



## **Concept Note & Summary of Discussions**

### **Virtual Policy Talk**

### **School-based Mentoring**

**Hosted by The Asia Foundation, Kampuchean Action to Promote Education (KAPE), and the New Generation Pedagogical Research Center (NGPRC)**

**18 August 2021 @10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. via Zoom**

#### **School-based mentoring**

Teacher education has been a keystone of educational reforms in Cambodia since the release of the Teacher Policy Action Plan in 2015. Along with other initiatives, such as the New Generation Schools (NGS), School-Based Management, the reform of Teacher Training Institutions is a long and complex, yet inspiring endeavor.

So far, school reforms have scored many successes, and, of course a few setbacks. But, as every educator knows, mistakes are learning opportunities, as long as there is someone who can ask the right questions and draw lessons from the experience. But can we systematize that learning process and transform our struggles into teachable moments?

That is what a mentoring program proposes to do. The Master’s Degree of Education in Mentoring of the New Generation Pedagogical Research Center is a good example, since it was created to address a recruitment crisis in the New Generation Schools. More fundamentally, feedback is the rationale for mentoring and distinguishes it from more conventional training methods, such as the cascading system of workshops that has been the dominant way to provide in-service training to Cambodian teachers.

Learning from mistakes also concerns the institutions themselves. How can we embed action research in their procedures in order to ensure a constant improvement of their syllabi and practices?

#### **Agenda (90 minutes)**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>
09:45-10:00	Zoom platform is open	
10:00-10:05	Opening by the moderator	Ms. Bopharath
10:05-10:15	Brief introduction of guest speakers by the moderator	Ms. Bopharath
10:15-11:00	Panel discussion	Mr. Stanislas Kowalski, Mentor, New Generation Pedagogical Research Center  Dr. Sun Somara, Training Coordinator, New Generation Pedagogical Research Center

		Dr. Daavid Väänänen, Technical Advisor and Lead Researcher, KAPE  Mr. Cheng Vichheka, Cambodian Association for Mentoring
11:00-11:25	Q&A	All participants
11:25-11:30	Closing	Remarks by Ms. Meloney C. Lindberg, Country Representative, The Asia Foundation

### **Summary of the Discussion**

- Mentoring approach is still new in Cambodia, there is potential for exploration and adaptation.
- Research is needed to improve the syllabus which can fulfill the possible needs of the mentors and mentees.

#### **The research findings:**

- The findings reveal the need for improvement of syllabus of New Generation Pedagogical Research Center (NGPRC). This includes removing some topics, specifically meta-analysis, recognizing important teaching methodology, and establishing new topics through creating the question bank.
- Another important finding is related to mentors and mentees pairing. The mentors and mentees should be matched based on several circumstances. For instance, it can be done by identifying the relevant subjects background of both mentors and mentees, gender preferences which both mentors and mentees are comfortable with, and other criterions made by the principals.
- Another main concern is related to the clear roles and responsibilities of the mentors. Mentors often find it challenging to cope up with the heavy workload delegated by the principals. Often, mentors are required too much time on the administrative tasks. Thus, it is necessary to have clarity of the roles and responsibilities that are acknowledged by both the principals and mentors.
- Lastly, finding showed the difficulty of ensuring confidentiality between mentors and mentees. Mentors do not have their own personal/private space and usually use the principals' office when providing the mentoring sessions to the mentees. Since it is critical to build trust and maintain confidentiality between mentors and mentees, it is recommended that mentors should have their own private space.

#### **Future research and interventions:**

- Consolidate the research under normal circumstances (Covid-19)
- Pilot the mentoring outside the New Generation School (NGS)
- Articulate (New Generation Pedagogical Research Center) NGPRC's practice in other areas

#### **Panel discussion:**

- How has the idea of mentoring been developed in the NGS context?
  - o There was a mentoring program in primary education and teachers were given feedback, yet there were some difficulties, such as quality schools and qualified teachers to ensure that the mentoring program effective. Plenty of workshops were

organized throughout the country, but they seemed to get poor result. Thus, mentoring approach essentially brings more effective results.

- How has COVID-19 impacted the training of educators?
  - o NGPRC has been well-prepared in terms of adapting to online teaching via Zoom platform. For example, during the last stage of the NGPRC requirement, students could not conduct the practicums at two different NGS because of increased number of COVID-19 cases, therefore they were required to conduct these online. Students were required to produce training videos to share their lessons, as well as to complete their teacher training requirements.
  - o NGPRC also provides mentoring to the teachers to tackle any challenges they face.
- Could you please share your experiences of participating in the mentoring program?
  - o All applicants went through three rounds of recruitment process. We need to work with NGPRC and the Ministry of Education. We teach 5-10 hours like other teachers and provide consultation to new teachers. We work actively during covid although we have faced some difficulties. Overall, we support new teachers mentally and technically, as well as helping KAPE to establish question bank.
- How has the research informed the implementation of mentoring program?
  - o Use the research to support the monitoring and evaluation aspect of NGPRC
  - o Use the research to support the training program of NGPRC
  - o Use the research to reorganize the topics, such as e-learning and blended learning for the training of NGPRC
  - o Use the research to provide appropriate environment, technicalities for mentors and mentees
- Can you elaborate more about Mentoring approach?
  - o Observation is the main approach of the mentoring program. The purpose is to help the teachers to reflect. Therefore, the mentors need to apply active listening. Mentors need to remain silent and let the teachers speak. Hence, the mentors can provide feedback. To make it effective, a small piece of advice is provided.
- Is this mentoring program applicable only for NGS? Is applicable to all schools across Cambodia?
  - o Any schools can apply mentoring approach. To do it effectively, proper trainings are needed. There are limited numbers of mentors at NGS. We aim to expand the mentoring program throughout the country. Interested schools can contact the center for further collaboration.
- What are the actions plan to have consensus with the MA candidates to reduce the workload? How can the one year program fulfil long term professions?
  - o One year is reasonably a good length of time to absorb the knowledge because no matter how much time people spend in school, they will still feel insufficient in acquiring new knowledge.