



# OVERVIEW OF CAMBODIA EDUCATION HISTORY

Cambodia's education system has transformed significantly since the early influences of the French colonization era to the current situation. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, education in Cambodia was mainly offered to boys through local Buddhist pagodas which focused on religious teaching. During 90 years of the French Colonization from 1853-1963, Cambodia's education system was influenced by the Western model. After achieving independence from France in 1953, Cambodia's king had the vision to rebuild the country by investing in education, 20% of the national budget was used for education. Unfortunately, all the efforts fell down because of the civil war. Tragically, during the Pol Pot regime, from 1975 - 1979, the overwhelming majority of teachers were killed, and all the public-school buildings were destroyed. Following the end of the war, the education system in Cambodia was rebuilt from almost nothing.

## Current Education System in Cambodia

Cambodia's education system is driven under the national government budget by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MoEYS). The structured framework of public education consists of several layers:

- **Preschool:** Not compulsory in Cambodia, but the government has motivated citizen to enroll their children to preschool since it is important for children well-being, preparing the for primary school, and reducing the levels of non-completion and repetition of grades. It provides children of the ages of 3-5. Core subjects are Psychomotricity, Pre-mate, Khmer Language, Science, and Social Studies.
- **Primary School (Grades 1-6):** The process begins with 6 years of primary education, emphasizing core subject like Khmer language, Mathematics, Science, Computer, Social Studies, Art Education, Physical Education and Sports, Health Education, Foreign Languages, and Local Life Skills.
- **Lower Secondary School (Grades 7-9):** Theses requires 3 years of education process, and the core subjects including Khmer Language, Foreign Languages, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, ICT, Physical Education and Sports, Arts Education, Health Education, and Local Life Skills.

- Upper Secondary School (Grades 10-12): The process is the same as Lower Secondary School, and the core subjects focus on Khmer Literature, Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Physical Education and Sports, Home Economics, Physics, Earth-Environmental Science, Chemistry, Biology, History, Geography, Moral-Civics, ICT, and Health Education.
- Tertiary Education: Higher Education is available to several universities or institutes like the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Institute of Technology of Cambodia, Royal University of Agriculture, Royal University of Fine Arts, Ecole Royale administration, Royal University of Law and Economics, Royal Academy of Cambodia, National University of Management, National University of Battambang, Svay Rieng University...

### **The Royal University of Phnom Penh**

The Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) is the oldest and largest university in Cambodia. It first opened on January 13, 1960, as the name of the Royal Khmer University. With the establishment of the Khmer Republic from 1970-1975, the name was changed to Phnom Penh University. In 1980, a year after the Khmer Rouge regime ended, the school was reopened and named Ecole Normale Supérieure, French was predominantly taught. The following year, another institute was opened, named Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), mainly training students to become Vietnamese and Russian Language teachers. To rebuild the education system in Cambodia, these two colleges had trained students to become teachers. In 1988, the Ecole Normale Supérieure merged with the IFL to establish Phnom Penh University. In 1996, the final name of the university was changed to the Royal University of Phnom Penh.

During the past decade, RUPP has continued to grow and now includes Faculty of Science, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Development, Faculty of Education, and Institute of Foreign Languages.

### **About the Faculty of Education, Royal University of Phnom Penh**

The Faculty of Education is the youngest in the Royal University of Phnom Penh. In 2006, before fully becoming the Faculty of Education, it was just the program of master's in education. By 2014, in order to



respond to the need to build human capital, it had transformed into the Faculty of Education which consists of 3 departments and a center until now, and they are Education Studies, Higher Education Management and Development, Lifelong Learning, and the Center of Training and Researching. Besides, giving service to students in related fields from bachelor's degrees to doctorate degrees, the Faculty of Education also plays an important role in taking part of providing in-service training to teachers, school principals, and other relevant educators. In 2017, after receiving permission and recommendation from H.E Dr. Chet Chealy, Rector of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Faculty of Education received permission and support to sign an agreement with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and the World Bank to implement a project called "Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP)". 100 secondary schools equaled 2,140 teachers and 448 school principals benefited from this project. Based on the successful and positive impact of this project, the Faculty of Education has continued to cooperate with MoEYS and World Bank on promoting and reforming education under the project called "General Education Improvement Project (GEIP)" or the project builds on Secondary Education Improvement Project for 4 years, 2022-2026. The new project covers promoting teachers and school principals' qualifications in 3 sub-sectors: Preschool, Primary School, and Secondary School. There are about 230,000 staff have benefited equal to 1,633 schools.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://rupp.edu.kh/content.php?page=about\\_rupp#intro](https://rupp.edu.kh/content.php?page=about_rupp#intro) <https://mettavoyage.com/exploring-the-rich-heritage-of-cambodian-culture/>

