Issues Concerning In-Service Training Program of Teachers in Cambodia: Perspective and Option

Chankea Phin
Graduate School of Comprehensive Human Sciences,
University of Tsukuba,
1-1-1 TennodaiTsukuba, Ibaraki,
305-8572 Japan,
phinchankea@gmail.com

Shinji Kubota, Professor
Faculty of Human Sciences
University of Tsukuba,
1-1-1 Tennodai, Tsukuba, Ibaraki
305-8572 Japan,
skubota@human.tsukuba.ac.jp

Abstract: *Quality teacher contributes to improving quality education and children's learning. To this mean, various countries keep searching for flexible ways of their own contexts in providing opportunities to teachers for their professional development through in-service training programs. This paper showed that in-service training for teachers in Cambodia has not been systematized and has been provided to teachers not regularly. Then, it presented the 'desired' and the 'not-desired' in-service training programs raised by primary school teachers, based on results of a questionnaire survey. It revealed that they desired to have trainings that can contribute to their teaching and learning, such as interesting teaching methods, techniques of producing teaching materials. However, they desired not to have trainings about modern technologies because they do not have those modern materials to utilize. Finally, the paper raised four components to investigate: appropriate structure, influential policies, actionable procedures, and sustainable practice of the in-service training programs.*

Keywords: Cambodia, In-Service Teacher Training, Quality of Education, Teacher Quality

Introduction

Accomplishing the education for all (EFA) goals and the millennium development goals (MDGs) so as to achieve universal primary education (UPE) has committed by international community since the 1990s. However, there remain approximately 57 million of out-of-school children (EFA GMR, Apr 2014). Children need to learn the basics at early grades, otherwise they will be unable to acquire necessary knowledge and skills in their later grades. Moreover, they will be incompetent to find a job or contribute their life to their family, their nations or any parts of the world. Ensuring that children can come to learn at school is an important task, yet providing them quality education is another effort. No one can deny that quality teacher contributes to achieving children's learning outcome and to raising the quality education system as a whole. The fragile of dealing with the acute shortage of qualified well-trained teachers is one among the most severe constraints to achieving the EFA goals and the MDGs. It noticed that the countries that emphasize on raising teacher quality and teacher status achieved a higher level in PISA 2012 results of their students (OECD, 2013; EI, 2013)

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Like other countries, Cambodia, an agricultural Southeast Asian country of about fourteen million populations, has committed to reconstruct and develop the country and intended to integrate her growth regionally and internationally through Cambodia millennium development goals (CMDGs). The government of Cambodia has focused on her human resources that were lost greatly during the turmoil during the 1970s. Such this, to contribute the

development, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) has concerned regarding the capacity of its educational personnel such as their academic background and pedagogical training experience. Furthermore, the MoEYS indicates irregularity of in-service teacher training for their sustainable professional development (MoEYS, 2014b). No country can be developed unless their populations are not well-educated. Therefore, quality schools and teachers are required to deliver quality education. In other word, quality of education requires quality teachers at its centre as an indispensable pillar.

Providing opportunities to teachers for their professional development to ensure quality of all learning activities and learning environments is likely a challenge that all countries, regardless of the level of their development, have kept on focusing. To this mean, unlike existing studies and official reports and documents; for example: Berkvens, 2009; Courtney, 2007; and Tan and Ng, 2012, which have investigated teacher education in Cambodia, but those have missed to clarify the concerns regarding in-service training for Cambodian teachers as indicated in this paper, in terms of survey participants, methods of the survey, and the contents of the survey -whose results are anticipated to be substantially useful for future teacher policy settings.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to examine issues concerning in-service training program of teachers in Cambodia, where experienced civil war during the 1970s and the budget are tight. Nonetheless, in-service training for teachers is indispensable for their professional development opportunity. To this extent, one hypothesis emerged in this study, namely: what kinds of in-service training programs do Cambodian teachers find appropriate? To clarify, more specifically, two objectives are designed: (1) to address teachers' perspectives regarding: (a) the "desired" in-service training programs and (b) the "not-desired" in-service training programs, and (2) to further discuss implications and options for policy makers for future efficient, effective, applicable in-service training programs within Cambodia's national educational context.

Materials and Methods

The survey instrument was author's self development questionnaire which was designed based on related literature and official documents which were originally written in English, Japanese, and Khmer language. Such this, the author decided to organize it in English, and then translated to Khmer language in order for distributing to respondents. This survey was conducted in August 2012 targeted to a line of educational personnel, from local school teachers to central level officials, in Cambodia. 230 copies were distributed and a total of 173 respondents' copies were collected, resulting in a response rate of 75.22% (see Table 1).

Table 1: Number of Respondents by Entity (N= 173)

Respondents by entity	No	Respondents by entity	No
Nursery school teacher	1	District education official	52
Primary school teacher	48	Provincial education official	20
Lower secondary teacher	6	Central official	11
Upper secondary teacher	7	Researcher	1
University instructor	6	Others (Unknown)	3

Among these, 9 copies were distributed to and collected from some educational staff who came from different provinces of Cambodia to stay at teacher's guesthouse in Phnom Penh for a short period for work. All the respondents and responses are kept anonymous and confidential. However, the author notices that the majority of respondents experienced working for any level of school education. In this paper, the author extracts only one section from the whole questionnaire: Suggestion for In-Service Teacher Training Program. This section contributes to the two parts that reply to the two objectives as stated earlier and is the main focus in this paper, but not absolutely because some small related parts of the other sections are also utilized at where necessary.

The section below first provides an overview on the in-service teacher training of Cambodia and then presents the empirical results of the study.

Overview on In-service Teacher Training of Cambodia

Education has played an important role in Cambodian society in maintaining social structure and forming social values. In the past decades, the priest of Buddhism had a role as the teacher to preach Cambodian citizens about social norms. Teacher had been respected by people surrounding and of high status in Cambodian society. However, it is shown that approximately 80 per cent of Cambodian elite, no exception for teacher or monks, were killed during the civil war in the 1970s due to political, ideological control (Phin, 2013; Yabe, 2009).. When the peace came to Cambodia in the 1980s, it is noticed that Cambodia was facing the lack of competent human resources, especially competent teachers to rehabilitate their role in educating children and in developing Cambodian society as a whole.

Up to the present, teacher competence and teacher quality have been focused by researchers, policy makers of the Cambodian government, and relevant development partners with the MoEYS of Cambodia. Through concerned study, it is shown that Cambodian teachers today realize and indicate explicitly that competent teachers do help contribute to students' learning achievement and to elevate the level of education quality (Phin, 2014a), which is the significant role that exists Cambodian society over the centuries. Moreover, they recognize the importance of in-service training program because it helps teachers to upgrade their capacity, their professional skills, the teaching methods, and to get confident in the profession as it can bring people's respect and trust (Phin, 2014a).

Yet, the in-service training for teachers has not been systematized and has been provided to teachers irregularly. It happens just once in a while (Phin, 2014b), perhaps only when there is a fund from donor countries or probably because of the weakness in Cambodia's education administration itself. In order to contribute to Cambodia's future human and social development, teachers require being well-trained. Educational development faces severe challenges due to acute shortage of qualified teachers. The MoEYS addresses some concerns regarding teachers having no experience in pedagogical training, low academic background such as primary school graduates or even not finished primary level. Few educational officials are PhD holders (MoEYS, 2012). According to the information of the International Reading Association

(2008:31) on "Status of Teacher Education in the Asia-Pacific Region," the continuous in-service program in Cambodia is conducted to the targeted group of the current teaching service, particularly teachers of basic education levels. It further shows that the management training program is to focus on school directors and intend to extend to education managers at all levels. This information tells insufficiency in providing the training programs to all teachers within the country. Realizing the significance of the in-service training program for Cambodian teachers, the authors sought to reveal the characteristics of in-service training programs delivered to Cambodian teachers, as results of a section of the questionnaire survey presented in Phin, 2014b. The article investigated seven crucial headings: (a) the training topics delivered to Cambodian teachers within the past three years, (b) the place of receiving the training program, (c) the duration of each training program, (d) the allowance teachers received, (e) the supporters of each training program, (f) the respondents' perceptions regarding the level of usefulness of each training program, and (g) the respondents' awareness whether or not in-service teacher training program is significant for their professional development.

Hence, the current paper intends to continue to examine the 'desired' and the 'not-desired' in-service training programs raised by respondents in another section of the questionnaires, anticipating to clarify the training needs of teachers that are substantially useful for future teacher policy making in setting the applicable in-service teacher training programs. The empirical results of the study can be presented in below section.

Results and Discussions

The present study has separated the 173 respondents by their entities as shown in Table 1. In this section of the questionnaire presented in this paper, the authors have examined the results based on their entities. 206 desired training topics were raised by the respondents: 51 topics raised by primary school teachers, 3 topics by lower secondary school teachers, 5 topics by upper secondary school teachers, 4 topics by university lecturers, 62 topics by district education officials, 26 topics by provincial education officials, 20 topics by central officials, 30 topics by teacher trainers of the TTCs, and 3 topics by the unique researcher. The authors had encouraged the respondents to provide the reasons why they desired those training topics. As a result, besides the 12 topics which were indicated without reasons, the survey obtained 194 reasons presenting the grounds of the respondents' decision. As such, in this paper, the authors present and discuss the case of primary school teachers only; these are presented in Tables 2 and 3 below as (a) the 'desired' in-service training programs and (b) the 'not-desired' in-service training programs respectively. The rest of the results of other respondents will be presented in a future paper.

(a) The "desired" in-service training programs

In this section of the questionnaire, 42 out of the total 48 primary school teachers have filled in resulting in 51 desired training programs indicating with the reasons why they desired. The authors notice that the primary school teachers need more training programs about teaching technique or teaching method, following by technique of producing teaching materials. Moreover, they wished to learn about teacher's role, teacher standard, and quality of education as well. The authors sum up the repeated topics and combined them as presented in Table 2.

Looking through the reasons they provided, we notice that the primary school teachers of Cambodia have attempts to get involved in their teaching profession who want to work

responsively for the sake of contributing not only to the quality of their teaching career, to their students' learning achievement, but also to improving the quality of the whole education system. As Cambodia is an agricultural country, it is shown that primary school teachers want to be trained on agriculture for obtaining more obvious knowledge and skills for sharing to their students and perhaps for sharing also to their neighbored populations to contribute to their daily livings.

(b) The "not-desired" in-service training programs

Like previous section, the authors encouraged respondents to provide the 'not-desired' in-service training programs and encouraged them to indicate why they do not desire. As results, for the case of primary school teachers, we obtained 14 not-desired training topics following with the reasons. We noticed that some topics were similar or almost the same with other respondents within this primary school entity. After summing up the repeated topics, the results can be combined as presented in Table 3.

We have wondered why they do not desire to have these training topics. For the case of primary school teachers, they do not need training programs that are less useful in their career. Table 3 presents challenges in in-service training programs for primary school teachers; which are because of the limited resources in education such as electricity and other necessary educational materials, boring poorly-organized trainings or probably because of the limited competence of teachers themselves to understand the training.

Table 2: The 'desired' training programs raised by primary school teachers

The 'desired' training programs	Reasons
Role/duty of teacher	To work responsively.
Teacher standard	For teachers to do activity efficiently and get good results.
Teaching technique or Teaching method	To fill more methods to teach better for easier understanding; To teach more effectively and qualitatively; To use in teaching/learning to develop knowledge to students more successfully, etc.
Technique of producing teaching materials	To bring it to use when teaching; To have enough teaching materials; To get to know about how to produce and how to use; and to make teaching and learning joyful, etc.
How to help late learning students	To encourage them want to study and try to study.
Teaching techniques used for new curriculum	To develop teacher capacity; To improve teacher's professional skills and improve the quality of Cambodian education as a whole.
New technique on how to manage classroom	For using effectively during teaching students.
Management	To strengthen effective management in classroom and school.
Child rights	To get to know about children and help them to avoid punishments.

Developmental technique	To implement at each grade and to help the growth of kids.
Technical meeting and workshop	To organize syllabus because core guidebook has changed so often
Technical knowledge	To mainstream and teach it to students confidently.
Methods of how to control step of teaching of short lesson	To manage how to implement accurately as scheduled
Agriculture	To allow students to learn how to plant and look after the crops
Information Technology (IT)	For self-development and work in the changing world.
Build workshop at school	For students to get involved in carpentry and carving, etc.
Improving environment	Because good environment makes students want to study happily.
Quality of education	Students deserve to acquire quality knowledge, good morality, good communication, and necessary skills for their future.

Having seen some issues in in-service training programs of teachers in Cambodia, efficient policy options for effective solutions are the focus for discussion. Dilemma in in-service teacher training program relates with the sustainability of implementations in order to provide more opportunities to teachers for their continuous professional development. Cambodia has addressed its hardship due to the shortage of budget in education and insufficient necessary materials to education or out-of-date sources (Dunnet, 1993). Simultaneously, she intends to integrate herself with neighboring nations or regional nations, and global nations. In the recent published official documents of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), there raised achievements in education sector, while many challenges have also been addressed to call for supports and financial aids (MoEYS, 2014b and 2014c). More specifically, in-service teacher training for Cambodian teachers has not been systematized, as presented in MoEYS 2010 and 2013 and as clarified in Phin 2014b. Cambodia attempts to improve the quality of education with other ASEAN countries, lifting the level of the development in response to the ASEAN community standard (SEAMEO, 2008, 2010 and 2013).

Table 3: The 'not-desired' training programs raised by primary school teachers

The 'not-desired' training programs	Reason
Techniques of different majors	Because it is difficult to understand or distribute to somebody.
Repeated training topics	Teacher gets bored with the same topics in several training programs.
Using slide	Unable to use due to no electricity connected at our school.
Usage of question collection	Teacher can make it already.
Unimportant topics	It wastes the time.
Topics that not used in education	It does not contribute to students' learning achievements and it may cause the quality of education weaker and weaker.

Techniques of advanced countries	Because we do not have tools to use at our school.
Producing teaching materials	Difficult to produce because of shortage of materials

However, although Cambodian teachers are willing to take part in upgrading their capacity, in contributing the students' learning achievements, and in elevating the quality of education; Cambodian teachers are overcoming with the irregular in-service training where the budget are tight for making it happen and where the training topics seem irrelevant to what they want or what they can do or seem far from Cambodia's context, as results presented by primary school teachers in the survey of the present paper. Providing regular in-service training for teacher professional development is a significant task that all countries, regardless of the stage of development, cannot put it away from focusing (OECD, 1998 & UNESCO; 1998 and 2006). Integrating ICT into teacher education has been introduced to Cambodia, as seen in the results of the 'not-desired' training raised by primary school teachers in this paper, while Cambodia teachers are unable to use it at their school due to their limited capacity in ICT literacy and due to the shortage of the modern tools at their workplace. Somehow, it is noticeable that this integration of ICT has been introduced to many countries in the world for the wake of technology in the 21st century (UNESCO, 2013). Doubtfully, developing countries like Cambodia and other developing countries face severe challenges to reach the point where developed countries have already done today, for example: in terms of acute shortage of competent teachers to educate their children to become skilful workers for the generation to come. Thus, finding the appropriate option of solution for coping up with the issues in in-service training program for teachers in Cambodia may be addressed accordingly. The present paper has revealed that Cambodian primary school teachers firmly recognize the importance of their teaching and intend strongly to have opportunities to participate in more in-service training programs. All above, the actionable option is to make a clear plan in clearer education goals within Cambodia's educational background and context, supporting from responsible policy makes or administrative educational officials and from relevant donor countries regarding the effective use of their experts and budget; otherwise in-service training program cannot be implemented sustainably or effectively.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present paper described issues concerning in-service training program of teachers in Cambodia, where experienced civil war during the 1970s that destroyed the tremendous amount of its elite populations and educational infrastructure, and where the budget are still tight for the development. The paper presented the challenges of Cambodian teachers who have no experience in any pedagogical training, while some teachers are primary school graduates or even not finished primary school; although few educational officials are PhD holders. On the other hand, in-service teacher training itself is not systematized and has been provided to teachers not regularly. Cambodian teachers realized the importance of teacher competence in contributing to students' learning achievement, to raise the level of quality education, and to contribute to human and social development. They indicated the significance of regular in-service teacher training for their continuous professional development in the changing world. This paper presented the 'desired' and the 'not-desired' in-service training programs raised by primary school teachers, as the results of a section of the questionnaire survey. For the case of primary school teachers, they desired to have trainings that can contribute to their teaching and learning, such as about interesting teaching methods, techniques of producing teaching materials,

management, and so on for the sake of improving the quality of teaching and learning as well as for the advancement of education sector and society development as a whole. However, they desired not to have trainings about modern technologies, techniques used in advanced countries, and so on because they do not have those modern materials at their schools and so do the modern techniques which are seemingly not applicable in their school conditions where there is no electricity connected, etc.

Thus, providing regular in-service training to teachers is an urgent task, while making it appropriate and applicable for Cambodian school context and conditions is another crucial work. Having seen the results presented in the present paper, policy makers of the Cambodian government as well as development partners will find them useful for future applicable in-service training for Cambodian teachers. At the time of making policy, policy makers and development partners are usually affected by globalization. However, each country can participate in only its own context, while sometimes it can integrate itself with regional and global context. As for the case of Ontario, Canada, the teacher professional development has emerged and influenced by its policy. It has also been seemingly urged by the pressure of the regulated and prescribed curriculum (Hardy, 2012). Pressure of adopting advanced methods of developed countries into developing countries is unlikely to get acceptable results. Nonetheless, efforts to improve teacher's professional development can be made by teachers themselves, by sharing with their colleagues within the school, and also by involving in activities out of school (Kubota, 2013). In addition to enacting compulsory in-service training, helpful support to build up creative environments for learning and teacher professional development is preferred.

All above, through the results and discussions presented in this paper, it is recommended to make clear aims in education as well as in in-service training programs for teachers. For future efficient and effective plan, in accordance with the availability of human and material resources and context, it is encouraged to conduct a critical investigation regarding: (i) appropriate structure, (ii) influential policies, (iii) actionable procedures, and (iv) sustainable practice of the in-service training programs. The four components shall happen if teachers themselves discuss with their colleagues within the school to find applicable programs, without interventions from outsiders. Likewise, relevant administrative authorities and education officials have a responsibility to support and participate accordingly to help schools and teachers work more smoothly. However, developing countries cannot move faster without aids and support from development partners or donor countries. They are, thus, appreciated providing funds and supports to the right places of demanding in order for the quality investment in education.

Note: The present paper described only the case of primary school teachers in Cambodia. For future study, there needs to examine the rest of results raised by other respondents' entity and another dataset obtained from the survey conducted in Nov-Dec 2013 with 189 primary school teachers by using the same questionnaires. Moreover, the future examinations need to address respondents' demographic background for critical analysis.

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