The Integration an Online Learning Environment in a Cambodian Academic Program

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MOOCs to enhance teaching and learning in Asia-Pacific
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Introduction

• Country overview: sociocultural and education context
• The case of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP)
• Enabling factors and constraints of technology integration
• Implications for MOOCs
Country Overview

ICT in education policies

- The 1st policy was formulated in 2004 (MoEYS, 2004) followed by the 2010 Master plan for ICT in education (MoEYS, 2010)

ICT in the social landscape

- Internet users: 25% of the total population\(^1\); 414% growth\(^2\)
- Social media users: 16% of the total population\(^1\); 100% growth\(^2\)

Schools/Universities

- Limited ICT infrastructure
- Limited understanding of ICT use for academic purposes

* The disconnection between policies, social landscape, and universities*

\(^1\) As of Mar 2015 (Kemp, 2015)
\(^2\) Jan 2014 – Mar 2015 (Kemp, 2015)
Sociocultural Context

Tradition
- Strong social hierarchy
- One-way participation
- Collectivist culture

Modernity
- Web evolution and the influx of the internet
- Globalization

Cultural hybridization and the struggle to find a middle ground between tradition and modernity
Education Context

• Teacher-centred approach: How the Cambodian sociocultural context influence the teaching practices of Cambodian teachers

• Some key issues of Cambodian higher education:
  – Rapid expansion: quality vs. quantity
  – Limited educational, technological, and human resources
  – Heavy teaching loads
The Case of RUPP

• A case example of an online learning environment integration in the MA in TESOL program of the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP)
Needs and Context Analysis

• The local context:
  – ICT infrastructure and internet access
  – Participants’ ICT proficiency and experience

• Needs analysis
  1. File storage and management
  2. Social networking and communication
  3. Extending and supporting classroom learning
• Students’ internet access

“Most MA students are not rich. Most of the time they support their learning by themselves. They work and then they earn and pay the school fees by themselves. When we ask them to log in to the webpage, they need to use the internet, so they have to pay certain amount of money. A few dollars might not be a problem for us, but it is for them because the school doesn’t provide free internet access for them.”

• Lecturers had heavy teaching loads, and some frequently held other part-time jobs to supplement their teaching income.

-> limited time devoted to the design of their class instructions
Constraint: The complexity of sharing practices

• In a collectivist society the practice of sharing is strongly encouraged, but the strong social hierarchy also dictates who have the authority to share.
  -> One-way sharing process from lecturers to students

• High expectation and trust placed on the lecturers as the knowledge holders and distributors.

“The reverse process where students play the role as the distributors is hard”
Enabler: Social uses of technology

• Students’ perceptions of the usefulness of sharing practices and online learning were largely drawn from their regular engagement with online social networking such as Facebook

• Students compared and contrasted their experience in online learning with Facebook

• Why did lecturers and students use Facebook as a reference point?
Enabler: Emerging understanding through engagement

- The adaptation “of” and “to” the online learning environment
- The shift of individual perceptions

“The site shouldn’t be improved, but the human should. The participation of our lecturers and students is very important. It is the mechanic force. Even if we have a good site, but people don’t use it then there’s no use at all.”
The integration of an online learning environment in a Cambodian academic program
What can be learned from the study?

- The complexity of ICT implementation spans beyond infrastructure and accessibility.
- ICT integration in the Cambodian higher education context:
  - Is interrelated to the stakeholders’ online social practices outside of education settings and their perceptions of technology.
  - Is not culturally neutral and need to consider the tension between conventional and emerging teaching and learning practices.
Implications for MOOCs

• The importance of local support (lecturers/teachers, facilitators, or tutors) in helping learners connect new and prior knowledge
• Consideration of practicality and contextual constraints (time affordance, etc.) and human-related factors in addition to technology-related factors
• Developing online sharing practices and community of learners
References


