2004a, 2005b, 2010a), the Education Sector Support Program (MoEYS, 2005a), the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) (RGC, 2010), and the EFA National Action Plan (MoEYS, 2003).

**Teacher Training in Cambodia**

Cambodia has a centrally organized teacher training system. The drastic need for teachers has pushed Cambodia to reduce the requirements for people to become teachers. This need for more teachers has been recognized by MoEYS and teacher
training for primary teachers follows a 12+2 (12 years of education followed by 2 years of teacher training) for urban areas and a 9+2 (9 years of basic education followed by 2 years of teacher training) for rural and remote areas. Lower Secondary teachers must have completed a 12+2 model and Upper Secondary teachers follow a 12+4+1 including a university degree and one year of training at the National Institute of Education (NIE) (Benveniste et al., 2008). The conditions for teaching in rural and remote areas are a bit more flexible because of the acute need for teachers in these isolated areas. In addition, “about a quarter of primary school teachers hold an upper secondary degree [grade 12], while about two-thirds hold a lower secondary school degree [grade 9]” (Benveniste et al., 2008, p. 33).

Teaching in Cambodia remains teacher focused with an emphasis on rote learning. Despite the adoption of the Child Friendly Schools policy and the integration of training classes on the rights of the child, teacher performance in the classroom remains largely teacher centered (Benveniste et al., 2008; Jago, 2008), reflecting the traditional Khmer model of education. The traditional model continues because of a lack of qualified teacher trainers and “[e]ducation advisers report that teachers, school directors and provincial and district offices of education have a strong tendency only to follow Ministry guidelines” (Jago, 2008, p. 34). This normally means following the lesson plans and utilizing the specific examples provided by MoEYS in the teacher’s manual.

Thus far only pre-service training has been discussed, but in-service training is also being utilized to address teacher shortages, but this training is fragmented and
Provincial and District Offices of Education remain unclear about who is responsible for carrying out such ad-hoc training (Jago, 2008). A final note about teacher training in Cambodia is that “it is imperative that preservice teacher training as well as in-service professional development systems are bolstered to raise teacher subject and pedagogical content knowledge” (Benveniste et al., 2008, p. 80).

**Current Research on Cambodian Education**

The introduction shed some light on the paucity of research on Cambodia’s education. Recall that there are roughly 65 articles in ERIC specifically focused on education in Cambodia. Many of these articles identify overarching issues and problems facing Cambodia including the cost of schooling, bureaucratic roadblocks, teacher recruitment and remuneration, and the imposition of modern ideas that often conflict with traditional views, and low student achievement.

**Cost of schooling.** Often student absences relate to a family’s economic status. Particularly in rural areas where agriculture is the main source of income, students will stay home from school in order to assist the family in the planting or harvesting of crops. The opportunity cost of losing one day of school is severely outweighed by the families need for work in the fields (Chansopheak, 2009; Collins, 2009; Tan, 2007).

Other costs of children attending school include the actual household expenses required to send children to school. Bray and Bunly (2005) identify several areas of out of pocket expenses required of families for children to attend school. These expenses include registration, uniforms, learning materials, supplementary tutoring, tests, transportation, and pocket money. While some of these practices including registration,
tests, and some supplementary tutoring have been outlawed by the Education Law (RGC, 2007), the remaining costs can be a real burden on families, especially those in rural and remote areas.

**Bureaucratic roadblocks.** Several issues regarding the bureaucratic structure of educational management in Cambodia remain apparent. The requirements placed on school administrators to file numerous perfectly hand-written reports to DOE and POE for the release of budget funds, inefficient use of school funds because most funding is earmarked for very specific expenditures without regard to the actual needs of the school, the lack of open dialogue between policymakers and those who implement the policies, and in some places a cursory relationship between school administrators and teachers (Chansopheap, 2009).

Promotion within the education sector is not based on meritocracy and there is a lack of transparency (Benveniste et al., 2008) in educational planning and implementation because reform takes a top-down, centralized approach “inherited from the Angkor era” (Tan, 2007, p. 22). Additional issues related to the lack of transparency are accusations of corruption at the Ministry, POE, DOE, and school director levels (Benveniste et al., 2008; Jago, 2008; Kim & Rouse, 2011; McCormick, 2012; Royal University of Phnom Penh, 2009).

Another issue regarding bureaucratic roadblocks is the quality and capacity of leadership in the education sector. Chhinh and Dy (2009) report that in Cambodia a “majority (5,996 out of 7,119) of the school administrators including principals hold no degrees higher than secondary school” (p. 122). Furthermore, [r]esources at POE level
are extremely basic; those at DOE are even more so and often consist of a few small rooms with tables and chairs; the majority do not have electricity” (Jago, 2008, p. 38) and along with local educators,

POE and DOE staff are paid a basic salary of US$30-US$40 per month; they supplement their income by giving private lessons, driving motorbike taxis, working at the markets, or farming. Thus, these education staff, with responsibility to the needs, supervision and support for all the school staff in their district, have the same problems as teachers in terms of giving time and priority to their jobs. In addition, the majority of staff are not trained sufficiently to be able to offer the support and advice needed by school directors and teachers. (p. 38)

Teacher recruitment and remuneration. Duggan (1996) discusses the need for more and better teachers in Cambodia when he states “unqualified teachers constitute some 85% of the active teaching force” (p. 362). Additionally, Cambodia has had a difficult time recruiting enough teachers to fill the needs in its schools (Benveniste et al., 2008; Duggan, 1996; Jago, 2008; Kim & Rouse, 2011; Tandon & Fukao, 2015). However, a significant demand for entry into TTCs from aspiring trainees, so the potential for growth is there and, at present, could be met. But the attractiveness of the teaching profession may change as economic growth continues to expand labor market opportunities, even at rural areas. (Benveniste et al., 2008, p. 94)
This means that there are perhaps adequate numbers of people interested in the teaching profession, yet there are not enough opportunities or openings for pre-service training at TTCs. Jago (2008) suggests that “the level of recruitment of teachers is raised in order to tackle the shortage of teachers and to reduce the current need for double shifting and multi-grade teaching” (p. 32).

Even though there is a large cadre of people willing to enter teaching as a profession, the reality is that those actually applying to enter are not Cambodia’s top candidates. In fact, each TTC receives more than 1,200 applications a year but accepts only about 160, an acceptance rate of only 15.6 percent (weighted). Although demand is higher than supply, more than one-third of TTCs report difficulties in recruiting qualified candidates and dissatisfaction with enrollee caliber. The issue was much more pronounced among PTTCs, suggesting a perceived link between applicant quality and teaching level. (Tandon & Fukao, 2015, pp. 34-35)

Remuneration may play a significant role in the low quality of potential teacher candidates. Benveniste, Marshall, and Araujo (2008) assert that one “common complaint is that teachers’ salaries are not sufficient to cover their expenses. And there is broad consensus amongst educators, union leaders, administrators, and society in general that this is indeed the case” (p. 49). Tandon and Fukao (2015) point out that in Cambodia “teachers on average earn less than other professionals” with similar education and training (p. 23).
Another problem related to teacher salaries is the report of delayed payment of salaries. Most teachers, report delays on receiving their salaries. The average delay length, about 10 days, varies little by school location. In remote schools, 10 percent of primary school teachers indicated that they “sometimes” miss school to collect pay, and 5.7 percent noted that they “always” miss class for this. (Tandon & Fukao, 2015, p. 32)

A bit of analysis of this information reveals that teacher salaries are a significant reason for absenteeism and reports of absenteeism appear regularly in the literature (Benveniste et al., 2008; Jago, 2008; Tandon & Fukao, 2015).

**Low student achievement.** Much of the literature recognizes that there is relatively little research on student achievement in Cambodia and that the data that is available shows that student achievement lags behind other countries. This literature is based on Cambodia’s Education Management Information System (EMIS) data regarding math and reading scores for students in grades 3 and 9. Most literature focuses on what factors are most significant in Cambodian student achievement including socio-economic status, pedagogical content knowledge of teachers, educational attainment of teachers, social networks of families, traditional gender roles, parental involvement, parental aspirations for their children, and fatalistic beliefs of parents (Benveniste et al., 2008; Eng, 2013; Eng, Szmodis, & Mulsow, 2014; Marshall et al., 2012; Marshall et al., 2009; Ngo, 2013).
The Tension between Modernity and Tradition

Khmer sociocultural traditions conflict with Western democratic ideas including democracy, equality, and decentralization (Pellini, 2005). Ayres (2000) further explains that “important tensions between the competing demands of tradition and modernity” (p. 442) remain a impediment to Cambodian educational development. Often, MoEYS relies on the assistance of NGOs and other development organizations to assist in the development and implementation of these policies because it currently lacks the resources and capacity to develop such initiatives and Cambodia’s dependence on foreign aid has brought with it increasing conditions and expectations aligned with these modern ideas as part of the acceptance of the aid. As a result, “multinational financial agencies have become involved either directly or indirectly in the educational goal setting task” in Cambodia (Crowley, 2010, p. 45). Thus, the education offered to Cambodian students is becoming less linked to Khmer tradition and more connected with Western modernization.

As mentioned earlier, education is a key input for development in many areas of human life. The development of human life is couched in terms of modernization and this relationship between development and education is emphasized by leaders of developing countries, including Cambodia, who indicate that “education is the key to modernization” (Ayres, 2003, p. 3). The capitalistic economic underpinnings of human capital theory infused with Western democratic ideals of social justice and decentralization fuel the push for modernity.
Ayres (2003) indicates that in Cambodia, “education had been central to the
tension between modernity and tradition and between development and state-making”
(p. 3). Because of the central position education holds in this tension, Ayres (2000)
further explains,

the Cambodian experience provides ample evidence that the tensions between
local (tradition) and global (modern) demands and imperatives, while significant
at the policy-making and classroom levels, are also negotiated and mediated at
the level of the nation-state, where political elites are often reliant on education
in order to establish their legitimacy. It is through these processes of negotiation
and mediation that educational agendas and policies interplay with local
sociocultural contexts and where the roots of crises in education can be located.
(p. 448)

One example of this tension is the push from development organizations to emphasize
democratization, transparency, and participation in the projects they fund in Cambodia
(2007b). Another example directly related to education is the push for parental
involvement in reinforcing educational policies, yet the Buddhist practice of non-
attachment as an exercise of equanimity conflicts with parental involvement in their
child’s education (Eng et al., 2014).

Additionally, the shift to an economic input model as the purpose of education
places a great deal of pressure on those responsible for producing an adequately trained
and qualified workforce without tools (educators, administrators, and Ministry
officials) that are trained and qualified to carry out this task themselves (Chhinh & Dy,
Because of this lack of resources, there is significant reliance on external donors for technical expertise and funding for educational projects that push traditional Khmer views toward the periphery of education and emphasize the ideas of modernity including decentralization, equality, a reliance on evidence based on scientific or mathematical calculations, and the use of ICT as an integral tool for education and educational development (Courtney, 2008; Dionys, 2012; Duggan, 1997; Hattori, 2009; McCormick, 2012; Pellini, 2005; Richardson, 2011; Tan, 2010). This move comes at the expense of the traditional emphasis of civic and moral duties in educational curriculum (Clayton, 2005; Tan, 2008).

The rest of this section will examine two ideas of modernity and their tension with traditional Khmer culture, equality and decentralization.

**Equality.** UNESCO (2009) indicates the importance of equality (សមភព; *samapeap*) to development by stating that,

[inequality] is linked to wider disparities in the distribution of power, wealth, and opportunity. And it is perpetuated by policies that either tolerate or actively exacerbate an unfair distribution of life chances – policies that fuel the transmission of poverty across generations. (p. 6)

One of the ways to promote equality is through the principles of social justice. Shields and Mohan (2008) call attention to “the need to make social justice the foundation of school reforms designed to bring about more equitable learning conditions for all students” (p. 290). This is significant because “unequal opportunity in education is linked to the transmission of inequalities and deprivation in other areas,
including health, employment, gender disparities and participation in society” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 73). Cambodian education has shown a commitment to social justice through the implementation of the Child Friendly Schools policy with a concentration on student centered learning and curriculum focused on children’s rights in teacher training.

The push for equality and social justice in the modern education agenda presents a tension with major tenets of traditional Khmer values. The use of pronouns and various verbs for the same action shown in Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate this tension. Another implicit tension between modern and traditional is the push for self-reliance, individual participation, and empowerment under the modern view with ideas of helplessness and imperfection of people emphasized in traditional Khmer education, particularly following the monastic model. Where Cambodia saw large-scale rejection of traditional values was under the rule of the Khmer Rouge. Here equality among all people was not only emphasized, but required including reference to others as friends and not parents, teachers, or venerated religious or sovereign figures.

**Decentralization.** Decentralization (វិជ្កម, vichegam) is another characteristic of modernity. UNESCO (2009) explains that “[d]ecentralization – the transfer of political, administrative and fiscal authority to lower levels of government – is one of the most pervasive governance reforms of the past two decades” (p. 130). It attempts to “promote democracy and the establishment of more democratic institutions based on principles of good governance” (Pellini, 2005, p. 206).
Decentralization has come into prominence as a way to increase community involvement in education in recent years. MoEYS has instituted a cluster schools program to help spread the responsibility of delivering and supporting education at the provincial, district, and community level. A school cluster centers around a core school joined together with 5-6 satellite schools. These schools then form committees to discuss improvements needed at the schools and the mobilization of resources to address these issues (Pellini, 2007b).

However, MoEYS’s attempts to modernize are not without issues. For example, MoEYS has outlined the objectives of the clustering policy, but has yet to provide details about how these objectives are to be achieved (Pellini, 2007b). Additional evidence of this lack of coordination or support for these modern policies comes from informal conversations with people involved in education in Cambodia. Many teachers, administrators, and NGO personnel explain that the Ministry has developed useful policies, but has provided little in the way of direction or encouragement to put these policies into practice.

Decentralization seems to show a tension with traditional Khmer beliefs as well. The instantiation of the patron-client system throughout Cambodian history places the patron at the center geographically and politically. The patron is responsible for caring for and protecting the clients while the clients provide labor, support, and allegiance to their protector, whether it is the king or policy making bodies. Reverence for the King and an idealized remembrance of the greatness of Angkor exemplify Khmer reliance on
a central model of governance in the past. Contemporary examples of this tension are bureaucratic roadblocks and the lack of parental participation.

**Summary**

In the modern, Western model of education, what one *knows* is valued over how one *acts*. The value of knowledge is ultimately measured through the economic development of a society. As such humans are a means to and economic end. Because of the economic development in the West, these nations possess the economic means to assist developing nations. When doing so, the ideas of modernity including individual participation, empowerment, self-reliance, equality, and decentralization are imposed along with wholesale implementation of these “successful” models of education and teacher training.

There is much consensus about the fact that teachers have the most influence of any input on student achievement, but “extensive research over the past 35 years has led to two clear conclusions. First, there are very important differences among teachers.... Second, these differences are not captured by common measures of teachers (qualifications, experience and the like)” (Hanushek, 2002, p. 3). This literature review has attempted to demonstrate these findings in the U.S. and abroad.

At the international level, some countries have demonstrated that their teacher development program is an efficient and effective model in producing high levels of student achievement. However, some countries continue to struggle to produce enough teachers of good quality to serve the country’s needs. Some of these problems include
cumbersome certification criteria, low salaries, poor recruitment, and a lack of matching training with the educational curriculum.

One interesting similarity between all of the countries observed is that the countries located in the East and in the developing world subscribe to the Western model of teacher training espoused by development partners. Each of the countries includes criteria for subject matter competence for teachers. The competency criterion utilized divides subject areas in the same way observed in the West (separate classes for math, language, science, etc.). It is also important to note that these subject areas are vital to the perpetuation of the modern individualized, capitalistic society with the purpose of producing workers to increase economic production. Another point of interest here is that many places have little or no curriculum for teachers to include moral, social, or spiritual values in the classroom.

Another interesting point is that the measurement of effective teachers in all of these places rests on individual student achievement on specific subject matter as conceived of in Western education. While other measures of student achievement might be more culturally and socially relevant, those measures have again given way to Western ideology. The important point here is that student achievement focuses on what one knows, not how one acts.

One more point related to subject matter competence and student achievement in the observed countries is the role of teacher as a transmitter of knowledge in a technical manner controlling or dictating what the student should know (Milligan, 2005). This
model of teaching perpetuates an unequal power relation between student and teacher representative in a traditional model of education.

These issues are observed in Cambodia today. For example, when asked what the goal of education was for his district one Cambodia superintendent responded that his goal was to help the students become “good people.” Evidence suggests that the impetus on moral and spiritual development in Khmer education dates to pre-Colonial times. Here the rules of propriety and Buddhist principles, including ideas of helplessness and imperfection, take a central place in Cambodian curriculum. As time passed and French influence spread in Southeast Asia, ideas of modernity followed, along with the modern model of education. Although the French model of education was never fully implemented, it is here that that the ideas of modernity were introduced to the Cambodian education curriculum. It was under the Khmer Rouge that these ideas were applied in full in Cambodian education. Contemporary education in Cambodia has integrated more traditional subjects within its modern curriculum and has seen several problems arise including the cost of schooling, bureaucratic roadblocks, teacher recruitment and remuneration, and low student achievement. Along with these issues, Cambodian educators are ill prepared to deliver a modern, Western model of education resulting in excessive reliance on external, foreign donors to the education sector, which possible perpetuate these problems.

A deeper analysis of these issues and the history of Khmer education reveals a tension between the ideology and structure of modern, Western modes of education and traditional Khmer concepts of education. This tension permeates all levels of the
education sector including the purpose of education, pedagogical strategies, subjects taught, modes of teacher training, and policy making and execution.

If the goal of Cambodian education is to make “good people,” then the measures used by Western educational research are looking in the wrong places. An effort to solidify improvement in education requires a program that matches outcome measures to indigenous ideals, norms, and goals. To begin this process in Cambodia, an understanding of the Cambodian position on quality education and quality teachers is necessary. This inquiry attempts to uncover Cambodian educators’ conception of quality in education and teacher training by answering the following questions:

1. How do Cambodian educators define quality education?
   a. How do historical, social, and cultural conditions play a role in developing that definition?

2. How is quality conceptualized either implicitly or explicitly in the various components of Cambodian teacher education?

3. How does the practice of teacher education in Cambodia align or not align with the Cambodian conception of quality education?

4. How does the conception of quality in Cambodian education align or not align with the conception of quality in EFA goals?
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents a description of the philosophical framework, the methodology guiding this study, and the methods employed to collect data for this inquiry. The chapter also discusses the credibility and dependability of the data as well as addresses ethical and confidentiality issues.

Philosophical Framework: Pragmatism

The beginnings of pragmatism as a philosophical view come from the writing of Charles Sanders Peirce. He lays out the pragmatic process as an epistemological tool. A method of settling dispute about what we know, either as an individual or as a collective. This process is perhaps best understood by looking at an example, “Cambodia is in Southeast Asia.” When I express this idea, what I am implicitly saying is that “I believe that Cambodia is in Southeast Asia.” Beliefs are important in this view because they “guide our desires and shape our actions” (Peirce, 1877, p. 5). In other words, if I want to visit Cambodia and I believe it is in Southeast Asia, I would not purchase a train ticket to get there from the United States. Belief creates a calming or soothing effect to our intellect. Doubt, on the other hand, creates a sense of uneasiness for us, causing us to act in a way that settles the doubt, creating a new belief (Peirce, 1877). Peirce labels this method of settling doubt pragmatism.
But if you follow the pragmatic method, you cannot look on any such word as closing your quest. You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be changed. (James, 1907, p. 53)

In other words, pragmatism is a way of “dealing with the problems of men” (Westbrook, 1991, p. 138), a method of thinking critically about the social problems we observe. Because pragmatism is a method of finding ideas that work with our experience and we express our experience through language, Rorty (1982) expounds on the connection between our experience and language through pragmatism by saying “in the process of playing vocabularies and cultures off against each other, we produce new and better ways of talking and acting—not better by reference to a previously known standard, but just better in the sense that they come to seem clearly better than their predecessors” (p. xxxvii).

**Pragmatic Theory of Meaning**

Following Rorty’s understanding of pragmatism, a concerted, shared effort at coordinating meaning (and culture) is required to uncover solutions to social problems. Pragmatism is not the willful imposition of ideas or solutions one side sees as the only way to “fix” a problem, rather it is a conversation arising to not only identify a problem, but to discuss how the problem came to light and ways that have been or are being attempted to solve the problem. The first step in this kind of communication is to coordinate the meanings of central words. Strings of letters on their own have no
meaning. Meaning comes when some stretch of letters signifies some idea or object. Quine (1980) emphasizes this by explaining that “meaning is what essence becomes when it is divorced from the object of reference and wedded to the word” (p. 22).

Dewey (1916) elaborates,

the sound h-a-t gains meaning in precisely the same way that the thing “hat” gains it, by being used in a given way. And they acquire the same meaning with the child which they have with the adult because they are used in common experience by both. The guarantee for the same manner of use is found in the fact that the thing and the sound are first employed in a joint activity, as a means of setting up an active connection between the child and a grown-up. Similar ideas or meanings spring up because both persons are engaged as partners in an action where what each does depends upon and influences what the other does. If two savages were engaged in a joint hunt for game, and a certain signal meant “move to the right” to the one who uttered it, and “move to the left” to the one who heard it, they obviously could not successfully carry on their hunt together. Understanding one another means that objects, including sounds, have the same value for both with respect to carrying on a common pursuit. (p. 18)

**Pragmatic Theory of Knowledge**

This inquiry is concentrated on how the concept “quality” is conceptualized and operationalized in Cambodian teacher education. The pragmatists’ theories of knowing and meaning alert us to the fact that what counts as knowledge and what a concept like quality means is determined by the goals and experiences of specific communities. This
sets a problem of first understanding the differences in meaning and then, if possible, coming to a shared meaning of the concept of “quality” education in order to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education in Cambodia. Therefore we must engage in this process of revealing shared meaning through what Biesta and Burbules (2003) call practical intersubjectivity. *Practical Intersubjectivity* creates a shared, intersubjective world through “the practical coordination and reconstruction of individual patterns of action” (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 12). This is, in effect, a process of translation through dialogue.

**Philosophy as Translation**

Contemporary work on dialogue in philosophy can be found in the work of Ian Barbour (1997) and Jürgen Habermas (2008). The focus of these works is the conflict between religion and science in academic debate, but this debate provides a map for how this sort of dialogue should be conducted, where the concerned parties may be using different words to express the same idea or using the same word to express different ideas. Habermas (2008) advocates for a dialogical approach that espouses a “critical attitude toward religious traditions while at the same time being open to learning from them” (p. 245). This dialogue leads to progress and mutual understanding through “philosophy in the role of a translator” that contributes to “the revival of sensibilities, thoughts, and motives that, although they spring from other resources, would remain buried if they were not brought into the light of public reason through philosophical conceptualization” (p. 240). Although the prescriptions for dialogue here speak to differing views within Western ideology, the application of dialogue involving
cultures from different ideological positions seems appropriate. The call for this sort of dialogue between cultures has recently emerged in comparative philosophy literature (Feinberg, 1989; McLaughlin, 2004). The dialogue intended here leaves open the opportunity to hear and understand other philosophies from their own perspective to forge “a common universe of discourse” (Panniker, 1988, p. 132). Dialogue, therefore, is a powerful means of clarifying the meaning of “quality” inherent in the Khmer educational tradition and comparing that with “quality” in its Western senses in order to understand the differences and, perhaps, arrive at a shared meaning that can underpin collaborative efforts to improve the quality of Cambodian education. But what might such a dialogue look like methodologically?

**Dialogue in Educational Discourse**

Advocates for dialogue in educational discourse often cite the influence and writings of Paolo Freire. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2000) outlines how this dialogue is carried out in real world scenarios to transform people from a state of oppression to a state of freedom. He further clarifies that “the object of dialogical action is to make it possible for the oppressed, by perceiving their adhesion, to opt to transform an unjust reality” (Freire, 2000, p. 174).

Freire suggests that the essence of dialogue lies in reflection and action. Reflection represents the words used to describe the world including the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions of both the oppressed and the oppressors. Action is the work needed to remove oppression. When reflection and action are co-
joined, the result is transformation and humanization in the world. It is praxis, “an act of creation” (Freire, 2000, p. 89). Furthermore,

it is as transforming and creative beings that humans, in their permanent relations with reality, produce not only material goods—tangible objects—but also social institutions, ideas, and concepts. Through their continuous praxis, men and women simultaneously create history and become historical-social beings. (Freire, 2000, p. 101)

This process of dialogue is constant in Freire’s eyes so that oppression does not reemerge and dehumanize. Freire further clarifies that,

the starting point of [the oppressed] search to know more (in the instrumental meaning of the term) is the debate of the concept. As they discuss the world of culture, they express their level of awareness of reality, in which various themes are implicit. Their discussion touches upon other aspects of reality, which comes to be perceived in an increasingly critical manner. (p. 123)

**Freirean Dialogue**

In* Pedagogy of the Oppressed*(Freire, 2000), Freire outlines the dialogical process (though in the text Freire refers to this process as decoding) and identifies four basic steps of the process. These steps as I refer to them are observing, codifying, decoding, and analyzing.⁸

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⁸ I have chosen to use the verb form here to emphasize the *active* nature of the research/work being performed.
**Observing.** In the observing stage, investigators (including participant-observers from the area, culture, society, etc) do just that, “observe certain moments of life of the area” (p. 111). These observations are recorded and begin to be a piece of the raw data used to further the dialogical process. Understanding the nature and detail required of this set of observations is crucial. Freire (2000) asserts that the investigators should, register everything..., including apparently unimportant items: the way the people talk, their style of life, their behavior at church and at work. They record the idiom of the people: their expressions, their vocabulary, and their syntax (not their incorrect pronunciation, but rather the way they construct their thought. (p. 111)

This emphasis on the minute details of their life and speech patterns provides insight into the norms of the participants in the area, how they envision their own situation.

**Codifying.** Once these observations have been collected, reports are made outlining the emerging situations and themes present in the observing stage. These reported situations and themes are then brought back to meetings with the participant-observers where further discussion and analysis about the situations and themes take place. This meeting is the first step in identifying the contradictions in the lives of the participants. As these contradictions are identified, the investigators need to understand the participants’ “level of awareness of these contradictions” (p. 115). This is done through the creation of cognizable objects representing those situations and themes that are then presented to the participants for critical reflection. These cognizable objects can
be a variety of things including photographs, drawings, music, poetry, etc. (MoEYS, 2007).

**Decoding.** In the decoding stage, these codifications are actually brought to the participants, where the participants are encouraged to explore those situations and themes identified earlier. Freire (2000) states that,

> during the decoding process, the co-ordinator must not only listen to the individuals but must challenge them, posing as problems both the codified existential situation and their own answers. Due to the cathartic force of the methodology, the participants of the thematic investigation circles externalize a series of sentiments and opinions about themselves, the world, and others, that perhaps they would not express under different circumstances. (pp. 117-118)

**Analyzing.** This last stage of the process represents “a systematic interdisciplinary study of [the] findings” (Freire, 2000, p. 119). This occurs when the decoded data is then analyzed to identify the fundamental themes explicit in the data as well as those themes not outwardly identified but present. It is in this stage those unfamiliar (what Freire calls “alienated”) with the circumstances of the subjects of the inquiry begin to see the “reality of the people” (Freire, 2000, p. 122). At this point the findings of the inquiry can be presented as a tool to affect change.

In drawing upon the work of Freire here, I stipulate that this inquiry is not a work of critical theory. It is not my goal or intention to begin a revolution of liberation education in Cambodia. Rather my purpose is to elicit an understanding of the Cambodian conception of quality in education for myself, future researchers, and for
Cambodian educators so that further research can be directed in a purposeful, meaningful way. The application of this type of dialogue in education has seen success in many countries including Cambodia (von Hahmann, 2004).

Methodology

Freire’s methodology reflects a pragmatist’s recognition that the different aims and experiences of different cultural communities require coordination of meaning—translation—of critical concepts before collaborative action can take place. This process of translation requires methods that are ethnographic—understanding cultural context—on one hand and philosophical—analysis and clarification of concepts—on the other. Therefore, this inquiry will proceed as a philosophical ethnography.

Ethnography involves an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context. It is not simply the production of new information or research data, but rather the way in which such information and data are transformed into written or visual form. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 455)

Creswell (2004) clarifies this by indicating that ethnographies are used “for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-shaping group’s shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time” (p. 473). To conduct an appropriate ethnography, Creswell (2008) indicates that an ethnography is an appropriate form of inquiry for what he calls a “culture-sharing group” that includes “two or more individuals who have shared behaviors, beliefs, and language” (p. 480). Given these
explanations, an ethnographic inquiry is well suited for discovering how quality is conceived in Cambodian education and teacher training.

Ethnography gained its roots in the social science of cultural anthropology. Hence, an emphasis on culture is vital to conducting a proper ethnography. To understand unknown or unfamiliar cultures requires intensive and lengthy fieldwork immersed in the culture, collecting data through observation and interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Frank & Uy, 2004; Patton, 2002). Frank and Uy (2004), reporting on the effectiveness of ethnographic study in acclimating pre-service teachers to the classroom, indicate that understanding culture and language are crucial to the researchers ability to interpret data from an emic/insider perspective. Researchers gain this emic perspective through various methods of data collection. These methods can include casual conversations, life histories, semi-structured interviews, censuses, observations, focus group interviews, etc (Creswell, 2008). As the researcher gathers data from these sources, she must also take fieldnotes. The fieldnotes should provide thick, well-detailed descriptions of events as well as including the researcher’s ideas and inclinations about what is being observed.

In-depth acquaintance with the culture and language being studied is crucial for any ethnographer. Margaret Mead conducted perhaps the most well known ethnographic inquiry about female maturation in Samoa. She spent many years living among the people, learning their customs and language. Freire emphasizes the need for understanding socio-cultural and linguistic understanding prior to investigation. He (2000) states that “[o]nce the investigators have determined the area in which they will
work and have acquired a preliminary acquaintance with the area through secondary sources, they initiate the first stage of the investigation” (p. 110).

Ethnography, like any scientific inquiry, is essentially a descriptive endeavor. Its design is to describe what IS the case in a particular cultural setting. Philosophy, on the other hand, can be both a mode of conceptual analysis as well as a form of normative argument about what ought to be done given particular circumstances. While this inquiry is concerned with what IS the case in Cambodian education, it is also concerned with clarifying the meaning of a concept—quality—in Cambodian teacher education as steps preliminary to any normative argument about whatever “oughts” might be found necessary to achieve quality education in Cambodia. Thus philosophical ethnography will be the methodology employed in this inquiry.

**Philosophical Ethnography**

Because the focus of this study is the Cambodian understanding of an abstract concept – quality in education and teachers – a suitable form of ethnographic inquiry is required. Creswell (2004) lists several types of ethnography including

- Realist ethnography- an objective scientifically written ethnography
- Microethnography- a study focused on a specific aspect of a cultural group and setting
- Ethnographic case study- a case analysis of a person, event, activity, or process set within a cultural perspective
- Critical ethnography- a study of the shared patterns of a marginalized group with the aim of advocacy
• Feminist ethnography- a study of women and the cultural practices that serve to disempower and oppress them (p. 475).

While these types of ethnography do address various problems and situations in valuable ways, none of these seems appropriate for the inquiry I wish to conduct. Given my academic background in philosophy, I want to understand how those in the Cambodian MoEYS understand “quality” in education and how they perceive the best way to implement that understanding of quality. To achieve mutual understanding dialogue is employed.

To forge this common universe of discourse, the positions of the two sides must be understood and to understand these positions requires ethnography. Walter Feinberg (2006) calls ethnography of this kind philosophical ethnography. He further indicates that philosophical ethnography,

is a methodological hybrid that uses interviews and observations to identify normative issues, to map out the meaning systems– rules, common intra-cultural understandings, shared aims, etc– in which they are imbedded, and, where necessary, to help unblock cultural road-blocks to coordinated action. It addresses situations in which individuals find that they must navigate between different meaning systems in order to arrive at a norm-governed action but where there is tension between different cultural norms. In other words, it is a method of analysis that could be especially useful in many of the educational situations that arise within an evolving global society where people from different backgrounds and traditions must engage with each other on a day to
Methods and Sources for Data Collection

Methods for Data Collection

To uncover the nuanced, Cambodian meaning of quality, I draw on the ideas of dialogue and translation used in Freire (2000) and Habermas (2008) to achieve a state of practical intersubjectivity (Biesta & Burbules, 2003) among both Cambodian education leaders and EFA program implementers around a common understanding of quality in Cambodian teacher education.

Data Sources

In order to begin this type of dialogue, the positions of the two parties must be clearly defined during the coding process. The strategies for attaining quality education through teacher training as prescribed by EFA goals are accessible through publications on teacher education and teacher quality compiled in the review of relevant literature. Understanding the teacher training curriculum and its implementation as developed by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) required extensive in-country research. This understanding is accomplished through a review of relevant documents. Additional data was collected through observations at three (3) separate teacher training colleges (TTC) in Cambodia and through semi-...

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9 This process seems to mirror the Freirian decoding stage discussed previously in this chapter.
structured interviews with appropriate administrators at the TTCs as well as teacher
trainers at the various TTCs. The locations and subjects selected to participate in this
study will be selected using a typical case sampling strategy. I logged 100 hours of
observations at each of the three TTCs in a one (1) month period. Also, during this one
month period spent at each TTC, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 10
individuals (see Appendices E and F for interview protocols in English and Khmer). I
also spent this time translating and transcribing the observations and interviews. In
total, I collected 300 hours of observations and conducted 30 interviews with teacher
trainers and TTC administrators. Subjects participating in interviews were chosen using
a convenience sample because they were at the PTTC and available to meet when I
began conducting interviews. I attended Site A first, followed by Site B, and finished the
observation and interview portion of data collection at Site C. At each PTTC, I
conducted 100 hours of classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with 10
teacher trainers and administrators totaling 300 hours of observation and 30 interviews
over a three-month period from November 2010 to January 2011. Interviews were
conducted after roughly 60 hours of observations. I did ask each of them about their
level of education. From my sample of 30 interview participants, there were 18 males
and 13 females and 21 held a Bachelor’s degree (one of these was completing a
Master’s at the time of the interview), three held Master’s degrees, three others attained
a High School diploma, and two only completed Lower Secondary (diplome in Khmer).

10 Stie A had 5 male and 5 female interview participants, Site B had 4 male and 6 female interview
participants, and Site C had 9 male and 1 female interview participant.
One of the participant’s answer to the question was unclear and a determination could not be made based on the interview.

**Document Review and RUPP.** While documentation of the goals and indicators speaking to the measurement of quality education at national and international levels is available through UNESCO’s annual Global Monitoring Report (GMR) and other documents, access to document expressing the goals of the teacher training curriculum in Cambodia have been more difficult to access. Because of this known difficulty with access to appropriate documents, I affiliated myself with the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) to help me gain access to these documents and open up additional gateways to contact those who would allow access to my study at MoEYS. In return for this support, I agreed to teach two classes in their Master’s of Education program and serve as an advisor to six students working on their theses. I received no monetary compensation for my work at RUPP. Thus, the first four months of the project were spent fulfilling part of my duties at RUPP, while I located, translated, and analyzed relevant documents, made connections and gained permission to access the three TTCs. In-country access was crucial to the data collection portion of this study because of the need to personally meet necessary gatekeepers and gain permission to access the TTCs, administrators, and teacher trainers.

**Data Collection Sites.** PTTC sites were requested from the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) office’s Cultural Relations and Scholarship Department using a convenience sampling method based on the ease of travel access for me. My request sought diversification based on geography to better triangulate findings
across the population. Once access to the PTTCs was granted, Site A and Site B appeared relatively similar in organization and physical structure. The buildings all seemed to be in moderately good condition, but none of the classrooms I observed in these sites had glass windows. Only shutters covered the windows and the shutters remained open to allow light into the classrooms. A large courtyard in the center of the campus was surrounded by the various buildings at each of these campuses. Site C had a much different atmosphere. There was a courtyard, but it was much smaller than the other 2 sites and it appeared to have a much larger student population than the other two. Additionally, this was the only site I observed that had a computer lab that had enough functioning computers for the entire class to use. Moreover, at Site C, there seemed to be much more foreign NGO work with a few buildings solely dedicated to NGO work who were there working daily during my observations. Sites A and B had a few foreign visitors during my observation periods, but the appearance of these workers was sporadic at best.

Although all of the sites had reliable access to electricity, access to the internet was extremely unreliable and typically inaccessible for students and teacher trainers at Sites A and B. At Site C the reliable internet was only available in the building housing the NGO. Restroom facilities at the sites was disparate as well. Site A only had a bowl at ground level that one squats over to use the restroom. Once one finished, the way to flush was to use a reservoir of water with a ladle to force the contents out of the building. This reservoir also serve as the way to clean oneself afterward. There was also
a sink with running water and a bar of soap to wash hands. Both Sites B and C had traditional western style sitting toilets that were flushable along with sinks and soap.

Data Analysis

Once this data was collected, I moved to the analysis phase where I determined similarities and differences in the conception of “quality” education between the Cambodian context and the EFA initiative. After discovering these differences, I began the coding process to determine themes represented in the data as well as emerging theme for consideration of those themes from the different contexts addressed in this study. As I stated previously, this inquiry is limited to discovering the Khmer conception of quality and compare that with the western conception of quality in education as the beginning steps of dialogue.

Coding Strategies

Initial observations at the research sites provided rich data illuminating how teacher trainers view and apply conceptions of quality in their work. These responses, then provided a foundation that allowed a comparison of the ideas of quality according to tradition (Khmer) and modernity (West/EFA) as indentified by Ayres (2003). Questions developed for the interview instrument correlate to the research questions asked in Chapter 1.

Those data combined with a review of documents related to Cambodian education and specifically teacher training produced a significant amount of material. In order to organize and manage the data collected, I employed NVIVO 10 as an
analysis tool. I reviewed material as I uploaded it into NVIVO and began to identify major codes and to then compare these codes to identify more major themes present in the data.

As this is a philosophical ethnography, the main focus of the exploration is to identify the ideas and ideals present in the participant’s view and how those ideas and ideals relate to the ideal of education as established by UNESCO as a dialogue between two different contexts.

Reliability and Generalizability of the Findings

Reliability of the Findings

All inquiry, whether qualitative or quantitative needs credible and valid data to ensure the findings are reliable. To ensure that the data in this investigation is credible, I followed Creswell’s (2008) urging that “researchers need to gather information that will answer the research questions, and then weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each form of data” (p. 241) in a way that allows complete honesty from the participants. Additionally, this inquiry followed Patton’s (2002) recommendation with respect to valid data “that qualitative sampling designs specify minimum samples based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study and stakeholder interests” (p. 246).11

11 Emphasis in the original text.
Generalizability of the Findings

The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to illuminate problems observed in various areas of our experience. Its thrust is to provide information that will lead to future research and establish a better understanding of the Khmer educational context, particularly the circumstances affecting teacher quality there. As this is a qualitative inquiry, the findings are in no way generalizable, though what may be generalizable is the methodology employed, philosophical ethnography, to provide insight and mutual understanding about issues where contextual difference lie.

Ethical and Confidentiality Issues

Ethical Issues

The ethical conduct of research is just as important as the credibility and reliability of the data collected. Creswell (2008) identifies the major areas of ethical concern including “respecting the rights of participants, to honoring the research sites that you visit, and to reporting research fully and honestly” (p. 11).

In order to ensure that the rights of the participants are respected, this research followed the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). These are a minimum standard of ethical conduct in research. Points emphasized in the IRB approval process are maintaining the privacy of the participants, ensuring that the participants are fully aware of the purpose of the study and the kinds of data to be collected. Another area covered by the IRB is once the participants understand the purpose of the research is ensuring potential candidates assent to participate in the
study and that no undue harm would come to them because of their participation in the study.

To ensure that research sites were honored in this research, I contacted the Cultural Relations and Scholarship Department at MoEYS seeking permission to conduct this research. Approval was provided along with a letter granting permission for me to conduct this research at three designated sites (see Appendix B). This letter was then shown to the directors of the three PTTCs where data was to be collected. The directors, upon reading the letter provided, began to ask questions about when data collection was to begin and gave me a brief tour of the PTTC campus as well as some general information. If the director provided a schedule for class observations, I followed that schedule instead of following a particular cohort for class to class.

Attempts to ensure that this research fully and honestly represents the data collected were substantiated by the use of audiovisual recording for both class observations and interviews while recording field notes using pen and paper during observations and interviews as well.

Confidentiality Issues

“Participant confidentiality is of utmost importance” (Creswell, 2008, p. 240). Patton (2002) adds that,

[t]raditionally, researchers have been advised to disguise the locations of their fieldwork and change the names of respondents,... The presumption has been that the privacy of research subjects should always remain protected. This remains the dominant presumption, as well it should. (p. 411)
Thus, every attempt was made to ensure participant confidentiality and the consent forms (see Appendices C and D) for this inquiry demonstrated this effort stating, 

[the only major risk is loss of anonymity. However, the likelihood of this is very low because all identifiers in transcripts and recordings will be removed. Also, all transcripts and recording will be stored in a password protected folder on the researcher’s personal computer.

**My Understanding of Cambodian Culture and Language**

My introduction to Cambodian culture and language began in 1996 as a religious missionary sent to Long Beach, CA. For the next two years, I studied the language, religion, and culture of the Cambodian people, attending various religious and cultural celebrations in an effort to understand the perspective of the people I was trying to serve. In the beginning, learning the spoken language proved laborious and learning to read and write was more difficult. In fact, I did not feel like I could carry a meaningful conversation with anyone in my first six months there. Once I began to speak the language with some facility, learning the customs, religion, and culture from the Cambodian point of view became easier. I could ask questions about vague concepts and unfamiliar rituals. These explanations provided me with insight into the Cambodian-American experience and way of life. As those two years ended, I found myself wanting to remain and become a bigger part of this close-knit community. After about one year, I returned to Long Beach, attending California State University, Long Beach and received a BA in Philosophy and became an active member of the
Cambodian Student Society on campus. During that time, I worked with the Cambodian community in other capacities as well. I first worked for a grass roots non-profit agency in Long Beach helping Cambodian refugees gain sustainable employment and later for a law firm as a legal assistant and Khmer translator. Both of these positions further helped to develop my language ability and cultural understanding tremendously. I also spent two months in Cambodia enrolled in an intensive Khmer language study program in the summer of 2008. There I greatly improved my reading, writing, and conversation skills through practice and living among Cambodians. This rigorous program also helped me build an appropriate academic vocabulary and conduct an initial inquiry into the Cambodian perspective on education. Additionally, my experience as a Fulbright Scholar added further understanding and detail of Khmer language and culture through 10 months of in-country experience as a lecturer in the Masters of Education program at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) and meeting with people associated with that program. Additional experience came from seeking and gaining approval for my research from the Cultural Relations and Scholarship Department at MoEYS and interacting with the administrators, teacher trainers, and students at the PTTCs.
CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This study investigates the perceptions of quality teachers and quality education of Khmer teacher trainers and administrators. These perceptions were investigated through the use of observation, semi-structured interviews, and a review of relevant documents. The four research questions for this study are:

1. How do Cambodian educators define quality education?
   a. How do historical, social, and cultural conditions play a role in developing that definition?

2. How is quality conceptualized either implicitly or explicitly in the various components of Cambodian teacher education?

3. How does the practice of teacher education in Cambodia align or not align with the Cambodian conception of quality education?

4. How does the conception of quality in Cambodian education align or not align with the conception of quality in EFA goals?

Data Collection Sites

Three Provincial Teacher Training Colleges (PTTC) were chosen to collect interviews and observations for this study. The three sites were chosen based on
approval from the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) office’s Cultural Relations and Scholarship Department and the convenience of my access to these PTTCs.

**Analysis of Data**

To analyze the data, I looked for emerging ideas and themes in what interview participants indicated as well as from observations made during the teacher training process in three different PTTCs. I then examined those ideas and themes through the traditional/modern lens explained in previous chapters. From this examination, I am able to see how the concepts related to traditional Khmer culture and the ideas of modernity interact in Cambodian educational settings, particularly in pre-service teacher training. Because this is a philosophical ethnography, not only am I trying to describe quality teachers and quality education from the Cambodian teacher trainer perspective but I am trying to open a dialogue between these two world views about what ought be the case for Cambodian education. This information and beginnings of dialogue will be important to future research into teacher education in Cambodia and provide a methodology where competing world views meet.

**Participants**

All of the participants in this study are teacher trainers or administrators at one of the three PTTCs utilized in this study. Each interview was recorded with a video camera and field notes were taken during each interview. The interviews were
translated and transcribed at a later date into English for analysis. The interview participants were chosen by convenience sampling after conducting roughly 60 hours of classroom observation. This allowed me to gain some familiarity with the teacher trainers before the interviews so that the participants felt more comfortable conversing with me.

Some (3) participants indicated during their interviews that they did not want to answer some interview questions about the obstacles or barriers to improving the quality of education. One participant indicated this when he said “there are things I can say and other things I cannot say about quality education in Cambodia” (C-04, interview, January 2011). My interpretation of this view is that they wished to censor responses that would speak poorly about either administration at the school, District, Provincial, and Ministry levels, possibly causing issues with job security. This provides some insight into the centralized model MoEYS uses to govern the education sector.

The Concept of Quality in Cambodian Educator Discourse

Pre-Khmer Rouge

Literature discussing the conception of quality in pre-war Cambodia is sparse. However, the mode of education for most Cambodians provides insight into how quality was identified during this time. During this period, education was implemented in temples and teachers were monks. Education “was aimed at providing moral and religious instruction [along] with the provision of basic literacy and numeracy” (Collins, 2009, p. 191). Dy (2004) further explains that,
students were taught sacred Khmer texts such as the Sutra which contains the precepts of Buddhism, literary traditions, and social life skills. The principle aim of the temple schooling system was to equip young men with the principles of life and society such as social conduct, moral ethics, as well as to achieve a certain level of basic literacy. (p. 92)

Principles emphasized in this monastic system of education encouraged “men to be more sociable, gentle, courageous, responsible, and hardworking, while women are supposed to be caring, reserved, and having good housework management skills” (Dy, 2004, p. 93). These values perpetuated the social hierarchy in Cambodia extolled by the patron-client system, but more importantly brought សមក្យ (sammakey, unity) to the Cambodian people (Tan, 2008). This sense of solidarity among the peasantry combined with loyalty to the patron (including the King) seems to denote quality in early Khmer education and those members of the សង្គ់ (Sangka, monkhood) that possessed these Buddhist virtues and could elicit these qualities in students were quality teachers.

Here, the ideas of community, interconnectedness, and mutual reliance related to Buddhism emerge as important driving forces in education to be the right kind of person who exemplifies these virtues. The requirement for teachers to help students and the community was expressed by A-05. A-10 also indicated that “teachers and parents need to work together so that children and receive education and become good people.” In this sense, teachers are the givers, able to exhibit and develop តីណ (tian, generosity). In order for there to be a giver, there must also be one who receives the generosity. This is a possible interpretation of mutual reliance where contemporary
Cambodia is reliant on the generosity of others after the destruction caused by the Khmer Rouge. B-05 explains, “we need other countries with quality education to come and help Cambodia.”

This mutual reliance and interconnectedness opposes the western values of independence and individualism. Individual student achievement on standardized exams as a way of measuring the gains a student has achieved demonstrates the importance of an individual’s work independent of the assistance of others. Other measures of success in education stem from individual student work as well including graduation rate and passage to the next grade level. Because everyone is perceived as equal and the measures are the same, when one does not meet the standards (this goes for students as well as for teachers) then, those bad students and teachers can be easily identified. The contrast of individual achievement based on the idea of equality contradicts the communal, interdependent values lauded in the Cambodian context.

In the Data

Several characteristics of quality teachers were given during interviews. Some of these characteristics were being fair, just, kind, polite, caring, and involved in the school and community. Participants also provided insight into what they thought quality teachers should know how to do and what they should know.

Characteristics of quality teachers. The characteristics mentioned in interviews state how people should act with respect to others and appear to be shaped by traditional Buddhist beliefs. Fairness was named as a characteristic of quality teachers by 9 of the participants in this study. One teacher trainer said that it is “important that
the teachers are well-rounded, and fair, and understand children. If a teacher lacks that, then the teacher is not good” (B-02, interview, December 2010). Another participant mentioned that quality teachers should “Love everyone the same, fair regardless of the students economic status, rich or poor, sick or not sick, so fair and has justice” (A-02, interview, November 2010). As in this quote, in many cases, the mention of fairness and justice frequently appear together. This ideas is supported in the comments by another participant where “fairness is rare and there are some disabled teachers who are working. But this is not supposed to be this way because when you have a disabled person teach the students, the students may not listen to the teacher” (A-09, interview, November 2010). This seems to be the case when the Buddhist principles of បុណ្ណ (bun, merit) and កម្ម (gam, karma) reflect a person’s past life (or lives).

The characteristics of being kind, polite, and caring exemplify the demeanor teachers should possess toward students, administrators, and other teachers. “Quality teachers should be polite and nice like the Cambodian children” (B-02, interview, December 2010). Another stated these characteristics more eloquently when saying “a true teacher is polite and the teacher will engage with students— be just, fair, and care about the students” (A-02, interview, November 2010). Again, an emphasis on traditional Buddhist virtues is apparent in how teacher trainers perceive quality teachers. Yet, in the scope of the modern view, teachers who are demanding and tough on students in order to draw out the maximum efforts of students to achieve high standards are values and often rewarded for their “success.” These responses seem to appeal to the Buddhist virtues of loving kindness េមតា and compassion ករុណ.
There was one response that seemed to resonate with a majority of participants—the desire to be a good teacher as a vital characteristic for quality teachers. Participants offered such thoughts as,

when I was a student here, I loved this place, so I always thought that I would be back to work here. I think it’s important to raise children to become good people. Like when I was teaching young kids, I got a lot of praise from the students and from their parents about how I taught them to be good people. Some, before leaving to America they come and thank me, I am honored and pleased because of this. But when I went to go and teach at the high school, I encountered students that did not listen so that led me to come back here. I figured that I should come back here to teach elementary teachers to be good teachers so that [future students] can become good people. Little children are like small bamboo shoots they can blossom to be great plants but they have to be nurtured in the right way from the early stages. (A-06, interview, November 2010)

and,

if a teacher is satisfied with their educational background and does not look to better themselves then that is not good, one is ability, two to have the desire and love to want more like responsibility and awake and taking the initiative, this is what makes the education system better. So without these two items then the education system cannot improve. (A-08, interview, November 2010)
The emphasis on the desire to be a quality teacher seems to be motivation to be good at any endeavor one pursues. Whether the motivation is external or internal, the desire for improvement is a pre-requisite for actual improvement no matter the activity. The difference lies in the effects of the desire for knowledge. The desire for knowledge in the Khmer context seems to be inward focused (on personal development of Buddhist virtues) that are exemplified through teaching. In the West, the focus is external, teachers have a desire to improve so that they can become better at sharing knowledge from their bucket so that students can more readily fill their own buckets with the knowledge provided. Moreover, the discussion of helping students become good

Table 3: Chart Identifying Traits that Teachers Want in Students and Student Want in Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers want students who…</th>
<th>Students want teachers who…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• have a polite and well mannered demeanor</td>
<td>• have compassion, empathy, and fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• love learning and studying</td>
<td>• have perfect justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• take much responsibility</td>
<td>• are endowed with virtue in their profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are honest with each other</td>
<td>• are completely devoted to their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• wear proper attire</td>
<td>• do not abuse their students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are conscientious and virtuous</td>
<td>• know how to create a joyous atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• follow the directions of the teacher</td>
<td>• lift student morale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• know how to obey others and help watch over everyone’s possessions</td>
<td>• have a good understanding and knowledge of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• wear proper attire</td>
<td>• wear proper attire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 My translation from Khmer hand-printed chart observed at Site B
Table 4: Teacher Training Curriculum for Primary School Teachers
Source: My translation of Curriculum for Teacher Training- Primary Schools 9+2 (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective/Essence</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sem. 1</td>
<td>Sem. 2</td>
<td>Sem. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Professional Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Skills</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Friendly Schools</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Urgency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Readiness</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Policies</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Development</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilization</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights (Human, Children’s, &amp; Women’s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about Gender</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Reinforcing General Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer Language</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Knowledge for Primary Teaching and Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer Language for Child Friendly Schools and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Readiness Program</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics for Child Friendly Schools and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Readiness Program</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying and Teaching Science</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics and Teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Education and Teaching</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship and Teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts and Teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education/Sport and Teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop (Factory work)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Hygiene</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Education</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS Education</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Student Teaching (Practicum)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
people is reiterated and those traits are specified in Table 3. The analogy of nurturing children like bamboo shoots connotes the idea of cultivation. More evidence of this cultivation metaphor came from an observation in a class on Khmer literature where the teacher articulated េធាើលុយដ្ើរ រកុ្្រា (thvuh l-aw daumbey reek ch-raun, do good in order to have much prosperity) (Observation A-04). The verb េធាើ (reek) literally means to blossom or bloom as in a flower. These linguistic examples indicate an idea of cultivation as a process of development that continues over a period of time so that one may reap the fruits of their work in this life or a future one. Although the idea of cultivation is present in western education with kindergarten as the starting point, compartmentalization of individual subjects quickly becomes the norm as students progress from one grade to the next after demonstrating individual mastery of some body of knowledge that has been transmitted from the teacher. The purposes of education exhibit this difference in perception, Khmer education is trying to cultivate student to be good people whereas, western education is focused on providing appropriate knowledge so that students can go do.

Table 3 supports the discussion in this subsection and reflects the traditional principles indicated by interview participants. In examining this table, it is important to note that these characteristics have particular emphasis on the relationship between teachers and students representing Buddhist values and emphasizing the social hierarchy present in Cambodia today. Particular mention of compassion, empathy, justice, fairness, and virtue in describing quality teachers demonstrates the continued presence of traditional Khmer values in education. For students, learning to be polite,
respectful, conscientious, virtuous, and obedient means that they will be good people. The characteristics of both teachers and students in Table 3 seem to reflect the Buddhist virtues mentioned in Chapter 2. When education creates good people then, quality is attained. It is important to note that knowledge, both of subject matter and of teaching techniques, receives little attention. This demonstrates that while knowledge is important in the Khmer context, it is secondary to displaying the virtues specified, whereas knowledge in these two senses is paramount in modern views of education.

What quality teachers know and know how to do. Primary teachers in Cambodia receive 2,035 hours of instruction in several content areas. These hours are divided into four (4) semesters, each lasting between 13-15 weeks. Table 4 illustrates the content areas and hours of instruction for each subject during teacher training at the PTTC. Here we see areas that recognize and celebrate the traditional views associated with Khmer culture and tradition including “Moral Development,” “Civilization,” and “Moral Education and Teaching.” Yet, there are also subject that clearly reflect modern ideals including instruction in “Child Friendly Schools,” “Rights (Human, Children’s, and Women’s),” and “Knowledge about Gender.” This indicates that within the teacher training curriculum there is an attempt to modernize education while maintaining some of the core values inherent in Khmer culture. In addition to the emphasis of international development topics in the teacher training curriculum, interview participants seemed to emphasize issues in applying ICT policies. This direct mention of obstacles to attaining these development goals perhaps reflect an implicit desire to learn from western experts that mirrors the patron-client relationship. My own
anecdotal evidence of interacting with Khmer and foreign development workers in the education sector indicates that often Khmer teachers and students ask for suggestions about improvement or if they are following correct protocols in education. The question of what they should be doing is a common inquiry. This is perhaps because most training offered is delivered through international development agencies from non-native experts about topics the international development community imposes on MoEYS without an understanding of the Khmer context. One interview participant critiqued this type of work stating,

I think and wish, with the problems with education here. I want the Ministry to follow the policies that they create. And I don’t want the Ministry to change their ways just because of the sponsor or donor. For example, when there is a French donor, we have to change our educational ways to cater to the French. Then a year after, if there is another country donate to the Ministry then the Ministry will change their ways again. This causes a lot of problems with the teachers, because we get confused. Like changing textbooks and curriculum for the student, the teachers do not know when that occurs so then the teachers are behind on the lessons. (B-01)

The blending of traditional and modern subjects in the teacher training curriculum seems to be a preliminary attempt at practical intersubjectivity discussed in the previous chapter, but a closer look reveals an imposition of policies and programs that work in other contexts instead of developing contextually appropriate policies and programs tailored to Cambodia.
One translational problem I came across is the distinction between *knowing how* (ប្រាប់, jeh) and *knowing that* (ដឹង, dung). Although Khmer has two separate words, I found that most participants use the all-inclusive term ដឹងមាន់ (jonnehdung) that connoted both knowledge and know-how. This distinction between knowing that and knowing how compartmentalizes the concept of knowing such that one can be an expert in content while lacking knowledge of how to transmit that knowledge to others and vice-versa. This compartmentalization of knowledge seems to closely resemble western conceptions of knowledge and is reflected in teacher training programs where teachers learn content knowledge in specific classes then learn pedagogical techniques in other classes. Whereas, under the Khmer conception, the merging of the two is reflective of *being* a good person. One cannot exhibit Buddhist virtues unless one both knows what the virtues are as well as how to apply those virtues in a specific situation. When one does this then, she *is* a good person.

When discussing what quality teachers know how to do (ប្រាប់/ដឹង, jeh/ jonneh, to know how/know how), several skills appeared on the participants’ lists including:

- prepare lessons (18 participants)
- utilize different teaching strategies/pedagogical methods and proper questioning techniques (20 participants)
- research (8 participants)
- set up and use equipment appropriate for the lessons (7 participants).
With the new emphasis on ICT use in education, many participants also included knowing how to use a computer and the internet as vital characteristics of quality teachers.

Asking participants what teachers should know (ដឹង, dung/donnung, to know/knowledge) provided some expected responses including:

- know content knowledge (17 participants)
- know the needs of the students and the community (10 participants).

Upon examination of these abilities and knowledge, these appear to be a set of professional skills emphasized in modern educational settings. Also, given the inclusive មក សូត used by participants in interviews, it seems as though in contemporary Khmer culture the knowledge one has and the know-how one acquires are categorized together and distinct from the interpersonal characteristics aligned with Buddhist virtues. Thus, these modern skills, while separate from conceptions of quality, interplay together to create a quality teacher in the eyes of the participants. One explanation of this fusion of modern and traditional conceptions is due to the interactions that the participants have had with international donors and trainers that provide assistance to the PTTCs.

Indigenous Conceptualization of Quality

Classroom geography. Traditional social hierarchy is still present in Khmer education. Reference to the national motto ជតិនសសសន្ពះមពកម្ត (jiet sasana preahmahaksa, Nation Religion King) is prominent on every piece of governmental property from letterhead, to street signs, to the classroom. The Nation, Religion, and King are to be extolled to the highest degree. On school grounds, the morning meeting
or ritual fully demonstrates the reverence and devotion that Cambodians have for the motto. Here students sing the national anthem, recite Buddhist chants, and disseminate pertinent information for the day before classes begin.

As observed in Figure 4, desks arrange in rows, two students per desk. The desks are usually made of wood with a wooden plank bench that the two students and share. There is also a small opening below the desktop for storing personal belongings.

Figure 3: Drawing of a Typical Cambodian Classroom
Source: 2nd Year Khmer language textbook, p. 19
for other classes. I also observed that the teacher’s desk was always at the front of the classroom, sometimes on a raised platform. The placement of the desk at the front and on the raised platform demonstrates the teacher’s status in the classroom. Additionally, nothing happens in the classroom without the teacher’s consent. In order to respond to a question offered by the teacher, students must raise their hand, be acknowledged by the teacher, stand, សំពះ (sompea, the act of raising hands pressed together to head and bowing as a sign of respect and reverence), and answer the question. Once a student responds, she continues to stand until the teacher grants permission to sit and after permission is given to sit down, the student សំពះ again, says “Thank you teacher,” and sits. Also, when a teacher or administrator enters the room all students stand and continue standing until instructed to sit by the person entering room. This occurs even in the middle of a lesson if an administrator enters. The student teachers would also stand when I entered the room and addressed me as លក្រគ (loke-kruu, teacher). This seems to be a reflection of both reverence and veneration for the authority of the teacher. It is an expectation that the teacher will provide guidance and wisdom like the protection offered under the patron-client model. This model of placing venerated items and persons at the front of a room is also observed in temples where statues of the Buddha are placed on platforms above where lay folk sit. In fact, this sort of environment closely resembles the way the Buddha taught his followers and disciples. The Buddha would stand or sit with his students sitting before him while he imparted wisdom to them through lessons. Murals in many temples depict this sort of instruction from the Buddha as well. Additionally, monks are afforded this type of respect when
performing ជីវិតបុណ្ណ (pitibun, rituals) at a temple or in someone’s home. The act of សំពះ is a direct reflection of the veneration, reverence, and respect that one offers to those of higher status than oneself including parents, grandparents, monks, and government officials.

Observation also indicated that the students as a group supplied the materials for the teacher to use in the classroom. On several occasions, the white board markers would run out of ink. When this happened, a student would volunteer their marker for the teacher to use and the class president would refill the ink in the empty marker. I overheard the class presidents asking for small donations from the rest of the class to buy ink or butcher paper to use during group work time. The students would also provide a 500mL bottle of water or a small pot of tea for the teacher during each lesson. This observation seems to be related to the others in this section regarding reverence and veneration to the one in power and is perhaps an extension of the patron-client system where the teacher has the knowledge and ability to impart information, but requires resources to pass this information along. The same sort of patronage is observed when lay folk provide food, water, and other essentials to monks (Harvey, 2000).

In classroom observations. One classroom observation where student-teachers responded well to a lesson appeared in Observation A-30, a class on Khmer language. During this class, the teacher (who happened to be a substitute that normally teaches 1st year student teachers) began by reviewing the basic concepts of learning language, asking students to verbally indicate these stages. The concepts listed in developmental
order were listen, speak, read, and write. Once this order was established, the teacher divided the students into groups and had them match a situation or scenario to the stage of development that best described the situation. As students were working on the assignment the teacher reminded the students to imagine how a small child would respond to the given situations, then she listened in on each groups discussion and asked questions specific to the discussion the students were having. She then asked students to come to the board to write down the answers to the scenarios they discussed and asked if any of the students in class had a red marker and a student provided her with one. She then used the red marker to correct the answers on the board and explained justification for the correct answers for each scenario. As the teacher interacted with the class, she did not always stand at the front of the room and as she interacted with students she made some light hearted comments that made the students laugh. In this situation, the students responded well to the teacher and felt like it was an excellent learning experience. This was demonstrated by the students asking if they could perform a choreographed sign of appreciation involving hand signals and sounds. In this case, the students ឃ្លា ឃ្លា ឃ្លា (jong june coca, give her a Coke) where they signaled opening the bottle with their hands while making a fizzing sound, then they signaled turning a bottle up to drink while making a guzzling sound, and finally they signaled wiping their mouths while expressing a satisfying ahhhhhh. Here is a clear example of a mixing of traditional and modern conceptions of quality. The teacher relied on students to provide the red marker so that the lesson could continue. However, it is important to note that the teacher modeled student-centered teaching
strategies in this class by assigning group work and having students perform a majority of the work with the teacher acting as a facilitator to the learning process.

**Analysis**

Based on the evidence gathered here, moral virtues are still in the Cambodian conceptualization of a quality teacher. Possessing Buddhist values of fairness, justice, compassion, and be polite are all specified as traits of quality teachers. Even though these values are praised for teachers to have, the curriculum for teacher training provides minimal opportunities for student-teachers to learn and develop these characteristics. This near exclusion of traditional values in the curriculum highlights the tension between tradition and modernity in Khmer education. Instead of subjects that teach and emphasize traditional virtues, the current curriculum focuses on a more modern conception of a quality teacher as one who possesses a great deal of content knowledge in the sciences (including social sciences) and utilizes student-centered pedagogical strategies to transfer this information to students based on the teacher’s perceptions of the needs of her students and the community.

The typical classroom in Cambodia provides even more evidence of the tension between tradition and modernity. In the classroom, students are reminded of the respect and authority that the Nation, Religion, and King merit and that teachers in the classroom demand the same respect because of the authority they have that was bestowed upon them because of the knowledge and wisdom they have attained. This veneration is accentuated by the teacher’s desk being placed in the front of the room and raised on a higher level than the students’ desks. Further evidence of the veneration
of the teacher comes from the ways that students interact with the teacher including សំពះ and the students' supplying the needs of the teacher including materials required to teach the class and offering water or tea for the teacher in the same way that lay people provide alms for monks at វត្ត. These practices are evidence that social hierarchy is still an integral part of society and schooling in Cambodia and are representations of the patron-client model observed throughout much of the history of Cambodia.

**Quality Education**

**In Interviews**

When asked about quality education in Cambodia, most participants revealed that they thought that the quality of education in Cambodia is improving or can be improved. However, the ways that participants describe quality education is comparative (comparing the current situation to the past and to other countries), not an objective or normative view of quality education. Most comparisons with other countries include looking at neighbors like Thailand and Viet Nam, or countries that have established NGOs that concentrate on educational development in Cambodia. Examples of this view include ideas like “Quality education in Cambodia is not quite comparable to neighboring countries, and in some areas, like the rural areas, there is no quality education. That’s why education is not comparable to other countries” (C-05, interview, January 2011).

Comparisons to the past are aimed at the era during and after the Khmer Rouge and most participants agree that looking back from Khmer Rouge until now, education
is of good quality. One participant said, “Education has come a long way since the war. In the mid 1980s there were no books and the language was almost lost” (A-07, interview, November, 2010). Another indicated that,

    if we talk about education from 1979 to now, which is about 31 or 32 years, it has improved tremendously. This is what we appreciate, coming from nothing to this. If we compare ourselves to other countries, then we are still behind because of the post war effect on education. (C-08, interview, January 2011)

In examining this quote, the participant seems to reference examples of how education shifted under the Khmer Rouge. School building and libraries were burned, pages of books were used as rolling papers for cigarettes, school lessons were held under trees, and empty sacks of concrete were used as paper for students to write on at this time. This was done in an attempt to eradicate the traditional ideals present in Cambodian society prior to 1975. Today we see many of these traditional ideals re-emerging in Cambodia and further development of physical resources as well. Schools and libraries are being built. Books are being printed and supplies for students are readily available, although they are too expensive for some families.

    Additionally, when looking forward, participants say that education still needs to be improved. Participants indicated many obstacles to improving the quality of education. One interviewee summarized some of the obstacles stating,

    obstacles deal with the number of students in the classroom, the Ministry of Education thinks that there are only 50 students in the classrooms but in actually there are a lot more students in the classrooms. This is the first problem, and the
second problem is the teachers’ abilities, teachers from 1979 and the teachers now have issues in comprehending what is expected as teachers. There is the lack of resources and equipment for teaching. Even though we have buildings that are nice but we do not have the right equipment inside those buildings for teaching. The fourth issue is the parents or guardians of the students, if the [parents or guardians are well to do] then the students are pushed to go to school and succeed but if the parents or guardians are not well off then those individuals will pull the students out of school so that [the students] can help [the parents] out. These are the four major issues. (C-08, interview, January 2011)

In understanding what the participant has indicated in this quote, it is important to acknowledge that the problems mentioned come from a Western critique of Cambodian education based on modern views of the quality of education. This is a clear example of modern ideas permeating contemporary Cambodian education and emphasizes quantifiable items to demonstrate quality (doing) that fail to take into account the Khmer conceptions of quality (being). Thus, teachers are torn about what benchmarks to follow. Examples mentioned specifically in this section were pupil to teacher ratios (PTR), the lack of resources, and the involvement of parents and guardians in education.

The next three sub-sections will discuss the Pupil to Teacher Ratio (PTR) issue, the problem of the availability of resources, and the importance of the role of parents/guardians in emphasizing education respectively. The following section on quality teachers will include a discussion of the expectations for quality teachers and quality teachers’ abilities along with other findings related directly to teachers.
**Pupil to Teacher Ratio in Cambodia.** In Chapter 1 I discussed the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) use of retention to 5th grade and PTR as proxies for quality education. Although UNESCO prefers to use retention to 5th grade as the proxy for use in the Education for All Development Index (EDI), research still demonstrates that a lower PTR has a positive influence on student achievement particularly for lower levels of primary enrollment. However, even with the recognized need for more teachers, the national PTR continues to be above the 40:1 threshold, and MoEYS continues to project national PTR at 45:1, yet the goal of 40:1 or lower even appears in Cambodia’s National EFA Plan (MoEYS, 2003).

Table 5 shows Cambodia’s actual and projected PTR through 2015 and shows a slight decline in Cambodia’s PTR since 2000. However, when Cambodia’s PTR is compared to neighboring countries, the trends in lowering PTR are similar, but the actual difference in PTR between Cambodia and its neighbors is surprising. Figure 5 shows the PTRs for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Another important

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**Table 5: Pupil to Teacher Ratios for Cambodia (2000-2015)**


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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTR</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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13 Figures from 2000-2014 are actual figures reported by UNESCO. Figure from 2015 the projection from MoYES.
observation from Figure 4 is that all of the countries except Cambodia have reduced their PTR to under UNESCO’s recommendation of 40:1 or lower.

Part of the problem with Cambodia’s PTR is related its push to achieve Universal Primary Enrollment (UPE). Cambodia’s UPE initiative began in 2002 with plans to achieve a 95% Primary Net Enrollment Rate (NER) by 2005 and 100% Primary NER by 2010, continuing through the end of the EFA initiative in 2015 (MoEYS, 2003). With more children entering school since 2002, Cambodia has seen its NER increase significantly. But without an equivalent percentage increase in teachers, Cambodia’s PTR rose to the levels observed now (see Table 5).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Cambodia has identified its need for new teachers, however its recruitment and placement of new teachers has yet to meet the demand with the current student population and influx of new students. Benvineste et al. (2008) point out, “[t]he demand for teachers has steadily increased over the last decade and it is not expected to abate in the near future as secondary schooling continues to expand” (p. 34). In its EFA Mid-Decade Assessment report, MoEYS (2007) indicates that, output from PTTCs is just barely keeping up with retirements and resignations. MoEYS has moved forward with dynamic experimentation to address teacher shortages such as flexible entry requirements to PTTCs (e.g., 9+2), use of Community Teachers in state schools, and affirmative action in minority communities. MoEYS will require support from its partners to bring these efforts forward as enrolments once again begin to expand. The teacher shortage
Figure 4: Pupil to Teacher Ratios for Cambodia and Neighboring Countries
problem is perhaps the single biggest threat to Cambodia’s effort to achieve EFA and deserves its designation as ‘the invisible crisis.’ (p. 213)

Recognition of the PTR problem is a promising step for MoEYS to find a sustainable solution, however, “teacher shortages are not a product of constraints in the potential supply of teachers, but rather of central planning efforts to limit the growth of the civil resources through budget allocation, revenue increases, or outside funding sources to sustain the budgetary increase associated with increasing the teaching force instead of relying on double or triple shift teaching to alleviate the problem of teacher shortages (Benveniste et al., 2008). In addition to the budgetary constraints of hiring new teachers, recruitment of quality teachers is a concern as well. Because of the tremendous need for teachers, MoEYS has amended the minimum entrance requirements into the PTTCs. For prospective teacher wanting to teach in most of the country 12 years of education followed by 2 years of training at a PTTC is required (the 12+2 model). For those teaching in remote and disadvantages provinces only 9 years of schooling followed by 2 years of training at a PTTC is necessary (the 9+2 model). Even if MoEYS is able to recruit enough teachers, a teaching force of high school graduates (and some with less than this) will struggle to provide adequate instruction according to contemporary Western literature on quality education.

Available Resources. Cambodia has had a history of economic issues since the end of the 1980s. Duggan (Duggan, 1996) summarizes “a Cambodia emerging from a long period of civil war and social dislocation would require considerable international
financial resources and expertise to define its future” (p. 362). With the entire economy reliant on billions of dollars of development assistance in the last decade, Cambodia still seeks external funding for most of its development projects, including education (Chanboreth & Hach, 2008). This information demonstrates that a return to the patron-client system after the Khmer Rouge lost power was inevitable and necessary. From modern and traditional points of view, Cambodia needed patronage in the form of development assistance in order to survive. This patronage helped solidify social harmony after the devastation of the Khmer Rouge, but has perhaps transformed into a case of dependency on foreign assistance in the forms of finance and technical expertise, particularly in areas of environmental, political, and social development.

Problems with physical resources have plagued Cambodian education since the 1980s. Clayton (1998) points out that “the Khmer Rouge destroyed 90 percent of all school buildings, emptied libraries and burned their contents, and smashed nearly all school laboratory equipment” (p. 6). According to the Educational Statistics and Indicators for the 2010-2011 school year, of the 10,455 schools in Cambodia, 4,639 schools are without a water supply and 3,237 are without latrines (MoEYS, 2011b). Additionally, 4,299 building are without good floors, 2,653 are without good roofs, and 4,012 are without good walls (MoEYS, 2011b).

In Observations

About half of the participants in this study indicate that resources are still very limited. I observed two main areas related to resources, those were physical resources and economic resources.
Along with issues surrounding actual school facilities, the infrastructure for modern instructional tools remains incomplete. In an interview, one participant said “as you can tell, in the rural areas, we don’t even have electricity” (A-08, interview, November 2010). One finding from Richardson (2011) noted, the lack of reliable electricity was reported to impact the ability of teacher trainers to practice using [ICT] skills, observe tangible results, and observe others using [ICT] skills. Some teacher trainers reported that unstable power supplies led to the loss of documents during power outages, causing added frustrations.

(p. 21)

Also, in many places the only place to find an internet connection is at an internet café or restaurant in larger urban areas (MoEYS, 2004b). More recently, Richardson (2011) emphasizes that in Cambodia “only .5 out of 100 had access to the Internet” (p. 9) and that a “lack of Internet access” (p. 25) means that teachers have to rely on older lesson planning and implementation strategies unless they are willing to cover expenses for individual internet use at an off-school site.

In addition to the poor building conditions and the lack of reliable electricity and internet, many schools do not have adequate computing resources. Richardson (2011) found that, a lack of a sufficient number of computers hindered several teacher trainers’ ability to use the computers to improve or maintain their technical skills. When computers were available, they were often found to be locked away where
teacher trainers could not access them freely due to territorialism, scheduling conflicts, limited accessibility, or other issues. (p. 25)

My own observations confirm these findings. One of the PTTCs where I observed had no working computers for student teachers to practice what they were learning in computer class and another only had about eight (8) computers that worked in the computer classroom. The only computers that were readily usable in these two PTTCs were located in the administration building. The main reason why these computers do not work is that often these computers are donations from NGOs when programs using these computers are updated or the projects are completed. In most cases, these machines are old and in poor condition and do not have the capacity to run current software. I observed one example of this at a PTTC where one working computer only had 64MB of RAM.

These issues arise despite a MoEYS initiative for the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education to “establish and develop human resources of the very highest quality and ethics in order to develop a knowledge-based society within Cambodia” (MoEYS, 2010b, p. 7). MoEYS indicates that ICT includes such forms as the Internet and computers to television, radio, video, and mobile telephones (MoEYS, 2010b). But my observations and interviews with participants demonstrated that ICT normally means only the use of computers and the internet, and that the use of those technologies is limited because of infrastructural and economic reasons.
Schools have been asking MoEYS for updated equipment for several years, yet MoEYS has no plan or budget allocation to procure additional functional computers for schools despite producing and implementing an ICT Master Plan. Instead MoEYS provides specifications for computers and computer labs in schools in Cambodia. MoEYS’s ICT Master Plan (2010b) states that,

the Ministry will issue specifications for computer labs in schools. All computers deployed in schools and Teacher Training Centers under this plan must be desktop computers that fulfill the requirements of low-power-consumption (under 70 watts, including monitor) and low maintenance, with screens large enough to clearly see Khmer text (at least 16”). Computers labs will tend to have 26 computers whenever possible, and accommodate classes with 40 to 60 students. Labs should be fully networked. Maintenance costs must be minimized, and all computers should be procured with three-year maintenance contracts.

Schools with computers for students should also have computers for teachers to enable them to develop computer-based administration and education materials. The ratio of computers to teachers should be between 1:5 and 1:10. (p. 23)

Another issue mentioned about using ICT in schools is the lack of knowledge by teachers and teacher trainers of the foreign languages necessary to use internet resources. One participant discussed this issue saying “other books that are written in foreign languages or published research on the internet, our student are not able to
utilize those resources yet. So, therefore, we cannot research via the internet” (A-01, interview, November 2010).

Additionally, observed use of ICT in the PTTCs was incredibly low. Only 8 of the 143 observed classes utilized any sort of ICT equipment and this was usually only classes designated as ICT classes. In fact, there was an instance of an ICT class where a paper based exam including short answer questions was given (Observation A-21).

With respect to the need for more economic resources, most of the attention has focused on the issue of teacher salaries. Several teachers and administrators admit that the pay is too low even for teacher trainers. One participant discussed her ideas in depth by saying,

the education system has not improved because of the livelihood of the teachers here. In my opinion if the salary of the teachers is higher, then the Cambodian teachers will try harder for the country. Right now, the teachers are finding outside work to supplement their children to go to school. That is the number one thing; if the salary is higher, then the teacher will try harder because they can be more dedicated in researching and finding ways to teach better. But all of these things require money and a lot of time. Teachers need time to find ways and techniques to teach better, and if they can support their families better because of better salary, then teacher can have more time to do those things. Right now, there are teachers working as moto-dub (moto-dub, driving a motorbike for hire as a taxi service) and other jobs. This is all I can offer. Money is a huge factor and if there is enough pay for teachers who are parents to raise their own
children like buying good quality food and milk then the teachers are less stressed and can devote more time in being better teachers. There are well to do people who buy expensive milk and food for their children but the teachers here cannot do that with the current salary. (A-06, interview, November 2010)

15 other participants indicate that teacher salaries should be raised to a level that allows teachers to support their families as well. Low salaries have resulted in low teacher morale and absenteeism (Benveniste et al., 2008). Jago (2008) also finds that, the issue of pay emerged as the most powerful de-motivating factor. It is impossible to earn a living on a teacher’s salary in Cambodia. This basic need is going to remain the top priority over and above any other aspirations teachers have for the quality of their teaching practice until it is fulfilled. (p. 9)

Classroom observations collected in this inquiry support this finding where there were 38 observed instances of teacher absenteeism at PTTCs. These cases included times when the teacher failed to attend class, was called out of class for a meeting, or when a substitute teacher filled in for the absent teacher. Also, teacher absenteeism in public schools has been widely documented (Benveniste et al., 2008; Jago, 2008). Another demonstration of low teacher morale is when teachers answer their mobile phone during class. Over the three month observation period, there were 38 occasions where phone calls were made or answered during instruction time. In some classes this happened on multiple occasions. This demonstrates to student teachers that whatever is going on in the classroom is secondary to whoever is on the other end of the call.
Solutions to the teacher salary problem are not hard to find. However, finding solutions that are economically feasible and can be implemented by MoEYS are more difficult. One recommendation offered by Jago (2008) includes,

a substantial flat rate increase; a reasonable basic salary level, most agreed, should be around US$100. POE staff also suggested US$100 would be a reasonable salary, saying that teachers try hard despite low salaries. They argued that teachers’ performance would improve if they received an increase as they would spend more time preparing lessons and be able to give up their additional jobs. It would then be easier for the POE to ask for extra effort or to take action where commitment is low. With four-hour school days the norm, and with the time and opportunity for additional employment that this allows, teachers giving up extra jobs may be a little optimistic. However, a reasonable salary would make the pressure to earn a living wage less intense, which should have a positive effect on teachers’ commitment and practice. (pp. 24-25)

The attention paid to the lack of resources including buildings, materials, computers, the availability of internet, low teacher salaries, and teacher absenteeism by the interview participants indicates that Khmer teachers feel that they cannot be good teachers without what western education calls adequate resources. The teachers are receiving training on what they should be doing to be doing (training that is usually sponsored and conducted by NGO consultants) but do not have the means or materials to implement much of what they have been shown by these Western experts. This insight gives rise to the notion that the patron-client hierarchy is still prevalent in
Khmer education, the opinion that Cambodians must rely on foreign assistance both in terms of resources and in terms of being told how to execute quality education. It seems that prior to the implementation of these resources in the modern world that quality education was being delivered by quality teachers. Thus the use of these resources is not a necessary condition for quality education. Additionally, teacher salaries have always been low in Cambodia. When the monastic model of education was prevalent in Cambodia, monks (as teachers) relied on the local villagers to provide food and other items they needed in order to care for themselves physically, but the status of teachers and the respect they received seemed to make up for the low wages. The issues with low wages today probably stems from the modern idea that every working person deserves a living wage. More importantly, if your livelihood depends on more than one job, the probability that you give your best effort at one of them seems relatively small. The evidences use of phones during instruction time supports this idea.

**Parents/Guardians.** According to Cambodia’s Education Law (RGC, 2007),

The duties of parents or guardians for educating minors are:

- to take children that are 6 (six) years old or at least 70 (seventy) months old to register in the 1st (first) grade of the general education program at a licensed school;
- to make a strenuous effort to support the learning of students, especially for basic education;
• to be deeply involved in the school, family, and community to help develop and improve the learning environment.\footnote{My translation from the original Khmer text}

In addition to their obligation to enroll their children in school, one teacher trainer thinks the most important resource to improve education is family.

Poor or rich, I want all the parents or guardian to take some time out of their busy schedule to spend time with their children. For example I heard that there is a French NGO in Steung Meanchey who takes in abandoned children and gives them food and schooling. There are opportunities in Cambodia. So I want parents to look at resources and get involved so that all children are in school. This way the children can be good people. I want all children to want to learn and the school will take responsibility when the students are in school but the parents need to take responsibility in bringing their children to school. This is the only way it will work, teachers and parents need to work together, so that the children can receive education and become good people. (A-10, interview, November 2010)

A closer examination of this quote reveals some important interaction between tradition and modernity here. Modes of modern education are emphasized including equality (the reference to rich and poor), the quality of modern French education (the French NGO in Steung Meanchey), and the importance of family involvement in education (parents taking the responsibility to bring their children to school). However, the
separation of tradition lingers in the separate mention of “receiving education” and becoming “good people” in that they follow correct Buddhist principles and adhere to the rules present within the Khmer social hierarchy. This separation demonstrates that even if a child attends school and receives the education currently being implemented, she may not necessarily be a good person.

Without parents that understand and appreciate the value of education, teachers can lose the motivation to continue to prepare lessons and can even increase teacher absenteeism (Jago, 2008). However, most parents, especially those living in rural areas “see little evidence that an education will make accessible any employment opportunities different from those available to uneducated children” (Jago, 2008, p. 58). This lack of parental participation continues to be a vicious cycle of continued unwillingness to participate in activities that do not demonstrate benefits for their everyday life. These parents feel that the time of their children is best spent helping with daily chores like cooking meals, cleaning, watching younger siblings, helping sell items at the market, or assisting with agricultural activities. For these parents, their children can still be educated to be good people by participating in festivals and ceremonies at the វត (wat, temple) including sending male children to serve as លក (lokenane, novice monk) for a time. Until parents are shown the benefits of formal education for their children and they are able to see better economic opportunities for their children that formal education affords, the cycle of exclusion from education will continue.
Analysis

Participants’ comparative views of quality education (with the past and with other nations) reveals that modern conceptions of education have permeated the Khmer educational landscape. Understanding that the education sector in Cambodia has improved markedly over the time when Cambodia was under the control of the Khmer Rouge exhibits that progress can be made. However, there is a significant need for external donors to fund education in order to achieve and maintain figures that match these conceptions of quality education in Cambodia, perpetuating reliance on those in power observed in the traditional patron-client model.

The issue of PTR being greater than 40:1 as prescribed in modern educational research as a minimum standard for quality education has a solution in the hiring policies implemented by MoEYS, but because the need for new teachers is so great, MoEYS has lowered the standards to enter into teaching particularly in remote and disadvantaged provinces (the 9+2 entrance policy). As for physical resources, Khmer schools must rely on development partners to update existing buildings and provide equipment deemed necessary to deliver quality education based on modern ideals. Observation and research indicate that schools need bathrooms (instead of latrines), computers (that actually function and can run current software), and reliable electricity and internet. Currently MoEYS does not have the economic resources to provide funding to achieve these in all schools. Additional burdens on economic resources are another issue. This include late and low pay for teachers. Because basic teacher salaries are not enough to provide a living wage, most teachers have to venture out to find other
jobs to supplement their income. When teachers must find other employment, their ability to conduct research on new pedagogical methods, attend meetings, and even attend classes they are teaching diminishes. The last concern identified is the lack of parental involvement in schools. Much of the issue here is that most parents that do not send their children to school fail to see the benefit that an education brings to their children. For most Cambodians, even if they attend school and attain a diploma, have little opportunity for social or economic mobility. They will most likely become farmers where the content of school classes has little if any applicability to ensuring that the rice crop is plentiful and that the livestock are cared for and remain healthy.

Even with the acceptance of the problems identified under the ideals established in modern education, ideas of Khmer tradition emerge. The Buddhist idea of ទេន (tian, generosity) and interdependence observed in the patron-client relationship permeates the discussion about quality education in Cambodia today, just as in the past. Then, Cambodians depended on the French for governance and the “correct” model of education. The influence of international donors mirrors this relationship today. Evidence in this section demonstrates an appropriation of western conceptions of quality in the education sector of Cambodia in the place of traditional Buddhist/Khmer conceptions. This emphasizes the idea that Cambodia needs help from NGOs and foreign development assistance to make quality education in Cambodia. Again, the patron-client relationship exemplifies Cambodia’s reliance on more powerful patrons in the form of aid partners who tell Khmer policy makers how to view the problems they have and the “correct” way to manage these problems. But the problems identified and
the solutions provided from these donors based on human capital theory do not seem to be finding traction in Cambodia.

**Comparison of Indigenous and International Conceptions of Quality**

Historical, cultural, and social conditions seem to permeate the Khmer conceptions of quality education, whether the teacher trainers are comparing education today to that of the past (during the Khmer Rouge’s control), or with neighboring countries like Thailand and Viet Nam, or to the standards established by NGOs based in the developed world. Teacher trainers understand that progress is being made, but that Cambodia still believes it lags behind its neighbors and other countries around the world.

The implementation of the Teachers Standard Framework (see Figure 5) in 2008 by the Teacher Training Department of MoEYS illustrated the push to get teachers to implement methods and standards acceptable in modern education. A closer look at the expectations listed and the responses from interviews with teacher trainers demonstrate that the teacher trainers are aware of these expectations. Further studies are required to determine if these expectations are imparted in their teaching and if student teachers are aware of these expectations.

There seems to be disparity between Figure 5 and the responses of the participants regarding quality education in Cambodia. The areas of knowledge, practice, and learning have the most detailed information suggesting that these areas are more important than the area of Ethics listed at the bottom of the chart. Yet, when
teacher trainers are asked about good teachers, content knowledge and the ability to pass this knowledge on, or plan lessons takes an inferior position to possessing and demonstrating morally virtuous behavior to students. Discrepancies appear with respect to the pedagogical methodology employed, the body of content knowledge in teachers, issues with resources, and the purpose of education.

**Instructional Strategies**

Based on observation, curriculum in all but a few classes is taught using lecture based methods. There appears to be an attempt to use student centered teaching methods, but these attempts only utilize form and not the necessary content. For example, group work is heavily used. In fact, I noted some form of group work performed in groups amounted to finding answers in the textbook to questions posed by the teacher from the textbook. In these cases, there was no requirement for critical thinking or encouragement for responses outside those found in the books. I also observed that teachers expect a lot of repetition to memorize key terms or phrases for a particular lesson. Specific examples of group work where rote answers to posed questions were appropriate responses occurred in 51 classes. This emphasis is perhaps based on the lack of textbooks, but could also hearken back to the Buddhist tradition where sacred texts were memorized so that the lessons contained therein could be easily transmitted to those who wanted to learn. However, this implementation of group work as a pedagogical methodology does not meet the standards listed under Teaching Strategies in Figure 6, particularly the standards involving “problem-solving learning opportunities for the students to engage in critical and creative thinking” and
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<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
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<td>STUDENTS</td>
<td>LEARNING CONTENT</td>
<td>HOW STUDENTS LEARN</td>
</tr>
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<td>Know their students, their learning needs, capacities, histories and attitudes to learning; Are aware of home and other factors (i.e., gender, social and economic background, ethnicity) which affect their students’ learning and know how to deal with them.</td>
<td>Understand educational policies (national goals and purposes of each sector); Understand how to prepare a lesson plan; Understand the content of the learning program and be able to explain and teach it clearly; Understand how to integrate discipline knowledge from different subjects in ways that students learn more skills and enjoy learning better.</td>
<td>Understand the educational context of the classroom and school community; Understand how students learn; Understand differences in ability, rates and styles of student learning.</td>
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**ETHICS**
- Show care and concern for students and work always in their best interests and that of society;
- Demonstrate commitment and dedication to the teaching profession;
- Provide a positive example of moral behavior and harmonious relationships for students and the whole school community;
- Use fairness and transparency in dealings with students, colleagues and others in the school community.

Figure 5: Teacher Professional Standards in Cambodia
Source: Benveniste, Marshall, and Araujo (2008)
catering “for diverse learning styles and needs through the appropriate use of a wide range of teaching methods.”

Also, in every subject, students would keep notebooks where they write what the teacher says during lectures. In some cases, the teacher reads directly from the book or recites from memory while the students transcribe what the teacher says. This could be due to the fact that books are limited and if the student teachers are in a school without that particular book, then they will have the information to teach that lesson and demonstrates that the pedagogical methods employed follow a rote learning system with the teacher delivering knowledge to students that they then need to memorize and be able to recite. More importantly, it retains the traditional hierarchy of the patron-client model of the student relying on the teacher to offer wisdom and insight about the material covered. The teacher-student relationship mirrors this relationship as well, but the relationship need not be one-sided with the teacher possessing the power. Under the Khmer interpretation there is an interrelationship where each side is dependent on the other for some resource whether it be knowledge in how to be a good person (through demonstrating correct Buddhist virtues) or a bowl of rice to eat (or a salary). Also related to this point, I observed several teacher trainers using similar notebooks to teach lessons at the PTTCs. Perhaps these notebooks were those made when the teacher trainers were student teachers. The lack of material resources (specifically books) may be another reason for this rote method of memorization.
Body of Content Knowledge for Teachers

Some trainers have a Bachelor’s degree, some have a high school diploma with additional training, and I also found 3 participants who only finished 9th grade\(^\text{15}\), also mentioned by A-01). The participants in the last category started teaching in the early 1980s. The dramatic need for teachers after the Khmer Rouge era caused anyone who had any level of literacy to be recruited as a teacher, even if that level was barely proficient. Current research indicates that this trend of teachers with low qualifications continues today (Tandon & Fukao, 2015). Thus, some teachers have little relative knowledge of content and it is difficult for them to accomplish items listed under the Learning Content column, specifically, understanding “the content of the learning program and be able to explain and teach it clearly.” The 9+2 recruitment policy for remote and disadvantaged areas today mirrors the reliance on poorly qualified teachers in a modern view of education.

Issues with Resources

The lack of physical resources in schools discussed earlier in the chapter is another issue reflected in the standards in Figure 5. Interview participants mentioned that without available ICT including computers and reliable internet access, teachers are unable to implement ICT into their lessons (under Teaching Strategies and Self-Learning) or do outside research for professional development (under Engagement in the Teaching Profession). Additionally, the lack of economic resources in the form of

\(\text{Participant A-01 also indicated that this is a problem within the Khmer system.}\

\(\text{15}\)
low and delayed pay of teachers’ salaries create roadblocks to accomplishing these standards. If teachers must seek outside employment to cover the costs of basic needs, then that leave little time for teachers to do outside research to develop lesson plans or meet with other teachers to discuss effective strategies (under Engaging in the Teaching profession).

**The Purpose of Education**

One other important observation about this is the mention of sending children to school so that they can be “good people.” This emphasizes the moral and civic outlook regarding the purpose of education instead of the economic purpose of education assumed in the development community. Observation in a Khmer literature class at a PTTC exhibits this goal explicitly when the teacher says “School is to teach students to be good people” (Observation A-04). Further instantiation of this idea came later form the same teachers during a discussion of an old folk tale regarding morality and corruption when he said “School is to cultivate people” (Observation A-04). Notice the use of agricultural metaphor to describe the care needed to develop people with specific virtues not to impart specific technical skills to students so that they can be cogs in some expansive economic development machine. Again, we see the dichotomy of cultivation (*being*) juxtaposed to transmission (*doing*) appearing in education based on models and ideas foreign to the Khmer context. This appears to be an instance of Cambodians using traditional conceptions of quality applied to benchmarks those conceptions were never intended to measure and analogous to imposing a yardstick as a standard form of measure where the metric system has been the traditionally accepted form of measure.
Analysis of Differences, Similarities, and Apparent Changes

Differences in Conceptions of Quality

**Quality teachers.** When discussing the conception of quality teachers with interview participants, stark differences from modern conceptions of quality teachers emerged. The most notable difference is that in the Cambodian conception of a quality teacher, interpersonal qualities related to Buddhist virtues and traditional Khmer notions of propriety following the rules of social hierarchy were the standard of measure. Teachers were of good quality if they were fair, compassionate, polite, nurturing, and modest. Having appropriate skills to convey knowledge was secondary to possessing these virtues. On the other hand, modern conceptions of quality teachers depend more on a teacher’s content knowledge in specific subjects (usually demonstrated by possessing a baccalaureate degree), the ability to implement lessons using pedagogical methods emphasizing student-centered learning (including using ICT to present lessons), and the ability to develop and accentuate these skills through ongoing teacher education modules (through organized coursework or personalized study).

**Quality education.** The differences in the conception of quality teachers is informed by the differences in the purpose of education between Cambodian teacher trainers and modern western views. For Cambodians, the purpose of education is to cultivate, grow, or develop, good people in a moral sense. This is recognized by a person’s adherence to Buddhist principles and social norms prevalent in Khmer society. Yet, according to modern perspectives, the purpose of education is to create members of
society who are productive in an economic sense because they possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities that contribute to the expansion of capital for themselves or for those who employ them. If the purpose of education is to create good people in the moral sense according to the Cambodian view, then in order to measure the quality of education, researchers should examine religious participation, what types of actions count as exhibiting propriety, or the number improper actions individual Khmer citizens engage in a given amount of time.

**Similarities in Conceptions of Quality**

*Identifying issues in education.* Instead, data from this inquiry indicate that there is a change in the perceptions of quality education in Cambodia to a comparative view based on past history or the performance of others according to proxies deemed appropriate by Western educational researchers. In naming the problems with quality education in Cambodia, comparisons to the Khmer Rouge era or contemporary educational reports about other countries enters the discussion. This is where the similarities in identifying problems with Cambodian education emerge. Issues with PTR, adequate physical and economic resources, and engaging family members in education are the most glaring issues. Solutions to these problems take a definite modern point of view as well with the recruitment and training of more teachers (even if the entrance requirements are lowered). Evidence of this easing of the entrance policy has been utilized in places like Japan and Australia after times of war and during a population boom.
**Fairness.** Another similarity is the idea of fairness in education. For Khmer teacher trainers the concept of fairness applies as a trait possessed by quality teachers as part of a list of Buddhist virtues for interpersonal relations extolled in traditional Cambodian culture. Here the concept of fairness implies fair treatment according to one’s place in the social hierarchy and following traditional norms. For example, the way that one speaks to a monk is vastly different to how one speaks to a child, including the words used to address them and the particular verbs that are appropriate to use. Fairness is also a concept venerated in modern models of education, but it is emphasized in a vastly different way. The emphasis on equality of and for all people is where fairness appears in the modern view. Regardless of race, religion, gender, social, or economic status, the idea that anyone can do or be anything is esteemed as an entrenched human right. Moral views discussed in contemporary philosophy draw out how fairness is implemented.

**Apparent Changes**

Several changes have arisen in Cambodian education in its history. From its beginnings in a monastic setting through the introduction of modern forms of education under French colonial rule and vast over haul under the Khmer Rouge, and finally to the system observed today, education in Cambodia has survived immense change. Although the change in recent years has pushed a modern agenda for education, ideas of traditional Khmer culture continue to permeate the educational landscape. The most
Table 6: Chart Comparing Khmer and Modern Conceptions of Quality Education and Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Khmer</th>
<th>Modern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Education</td>
<td>To be (moral)</td>
<td>To do (economic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieved by</td>
<td>Cultivation (whole individual)</td>
<td>Transmission (parts of individual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measured by</td>
<td>Social harmony (capabilities)</td>
<td>Economic growth (capital)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Teachers</td>
<td>Coursework (knowledge)</td>
<td>Coursework (knowledge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buddhist virtues</td>
<td>Advanced degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Test scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>Teacher experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences</td>
<td>The purpose of education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How quality education is achieved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How quality education is measured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality characteristics (Khmer)</td>
<td>Personality characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>compared to certification (modern)</td>
<td>compared to certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>Identifying issues in education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupil to Teacher Ratio goal of 40:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of economic and physical resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental/guardian involvement in education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriation of modern ideas in Khmer context</td>
<td>Need to use ICT in lesson planning and delivering curriculum</td>
<td>Reliance on Western donors to develop and implement policy as well as train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reliance on Western donors for financial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Implement and sustain economic growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
traditional Khmer rules of propriety and be instilled with Buddhist virtues pervades conversation about quality teachers and the purpose of education. The changes to education in Cambodia are most radically seen in the transformation of curriculum and education policies to embrace modern ideas of equality, freedom, and economic development. Under this modern view of education, economic development, the accumulation of wealth for a nation and its citizens is the measuring stick for success. Based on these modern measures, Cambodia continues to lag behind with respect to the quality education and economic development. There appears to be room for traditional Khmer conceptions of quality alongside those of aid donors and what international literature on quality education says. If curriculum and policies implemented in education matched the goals and purposes inherent in the Cambodian view of education is informed by education experts about how to achieve those goal and purposes, progress would perhaps be observed. Until the tension between tradition and modernity is resolved, however, the education sector will continue with the problems it currently faces.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to add to the literature about teacher quality in Cambodia. The study attempts to understand and reveal the Cambodian conception of quality teachers and education. Additionally, this inquiry seeks to open dialogue between these views in order to help frame the plight of education in Cambodia in general as well as with respect to modern forms of education, particularly Education for All (EFA). Observance of these problems led to the research questions addressed in this research.

Findings

Introduction

There is a tension between traditional Khmer and modern conceptions of quality education and teachers. This tension has existed since the introduction of the French education system. Vestiges of the importance of Buddhist virtues in teachers is observed from participant interview data as well as observation from the classroom. Despite the continued promotion of Buddhist virtues, there has been an acceptance and assimilation of these modern, Western educational goals and policies in Cambodia’s
education sector. The tension between these conceptions lie in how these new policies have been developed and implemented without adequate resources or training for those working in Cambodian education. Instead, Cambodia’s Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) relies on resources from foreign donors for financial support and technical advice on how to accomplish these goals formed from ideas celebrated in modern, Western education.

Cambodian Educators Defining Quality Education

Most participants in this research mentioned that there has been much improvement in the quality of education since the Khmer Rouge lost power in 1979. Yet, the realization that Cambodia continues to struggle providing the same level of quality education as other countries remains prevalent. Additionally, the actual and projected PTR for Cambodia are still well above the 40:1 ratio suggested in EFA. Lack of appropriate resources also continues to be a struggle in physical resources such as decaying school buildings, a deficient supply of textbooks and learning materials including scientific lab equipment, unreliable electricity and internet, and an insufficient number of functional computers. Much of these issues are exacerbated by a lack of financial resources and delays in payment of school budgets and teacher salaries. These issues, along with low teacher salaries, have produced low morale and an attitude of complacency among teachers. There is also a rise in teacher absenteeism as reported in extant literature and corroborated with observations in this study.

The most important part of ensuring quality education is with a well-qualified teaching force. When defining what a quality teacher looks like, most participants in
this study cited a plethora of Buddhist virtues as necessary for a good teacher. These virtues include being just, fair, polite, kind, and caring. Table 4 demonstrates this heavy reliance on moral standards for both teachers and students. Perhaps just as important, but secondary in responses was the actual content knowledge of the teacher and the needs of the community and students. Another important quality in good teachers is the desire to be a good teacher.

**Components of Teacher Training in Cambodia**

The teacher training curriculum in Cambodia appears to be a hurried attempt to introduce the ideas of modern education into Cambodia. Where issues arise is in the implementation of the teacher training curriculum. Instruction in the PTTCs still relies heavily on a model of rote memorization and regurgitation. There is little emphasis on student-centered models of learning or opportunity for critical thinking about how to best implement lesson plans or deal with difficult situations teachers might face in the classroom.

**Alignment of Teacher Training with Cambodian Conceptions of Quality Education**

Teacher training in Cambodia provides the opportunity for teacher trainees to receive some instruction in traditional Khmer principles but the curriculum mainly emphasizes the inclusion of subjects deemed appropriate in modern education research. The biggest problem faced here is the lack of demonstrable implementation of many of these modern modes of education including student driven discussion and an emphasis on critical thinking. Some teacher trainers understand the emphasis on student centered learning methods, but have not been taught how to use these methods in their teaching.
(A-05, interview, November 2010). As discussed in the previous section, the teacher training curriculum includes sections focused on student centered learning, but teacher trainers fail to incorporate these methods when teaching at the PTTC.

One teacher, who was asked to fill in for an absent teacher on short notice, did prepare a lesson and utilized several student-centered methods throughout the class. At the end of the class, the students applauded the teacher. This demonstrates that teacher trainers know how to utilize student centered methods, but fail to incorporate these methods in their lesson plans on a regular basis. The implementation of more teacher training and school curriculum courses on children’s rights, psychology, hygiene, and local life skills emphasizing student choice are a push toward knowledge for doing and away from traditional Khmer conceptions of knowledge for being. The use of foreign consultants in training, curricular design, and educational planning ensure that a continued push for modernization will probably transform Khmer conceptions in the future. Additionally, teacher trainers express the need for more ICT resources and training in using these methods along with more pay to allow them more time to research using these methods. One trainer indicated that “honestly, the teachers want to know and learn how to use a computer but again this is the one thing that the teachers cannot do on their own. And the Ministry cannot afford to supply the teachers all these computers for the teachers to use and learn with” (A-05, interview, November 2010).

Alignment of Teacher Training in Cambodia with EFA Goal 6

With respect to the alignment of teacher training to EFA standards for quality education, programs and implementation practices lag far behind Cambodia’s ability to
see PTR decrease to appropriate numbers. Reliance on NGOs and international aid organizations for assistance only goes so far. At some point, Cambodia must be able to formulate and implement its own policies to see the kind of success that modern models of education praise. One participant said “I want all education around the world to be at the same level, not have different education levels for different countries based on the economic situation of that country” and “[i]f I had a wish I would want more NGOs to come and help the teachers here to be like other countries’ teachers. I don’t want Cambodian teachers to be left behind” (A-04, interview, November 2010). Yet, the policies and programs being implemented by MoEYS rarely focus on measures that increase the quality of education following EFA guidelines. Remember that MoEYS continues to project a goal for PTR well above the 40:1 threshold contemporary research deems appropriate for ensuring quality education. Furthermore, the implementation of more teacher training and school curriculum courses on children’s rights, psychology, hygiene, and local life skills emphasizing student choice are vital to ensuring quality education according to modern guidelines as well. Extant research including those emphasized in EFA indicate that these subjects are crucial to political, social, and economic development. However, based on the findings in the data of this study, Cambodia lacks programs or a clear set of implementation practices to get their policies aimed at EFA and quality education into practice in the teacher training classroom or the school classroom.
Contributions and Implications

Contributions

The contributions of this research cover a range of areas including empirical research on Cambodia, as well as making theoretical and methodological contributions in the field of educational research. This inquiry has provided a way to establish a mutually understood conception of “quality” given implicit understanding and explicit implementations for producing quality. The use of dialogue is the way that this mutual understanding is accomplished. Theoretically, the idea of dialogue has its roots in the epistemological view of pragmatism as described by Rorty (1982) and Dewey (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Methodologically, Freire (2000) demonstrates how this dialogue is accomplished in research.

The value of this research lies well beyond the scope of theory and methodology to provide significant insight into the history of Khmer education and the social, cultural, and linguistic traditions that shape the Cambodian conceptions of education and teachers. In an area where there is a dearth of research (Cambodian education), this inquiry illuminates not only how Cambodians perceive quality, but how they arrive at these conceptions. Implicit in how Cambodians understand quality education are the Buddhist virtues of ទាន (tian, generosity), េ ម តា ន (mey-ta, generosity), ករុណន (garunna, compassion), មូទិតន (mutita, empathetic joy), and ឧ េ ប កា (upeka, equanimity) (Harvey, 2000). A closer look at these virtues and the social and political history of Cambodia reveal an interconnectedness between everyone in society, emphasizing a patron client model of interdependence. After the Khmer Rouge almost destroyed the country,
Cambodia became reliant upon the support of foreign donors for its basic needs. Today this dependence has seeped into the education sector as well. Today, Cambodia is dependent upon donors in several areas including,

- research
- educational methods and training
- technology
- educational finance.

Because of this dependence, we see an assimilation of Western ideas and standards in education where donors dictate what is to be done and how success will be measured without regard for Khmer conceptions or traditions. This, in effect, perpetuates Khmer dependence on foreign ideas and money and leaves little room for the cultivation of Khmer ideas about education.

**Implications**

Several implications result from this inquiry including the aforementioned dependence of Cambodia on Western donors for assistance. With their dependence on Western ideas and money, Cambodia appears to be a perpetual colony, reliant upon the expertise of the West and its ideologies imported to make those colonized “better.” One way to avoid this colonialist paradigm is to understand and integrate the Khmer perspective into the decision-making process and this can be achieve through dialogue. Other implications from this research include MoEYS, NGOs and international donors, and future research. The next section provides detail about those implications and provides recommendations about how to address these issues.
Impressions and Recommendations

One general impression I have from spending time on this research is that there is an overall sense of maintaining the continued support of foreign donors among teachers and administrators. They see needs that could be met, but there is no real incentive for anyone to make an effort at change. The root cause of this sense of compliance with the current situation is not certain, but there are several possibilities. One possible reason is the emphasis on Ṣiyāṃ (upeka, equanimity) present in Buddhism. Here, people are required to detach from the problems arising in their lives to exhibit virtue. Another possibility is the reliance on those protectors to provide inspiration and instruction to the people as with the traditional patron-client relationship discussed earlier. The prosperity of the Angkor era and its centralized approach to government, society, religion, and culture is still highly venerated in Cambodia today. Even with these roadblocks, progress in education is still possible without denying traditional Khmer culture and ideas, but can only be fostered through the mutual understanding that practical intersubjectivity provides.

Recommendations for MoEYS

In order to see progress in the education sector, real initiatives must come from MoEYS with plans for implementation and a budget that allows for the accomplishment of those policies. This does not mean, however, that the Ministry must lean on NGOs and international donors to formulate plans, programs, initiative and policies independent of MoEYS. In fact, I suggest that MoEYS approach those organizations already working in the education sector in Cambodia and articulate the goals that
education in Cambodia should accomplish and ask those donors “How do we accomplish goal x and what resources would we need to accomplish this?” Once some goals have been established and a plan to accomplish them including help from these technical experts, figure out the budget for that particular goal and articulate what resources MoEYS can allocate toward that goal, but will need assistance with this set of resources.

Additionally, MoEYS has gotten off to a great a start with the formulation of the Education Law, the Child Friendly Schools initiative, its ITC campaign, and the formulation of Teaching Standards, but specific information about these is not readily available at the lower levels. One example of this was at one of the PTTCs, I asked to see a copy of the Education Law, but there was no copy anywhere at the PTTC. I was finally shown a copy after three days. Documents like this should be readily available not just for researchers or investigators, but for faculty and administrators to be able to see what is required of them and develop ways they can accomplish these requirements on their own. The NGO Education Partnership (NEP) is a great resource to start this dialogue. Once this dialogue begins, MoEYS can then create new goals to meet the needs of the education sector by listening to the suggestions of those working in lower levels of education including school administrators and faculty. These are the people who are best acquainted with the problems that face education, whether it is a problem with student learning, developing a new textbook, or getting more reliable electrical or internet resources to schools.
Since there is still a recognition of Buddhist virtues in education, perhaps MoEYS should include Buddhist officials and monks in the policy making process. In addition monks should be included in curriculum design and content as well. This will insure that Buddhist values continue to be maintained in an education system with a goal of cultivating “good” people.

**Recommendations for NGOs and International Donors**

First and foremost, gain a basic understanding of Khmer culture and language. When one PTTC director told me that I was the first researcher to come that spoke, read, and wrote Khmer, I wondered how valuable the data previously collected could have been? Were any significant ideas or thoughts lost in translation? I realize that learning Khmer language is arduous and does not fit with most models of most languages used in the West, but when you understand another’s culture and language, it is much easier to not only understand their needs, but also helps with insight about prioritizing needs to be met. This understanding also help to design and implement suggestions that are truly meaningful and helpful. In addition, NGOs and aid donors should coordinate with each other about projects. I observed several different organizations working in different parts of the country providing conflicting suggestions on resolving the exact same issues. Which directions do you follow when one expert says go right and another tells you go left?

Another recommendation is to be critical of the economic driving human capital theory guiding much of Western development. Here, quantitative outputs define quality whether the discussion is about Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per person or
scores on standardized national exams. It is in measuring these areas that Cambodia fails. These failures create a sense of helplessness and dependency. Instead focus on human capabilities, the ability one has to function in a society (Wigley & Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006). When focusing on a human capabilities approach, consideration is given to what it means for an individual to function in a society. When an individual functions well in society, she appreciates the value of things in her life, including education. For Cambodians social harmony and rules of propriety are highly valued as demonstrated by their continued use of social hierarchy exhibited in language and in the reverence given to those of higher status. When these values are emphasized in education, it will gain greater value.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Further research is needed in the education sector for Cambodia. More specifically, more qualitative research is needed to uncover the real problems and issues haunting the education sector. Much of the focus of new research should cover the needs of the Cambodian education system. I mean this with respect to ensuring that the Khmer understanding of the purpose for education remains intact. If Cambodia wants to continue to produce “good people” (in a moral sense) through its education system, research should focus on how to accomplish this goal without judgment or chastising them because their goals differ from those of a “modern” society. The true ideals of modernity include an empathetic understanding of the other, not an imperialistic imposition of ideals deemed “the right way” to educate.
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL LETTER

Subject: Use of Human Subjects in Research - Approval Memorandum

From: Human Subjects <humansubjects@magnet.bsu.edu>

Date: Tuesday, September 21, 2010 9:00 pm

To: [Redacted]

Cc: [Redacted]

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306
(850) 644-8533 - FAX (850) 644-4092

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 9/21/2010

To: Enoch Starfall

Address: 1209 Stone Building, Tallahassee, FL 32306
Dept.: EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS AND POLICY STUDIES

From: Thomas L. Jacobsen, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Quality Education and Teacher Training In Cambodia: A Philosophical Ethnography

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above has been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Exempted per 45 CFR § 46.101(b) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped versions of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 9/10/2011 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing, any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols in order to ensure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institutional and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is HHS00009446.

Cc: Jeffrey Milligan, Advisor
HBC No. 2010-4835
APPENDIX B

RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH)

FSU Behavioral Consent Form
Quality Education and Teacher Training In Cambodia: A Philosophical Ethnography

You are invited to be in a research study of the Cambodian conceptions of quality education and quality teachers. You were selected as a possible participant because of your position in the education sector of Cambodia or because you are the parent of a student in Public education in Cambodia. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Enoch Matthew Stanfill, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Florida State University, USA.

Background Information:

The purpose of the proposed research is to gain an understanding of the Cambodian conception of quality education and quality teachers and how these conceptions compare with how teacher training in Cambodia aligns with the Cambodian conception of quality education and how it compares to the EFA goal of improving educational quality.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: Participate in a one time 15-30 minute video recorded interview about your thoughts on quality education, quality teachers, and your educational experience in Cambodia. Teacher Trainers will be asked to allow the researcher to observe and video record their teaching at a Provincial Teacher Training College for a period of 30 days, totaling 100 recorded hours.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks. The only potential risk of this study is a loss of anonymity. However the likelihood of this is very low because all identifiers in transcripts and recordings will be removed. Also, all transcripts and recording will be stored in a password protected folder on the researcher’s personal computer.

There are no direct personal benefits for participation in this study.

Compensation:

You will not receive compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by the laws governing the United States and Cambodia. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a

FSU Human Subjects Committee Approved 9/20/10. Void after 9/19/11 HSC# 2010.4855
subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Only the researcher will have access to the recording and transcripts.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Enoch Matthew (Matt) Stanfill. You may ask any question you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact Matt at [redacted] or [redacted]. You may also contact Matt’s advisor, Jeffrey Milligan at +1 (850) 644-8171 or jmilligan@fsu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

__________________________  __________________________
Signature                  Date

__________________________  __________________________
Signature of Investigator  Date

FSU Human Subjects Committee Approved 9/20/10. Void after 9/19/11 HSC# 2010.4855
APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM (KHMER)
ការបញ្ជាក់

ការបញ្ជាក់គឺចេញពីការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងក្រុងសំខាន់ក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គី។

ការសំខាន់

ការសំខាន់គឺជាអ្នកក្លាយជាសុខារីយ៉ាងមានអត្ថប្រយោជន៍។

ការអភុស្បត់និងការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គី

ការអភុស្បត់និងការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គីគឺជាអ្នកក្លាយជាសុខារីយ៉ាងមានអត្ថប្រយោជន៍។

ការសំខាន់និងការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គី

ការសំខាន់និងការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គីគឺជាអ្នកក្លាយជាសុខារីយ៉ាងមានអត្ថប្រយោជន៍។

ការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គី

ការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គីគឺជាអ្នកក្លាយជាសុខារីយ៉ាងមានអត្ថប្រយោជន៍។

ការសំខាន់និងការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គី

ការសំខាន់និងការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គីគឺជាអ្នកក្លាយជាសុខារីយ៉ាងមានអត្ថប្រយោជន៍។

ការសំខាន់និងការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គី

ការសំខាន់និងការប្រឈមព្រៃក្នុងស្ថានភាពក្នុងប្រទេសបាយកង្គីគឺជាអ្នកក្លាយជាសុខារីយ៉ាងមានអត្ថប្រយោជន៍។

FSU Human Subjects Committee Approved 9/20/10. Void after 9/19/11. HSCR 2010-1055
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (ENGLISH)

Interview Questions (English)

1. What are your thoughts about quality education in Cambodia?
2. Do you think the education system in Cambodia provides a quality education or not?
   A. If so, what are some important things that help students receive a quality education?
   B. If not, what are the barriers to students receiving a quality education?
3. What characteristics do quality teachers have?
   A. In your opinion, do some, most, or all Cambodian teachers have these characteristics?
   B. What do quality teachers know how to do?
      i. In your opinion, do some, most, or all Cambodian teachers know how to do these things?
   C. What do quality teachers know?
      i. In your opinion, do some, most, or all Cambodian teachers know these things?
4. What is your educational experience?
   A. Primary School?
   B. Lower Secondary School?
   C. Upper Secondary School?
   D. University/Technical School?
5. What level test did you pass in school?
   A. Primary School?
   B. Lower Secondary School?
   C. Upper Secondary School?
   D. University/Technical School?
6. Do you have any other thoughts or opinions about the quality of education to the methods of education in Cambodia?
Interview Questions (Khmer)

1. សូមប្រការថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធពីរៀន្តដ៏ធំមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត?

2. សូមប្រការថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត?
   A. ប្រការឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
   B. ប្រការឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត

3. ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត?
   A. ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
   B. ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
      i. ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
        ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
   C. ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
      i. ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត

4. ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត?
   A. ឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
   B. ឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
   C. ឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
   D. ឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត

5. ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត?
   A. ឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
   B. ឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
   C. ឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត
   D. ឃើញ ថាមកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត

6. ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត?
   ប្រការឃើញថាតើអ្នកព្យាយាមប្រការណ៍ពេញនិយមប្រពន្ធទុកច្បាប់ទៀតមួយដែលសម្រាប់អ្នកបំផុតបំផុត?
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