

# TOPIC: What Do You Think of Cambodia's Education Strategy Towards 2030?

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## សេចក្តីសង្ខេប (Executive Summary)

ដើម្បីឆ្លើយតបនឹងទស្សនៈវិស័យជាតិសម្រាប់ឆ្នាំ២០៣០ និងកង្វះធនធានមនុស្សចាំបាច់ក្នុងតម្រូវការការងារឧស្សាហកម្ម ក្រសួងអប់រំ យុវជន និង កីឡា បានបង្កើតផែនការយុទ្ធសាស្ត្រប្រព័ន្ធអប់រំ ដើម្បីធានាការកសាងធនធានមនុស្សដែលមាន គុណភាព និងសមត្ថភាពគ្រប់គ្រាន់ ឆ្លើយតបនឹងទីផ្សារការងារក្នុងស្រុក និងការប្រកួតប្រជែងក្នុងសមាហរណកម្មសេដ្ឋកិច្ចអាស៊ាន។ ទោះយ៉ាងណាក៏ ការអនុវត្តផែនការយុទ្ធសាស្ត្រប្រព័ន្ធអប់រំជួបប្រទះ នឹងបញ្ហានានា រួមមាន អត្រាទទួលបានការអប់រំមាន កម្រិតទាបទៅតាមកម្រិតអប់រំ គុណភាពអប់រំនៅមានកម្រិត កង្វះខាតហិរញ្ញវត្ថុ និងការគ្រប់គ្រងបុគ្គលិកផ្នែកអប់រំមិនមាន ប្រសិទ្ធភាព។ ហេតុដូច្នេះនេះ កំណែទម្រង់ហិរញ្ញវត្ថុ ការលើកកម្ពស់គុណភាព និងការយកចិត្តទុកដាក់គ្រប់គ្រងប្រតិបត្តិការនៅ ថ្នាក់ក្រោមជាតិ ជាដំណោះស្រាយដ៏ចាំបាច់ដើម្បីការអនុវត្តផែនការអោយមានប្រសិទ្ធភាព។

Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) vision is to establish national development in line with peace and stability, sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction, culture and national identity promotion, environmental protection and national harmony. RGC expressed the ambition in Rectangular Strategy phase IV to be an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and to be a high-income country by 2050 after Cambodia graduated from a low-income country to a lower-middle-income country in 2015. To accomplish this ambition, RGC commits to achieve approximately 7% economic growth annually, reduce 1% of poverty rate annually, promote more production in industry along with low unemployment rate, further empower institutional capacity for national and sub-national authority. RGC developed industrial policy 2015-2025 as a mechanism to promote productivity simultaneously with ASEAN Economic Community integration. However, a key challenge for industrial sector in Cambodia is the scarcity of

skilled labors and technical knowledge. Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MoEYS) implemented Education Strategic Plan (ESP 2014-2018) as a response in order to facilitate the national vision 2030. ESP 2014-2018 shows the expectation of creating quality and relevant human capital for labor market. Although ESP 2014-2018 is a strategic tool to respond to the national policy and labor demands, the practice of ESP 2014-2018 also has some limitations, including inequitable school assessment and limitation of education quality, financial shortage, and ineffective staff management.

Initially, ESP 2014-2018 aims to ensure equality of education services assessment to community and it wishes to promote education quality especially in research, technical skill, vocational skill and science. Conversely, Cambodia education sector faces school assessment gap as well as poor education quality. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported that school

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assessment gap between boys and girls in Cambodia was mitigated since 2011, but secondary education assessment gap between children in rural areas and children in urban areas still exists because of inequality of income distribution. Poverty pushes low income parents or guardians to drop their children out of schools and help them with farming and house chores instead. The grade repetition rate and low-quality education discourage students and their parents or guardians' confidence on education service. In fact, in 2013, there was 94.2% of children enrolled in primary education, but the higher grade was lower, with only 40.7% in lower-secondary education and then to only 20.6% in upper-secondary education. The grade repetition rate is 6% in primary education and 1.2% in both level of secondary education. Drop-out rate is 6% in primary education, 15% in lower secondary education and 8% in secondary education. ESP 2014-2018 paper work noted that the enrollment and quality in secondary schools have recently increased only a little and grade repetition rate decreased notably, yet the drop-out rate remains unchanged. In this connection, MoEYS encourages students to learn science and vocational skills. Many students recently participate in science and vocational skills in secondary school, yet MoEYS still concerns about the quality of teaching and learning as well as the qualification for higher education and labor demand. The number of students who enrolls in higher education is low and the quality is limited. According to Policy on Higher Education Vision 2030 (HSV 2030), MoEYS aims to promote researching skills and technical skills quality for higher education in order to supply labor market. In 2013, about 200,000 students enrolled in public and private higher education institutes only in city. Students in higher education mostly choose social science and business-related majors while only a small percentage of students chooses science, engineering and agriculture. As a result, lack of ability in critical thinking, researching skill, technical skills, and knowledge of current skill demand in market cause graduate students from

higher education to mismatch the labor requirement or work conversely from their majors.

ESP 2014-2018 also aims to ensure effective leadership and management of education staff at all levels. This policy is to promote effective and flexible education service and staff management with accountability. Currently, this policy is struggling with financial shortage and inequality of financial distribution. Education Expenditure accounts for only about 2% of Cambodia net Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013 and it is only 2.7 % of Cambodia net GDP in 2017. MoEYS proposed for an increase to 23.1% as potential share of national budget in Education sector in 2017 as indicated in ESP 2014-2018, yet the actual share of national budget on education sector shown in National Budget Law was only 12.3% in 2017. Furthermore, the allocation of education budget in Cambodia faces deficit recently. Since 2013 until 2016 education budget has been a surplus, except for 2015, which equals to positive 56,485 million riels or 14 million dollars. On the other hand, MoEYS encountered pretty huge budget deficit in 2017 and 2018 equal to minus 312,911 million riels (-78 million dollars) and minus 319,588 million riels (-80 million dollars) respectively. Consequently, the financial shortage in education sector yields ineffective education service in Cambodia. MoEYS manages and finances approximately 60% of civil servants in Cambodia and the number of education staff is projected to increase annually. The increased amount of education staff requires more financial support as well as robust management system. On the contrary, the disparities emerge between education staff in urban and rural areas. MoEYS struggles to recruit teachers for rural areas and disadvantaged communities or ethnicity communities which resulted from those disparities. The low-income standard of living demoralizes teacher quality and the management system. The basic salary is 400,000 riels. Teachers mostly criticize the amount of salary given, and they teach in unclear structures due to ineffective

management from management staff (from school principal up to director general). Personal tuition is the additional source of income for teachers. Parents and guidance have negative assumption on public education service due to the required extra-spending on corruption and extra-tuition, which is not included in standard school curriculum. In addition, teachers, especially in rural areas, find it hard to adapt themselves with the new quality of teaching due to shortage of teaching materials. The secondary schools in remote areas are mostly lack of facilities and teaching equipment. Mostly, a class contains big amount of students up from 40 to 60 or more due to the shortage of classes and buildings. MoEYS reported that 141 lower secondary schools have only eight computer labs in 2013. The shortage of technical and vocational teachers, text books, science labs, language labs, libraries and library materials also exist in rural areas. Only 52.9% of lower secondary school has access to clean water and only 64.4% of upper secondary school has access to clean water.

In short, Education Strategic Plan is a core policy tool to national development policy toward 2030, but it faces the challenges in practice. The low rate of education assessment in secondary and higher education as well as financial shortage in education sector poses an obstacle to achieve the MoEYS expectation on quality and potential skills required in industrial economy such as science, mathematics, technical skills and vocational skills. People living in poverty, especially those who live in the countryside have limited education access due to their low incomes, lack of education facilities and materials, and lack of education staff. The ineffective management structure and higher salary demanded by education staff are also the concerns. Actually, MoEYS needs huge financial support to run the policy toward the elimination of scarcity in technical knowledge in Cambodia. The policy needs to be participated by national and subnational levels in education sector as well as

relevant parties, including Ministry of labor, Ministry of rural development authority, firms, non-profit organizations, international community, financial institutions, students, parents, guardians and all stakeholders. The national budget distribution gap between the potential rate and actual should be reduced. The appropriate actual share of budget in Education should be about 20%. MoEYS should consider about salary reform and incentives for teachers in rural areas along with the effective training to education staff. The minimum wage for education staff should be at least 700,000 to 80,000 riels, considering the inflation and the increase in minimum wage in other careers. For instance, footwear and garment workers receive 181 dollars as minimum wage in 2018. MoEYS should encourage more scientists and technicians to involve in science and technical skills education by financial incentives. MoEYS should also provide orientation of education policy towards 2030 to students and their parents or guardians aiming to encourage secondary students to advance science knowledge in higher education. Last but not least, MoEYS should strengthen the management, especially in rural areas by having a regular review and observation based on the plan in every quarter of the year.

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