Summary of Philosophy Teaching in Cambodia

Philosophy in the National goals of Education
The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports’ main goal in education is “to develop an inclusive, easily accessible and high quality service, which is available to all, independent of wealth, gender, ethnicity and mental and physical attitude.” Philosophy related goals in schools in Cambodia are to develop in students a spirit of

- self-confidence
- self-reliance
- responsibility
- solidarity
- national unity and patriotism
- respecting the law and human rights

They are furthermore expected to educate children to

- become good citizens
- to live together peacefully
- to develop a responsibility towards their family’s happiness and contribute to social welfare

The aims of the curriculum elaborate on these goals and state that when students leave schools they should:

- Have the capacity to manage and take responsibility for their own actions and decisions and be self-reliant
- Have the capacity to exercise judgment and responsibility in matters of morality and a commitment to identifying, analyzing and working towards solutions of problems experienced by their families and society
- Have an understanding and appreciation of other people and other cultures, civilizations and histories that leads to the building of a public spirit characterized by equality and respect for others’ rights
- Be active citizens and be aware of social changes, understanding Cambodia’s system of government and rule of law, and demonstrating a spirit of national pride and love of their nation, religion and king

---

1 http://www.prb.org/Countries/Cambodia.aspx
2 The GER is used in the education sector and by the UN. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics the definition of the GER is the “total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year.” Its purpose is “to show the general level of participation in a given level of education. It indicates the capacity of the education system to enrol students of a particular age group. It can also be a complementary indicator to net enrolment rate (NER) by indicating the extent of over-aged and under-aged enrolment.” It is calculated by dividing “the number of pupils (or students) enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age by the population of the age group which officially corresponds to the given level of education, and multiply the result by 100.”
4 Ibid.
5 http://www.ibe.unesco.org/
6 Ibid.

This draft country briefing was prepared for comment by RUSHAP, UNESCO Bangkok. Comments are welcome to rushap.bgk@unesco.org
- Have an appreciation of and be able to protect and preserve their natural, social and cultural environment

**Primary education**

In Cambodia, basic education is the combination of primary education and lower secondary education. From a philosophical perspective, grades 1-3 are supposed to develop moral understanding, learning skills and life skills. Grades 4-6 further develop learning skills, life skills, moral development and personal development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khmer language</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and geography</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral-civics</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special activities (improve students’ life skills and personalities)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The school year consists of 38 weeks*

**Assessment**

From grade 4 learning is assessed through teacher-made and marked tests.

**Case studies of philosophy teaching in primary schools: Identified courses called “philosophy” in primary schools**

Not available at this moment.

**Case studies of philosophy teaching in primary schools: Philosophy related teaching in primary schools**

Furthermore, the NGO Schools for Children of Cambodia has launched training programmes for teachers and directors in rural Siem Reap. According to the general manager of the NGO, Andrea Messmer, “the teachers and directors attended two weekend sessions in February and March, where they were taught in [...] a more participatory, engaged style of pedagogy that attempts to stimulate discussion among students.”

---

8 Ton Sa Im. *Curricula for national basic education in Cambodia (1994-2001) and proposals for advancing to present curriculum design framework.* (Draft situation analysis produced as part of the project IBE-UNESCO Bangkok ‘Basic education in South East Asia’). Paper discussed at the sub-regional workshop ‘Building capacities of curriculum specialists for educational reform’. Vientiane, Lao PDR, 9-13 September, 2002.
The Challenges of Teaching Philosophy in Cambodia

1. Difficulties in teaching philosophy
   a. Lack of teaching materials
   b. Language barrier
   c. Difficulties raising issues relevant to politics, culture and history
   d. Difficulties for those who teach philosophy but don’t do philosophy

2. Obstacles to the practices of philosophy
   a. Majoring in philosophy does not guarantee a job after college
   b. Some people don’t attach any value to and have prejudice towards philosophy because they don’t really understand clearly what philosophy is. It is also the result of the long civil war during which the communist ideology was used as the crucial philosophy at that time.
   c. The nature of philosophy is controversial and abstract

To solve these problems philosophy should be taught in a very simple way and needs to include both theories and practices.

Chanroen, Pa
Doing and Teaching Philosophy in the Cambodian Context
Presentation on World Philosophy Day 15-18 November 2006, Rabat, Morocco

Secondary education

Lower secondary education (year 7, 8 and 9) develops
- freedom of thought and expression
- attitudes of tolerance
- their talents
- individual qualities
- creativity
- social ethics and skills for the benefit of a harmonious society

Upper secondary schools aim to
- advance their knowledge of Khmer knowledge
- give students deep knowledge of the national identity
- give students a more complex understanding of morality and civic responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly time allocation per grade in minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral-civics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic education (drawing, music, songs, dances and plays)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special activities (improve students’ life skills and personalities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The school year consists of 38 weeks

---

10 Ibid.
Assessment
Learning is assessed through “provincially set and managed Grade IX examinations, followed by a national Grade XII examination, organised through the Examinations Office.\textsuperscript{11}

Case studies of philosophy teaching in secondary schools: Identified courses called “philosophy” in schools
Not available at this moment.

Case studies of philosophy teaching in secondary schools: Philosophy related teaching in schools
Not available at this moment.

Identified programmes to provide teaching materials in philosophy
The Cambodian Centre for Applied Philosophy and Ethics produces and distributes books, tapes (audio and video), pamphlets, educational films and documentaries on philosophy and ethics.\textsuperscript{12}
Finally, Youth for Peace, a German based organisation has been working on programmes and organizational structures related to peace education in Cambodia since August 2000. Their programmes are based on the core values of:

- Youth
- Solidarity
- Strength, patience and morality
- Justice, freedom and democracy
- Gender equality
- Non-prejudice and openness\textsuperscript{13}

Links
\textsuperscript{11} http://www.ibe.unesco.org
\textsuperscript{12} http://www.camcape.org/
\textsuperscript{13} http://www.friedenspaedagogik.de/english/topics_of_the_institute_s_work/peace_education_projects/youth_for_peace_cambodia

Ton Sa Im. *Curricula for national basic education in Cambodia (1994-2001) and proposals for advancing to present curriculum design framework*. (Draft situation analysis produced as part of the project IBE-UNESCO Bangkok ‘Basic education in South East Asia’). Paper discussed at the sub-regional workshop ‘Building capacities of curriculum specialists for educational reform’. Vientiane, Lao PDR, 9-13 September, 2002.

http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/332.html
http://www.camcape.org/
http://www.friedenspaedagogik.de/english/topics_of_the_institute_s_work/peace_education_projects/youth_for_peace_cambodia
http://www.ibe.unesco.org
http://www.prb.org/Countries/Cambodia.aspx

**Acknowledgements**
This summary was prepared by Arthur Wolf, and comments on initial drafts were made by several experts.