

Integrating Anti-Corruption into School Curricula (Cambodia)

Summary

The Transparency Task Force (TTF)¹ a working group consisting of staff of the Center for Social Development and the Ministry of Education, aims at strengthening the moral values of school students through integrating accountability and good governance concepts into school curriculum. To this end, teacher guide books for subjects including Khmer language, civic education, home economics and history, from grades one to twelve, have been developed, and teachers have been trained in using them. So far, 6,000 teachers have been trained in 19 provinces and cities in Cambodia between 1999 and 2002.

This project has been implemented over a large scale, reaching out through a systematic training process. It illustrates a flexible and creative approach to developing ethical education tools to compliment existing teaching materials.

Background

Corruption in Cambodia can be traced back to the patronage networks which characterised the reigns of the great kings of the Angkorean era in the 12th century. Regimes of the intervening period have been more or less corrupt; however, Cambodia's current reputation for rampant graft cannot be avoided. As the former centralised economy collapsed after the Paris peace accord in 1991, a free market has emerged into a virtual vacuum of legislation, coupled with poor enforcement of laws, where they exist, producing conditions ripe for corruption to flourish in.

The costs of corruption in Cambodia are estimated to be massive. For example, while annual legal income from Cambodian forests is estimated at US\$13.5 million, an additional US\$100 million is lost to corrupt practices, according to the Minister of Economy and Finance. Donors and other members of the international community are showing increasing impatience as corruption continues to divert development funds from basic social services such as health and education.

1 The TTF is a joint effort by the Center for Social Development (CSD), a Phnom Penh based advocacy NGO, and the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS), including its Department of Pedagogy. Funding is provided from the Asia Foundation, the DanChurchAid, Diakonia, British Embassy, Australian Embassy, SEAFILD, and CIDA.



CSD poster

To collect baseline data for future counter-corruption legislation and education, the Center for Social Development (CSD) conducted the first-ever scientific survey in 1998 on attitudes towards corruption in Cambodia. 84% of Cambodians surveyed were found to think that bribery is the normal way of life. Despite this perception, they also widely believed that bribery hindered national development, and there was an almost universal agreement (98%) that combating corruption was important. These findings indicate public support for campaigns to clean up politics and public administration.

When findings were examined according to age, it was found that young people believed corruption to be less widespread and less damaging than older generations,

but were also more accepting of demands for bribes and vote-buying than all other age ranges. Given these findings, CSD concluded that the attitudes of young people should be altered, and that an education campaign was necessary. Ideally, counter-corruption teaching needed to be included into regular curricula at both primary and secondary school level.

The project

CSD knew that such changes would require a revision of the curriculum and a wide-scale implementation programme, both of which could not take place without co-operation from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS).

CSD set out to lobby the Ministry. It was an advantage that a precedent had been set by the introduction of a human rights curriculum in the previous years: the curriculum of a new subject Civic Education had been developed with significant input of human rights NGOs. In addition, the Ministry showed political will to address corruption and related issues via the curriculum. Thus,

in 1999, the TTF was founded with the aim of finding ways to integrate concepts of accountability and transparency into the curriculum.

Developing a teacher guide book

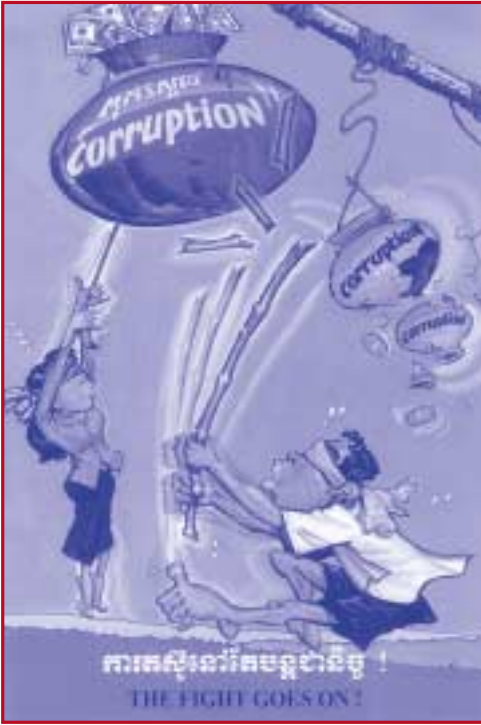
New teacher and student textbooks had been published shortly before the TTF was formed, which meant that a complete revision of books was not an option. Instead, the group sought ways to integrate the topic of accountability without revising the existing teacher and student textbooks. After discussion, the TTF decided to identify lessons and pictures in the current books that are related to transparency, accountability and good governance, and to develop a supplementary teachers' guide book for each grade that would help teachers to add integrity and accountability topics to their teaching, using the existing textbooks.

Primary level

TTF identified the subjects Khmer language, civic education and home economics as suitable for anti-corruption teaching. At primary level, stories and illustrations addressing values and friction between personal ambitions and the needs of the community were identified as relevant. When teaching lessons and discussing the illustrations, the TTF suggested the damaging effects



A classroom session



of greed, egoism and other behaviour at the expense of other children should be highlighted by the teacher, and honest behaviour should be encouraged.

Secondary level

At secondary level, integrity issues can be addressed more directly. For example, a 9th grade text of home economics deals with family income generation. The TTF recommended that the following question be added to the existing questions in the student textbook: “Where does the income of your family come from?” and puts the following possible answers to them: “From honest work? From fraud of public or State assets? From exploitation

of other people? From the abuse of power for private gain?” The students are then asked to discuss these concepts.

A grade 12 Khmer language textbook has a theatre play entitled *Bad Rich Man* that deals with social injustice caused by the corrupt practice of a passenger truck owner who bribes a police officer to be freed from criminal sanction. Here, the TTF suggested the following question be added to the existing question in the student textbook: “Why does corruption breed social injustice? Explain this fact based on the content of the scene.” Again, students are encouraged to discuss corruption and its effect on society.

Training teachers

Following the identification of linkages between existing curricula and concepts of accountability and good governance, TTF conducted a pilot test at both primary and secondary levels in rural and urban locations (in Phnom Penh city, Kandal and Takeo provinces) at the end of 1999. The tests showed that teachers were able to integrate accountability issues into their teaching, and that they welcomed the inclusion of these topics into the curriculum. In

addition, students' knowledge and awareness on the importance of good governance increased.

From 2000 to 2002, teacher training took place under a three-stage programme, known as the Textbook Orientation Program (TOP). Stage one of the TOP involved training 25 senior education officials. From these officials a core set of trainers were selected who then conducted training under stage two of TOP.

Stage two can be characterised as a series of Training-of-Trainers workshops. Selected teachers attended three day workshops held at provincial level and conducted by officials trained under stage one. Trainers were chosen to represent various school districts – these trainers were then responsible for training classroom teachers under stage three. 19 workshops have been held in 19 provinces and cities of Cambodia, and a total of 6,000 teachers have been trained to conduct workshops for their colleagues. Unfortunately, lack of funds led to a temporary halt of the programme. Stage three is now likely to be implemented by MoEYS' regular teacher training programme after the publication of revised teacher guide books.

Training process

For each stage of training, the TTF working group conducted the same process as followed:

1. Division of participants into groups (four – five trainees per group)
2. Familiarisation of participants with the new teacher guide books
3. Identification of relevant lessons in the teacher and student textbooks, and creation of tabulation for matching the integrated concepts to the textbooks' lessons or pictures
4. Discussion on methodology: How to integrate additional questions and answers into classroom teaching
5. Preparation of two classroom sessions – one without and another one with integrated accountability concepts
6. Selection of one trainee to conduct the class demonstration based on methodology and teaching material
7. Evaluation and discussion of class demonstration.

Mainstreaming of TTF materials into regular curriculum

In 2003, MoEYS set out to revise all teacher books from grade one to grade twelve. The new books will be published in the next year, and will make the current teacher guide book superfluous. Again, TTF contributed to the content development of the new books, and supported direct mainstreaming of accountability issues in Khmer language, civic education and home economics subjects. Throughout primary and secondary school, accountability/ transparency will be addressed 334 times in the curriculum.

The publication of the new teacher textbooks will be followed by teacher training (TOP) for each subject, to be carried out by MoEYS. The trainers trained by TTF will be involved in TOPs.

It is expected that the publication of new teacher textbooks and implementation of TOP for each subject, will enable more than two million school students to learn about transparency, accountability and good governance every year. It will be important to monitor and evaluate the new methodology and its impact on the awareness of school students in the future.

Results and recommendations

In each stage of training, the trainees were asked to fill out a survey to measure their awareness and their feelings about the importance of accountability and good governance and about their integration into school curriculum.

Positive feedback suggests that respondents feel that this project is vital for youth education. Teaching accountability lays the basis for long-term sustainable development of the nation. Instilling values in Cambodian youth that will promote a clean and open society for the future is seen as an attempt to break the cycle of corruption. Through classroom teaching, youth are encouraged to discuss the issues of accountability and corruption with their family or relatives, and respondents expect to see, over time, a change of attitudes.

However, respondents also see anti-corruption education as a long term process. It takes a long time to educate people who have suffered both physically and mentally from more than 20 years of war. Changes in people's attitude and behaviour will not take place immediately, and the impact of anti-corruption education will only be felt over a longer term.

In addition, some respondents doubted the success of the programme given the current level of teacher salaries are below the poverty line (US\$ 16-22 per month). Low wages of teachers as well as other State servants, a secretive administration and the lack of free information is seen by many as the main obstacle to promoting transparency and combating corruption in Cambodia.

We hope other civil society organisations, especially TI National Chapters, will undertake activities of this kind in their own country, to create a worldwide network to fight corruption and promote transparency through education.

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