



SECONDARY TEACHER WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT IN CAMBODIA

Om Chandara
Khieu Chetra
Seang Linda
Yoeng Kimheng
Long Sophanim
Moun Sotra
Srey Borin

ABOUT NORRAG

NORRAG is the Global Education Centre of the Geneva Graduate Institute and a global network of more than 5,800 members for international policies and cooperation in education and training. NORRAG is an offshoot of the Research, Review, and Advisory Group (RRAG) established in 1977 and at the time funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Swedish International Development Authority (Sida). It was charged with critically reviewing and disseminating education research related to the Global South. Since our move to Switzerland in 1992, NORRAG has been significantly supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, and, for a period, the Open Societies Foundation (OSF).

NORRAG's strength lies in addressing under-researched questions of quality and equity in key issues in education and development and in amplifying under-represented expertise, particularly from the South. NORRAG's core mandate is to co-produce, disseminate and broker critical knowledge and to strengthen capacity for and with the wide range of stakeholders who constitute our network. Our stakeholders from academia, governments, NGOs, international organisations, foundations and the private sector inform and shape education policies and practice at regional, national and international levels. Through our work, NORRAG contributes to creating the conditions for more participatory, evidence-informed decisions that improve equal access to and quality of education and training.

More information about NORRAG, including its scope of work and thematic priorities, is available at www.norrageducation.org.

Join the global NORRAG Network
www.norrageducation.org/norrage-network

Follow NORRAG on social media



ABOUT THE KIX EMAP HUB

The [Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange \(GPE KIX\)](#) is a joint endeavour with the [International Development Research Centre \(IDRC\)](#) to connect expertise, innovation, and knowledge to help GPE partner countries build stronger education systems and accelerate progress toward SDG 4. There are globally four KIX Hubs or Regional Learning Partners, overseen by IDRC. The Hub functions as a regional forum within KIX. NORRAG is the Regional Learning Partner for the KIX Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific (EMAP) Hub (previously known as the KIX EAP Hub).

The KIX EMAP Hub facilitates cross-country knowledge and innovation exchange and mobilisation, learning, synthesis, and collaboration among national education stakeholders in 38 GPE partner countries in the EMAP region. The Hub also offers opportunities for peer learning and exchange by means of professional development and inter-country visits.

 gpekix.org/regional-hub/kix-emap  norrageducation.org/kix-emap

 @KIXEMAP  @KIXEMAP  @KIXEMAP  @KIXEMAP

ABOUT UNESCO INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING (IIEP)

Established in 1963 within UNESCO, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) develops and strengthens the capacities of educational planners and managers through professional development programmes, technical cooperation, policy research, and knowledge sharing. IIEP's vision is rooted in the understanding that education is a basic human right and thus, its mission consists of contributing to the expansion of quality education, to provide equitable and relevant learning opportunities to all.

 iiep.unesco.org

ABOUT THE KIX EMAP LEARNING CYCLES

The KIX EMAP Learning Cycles are professional development courses offered to national education experts from 38 GPE partner countries in the Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific (EMAP) region. Teams of national experts analyse, contextualise, and produce new knowledge on policy analysis and innovations. These professional development courses allow participants to share experiences, exchange knowledge, and contribute to the strengthening of their national education systems. The Learning Cycles are also an opportunity for national experts to publish their studies and findings internationally, and disseminate them on diverse online platforms, with support from the KIX EMAP Hub.

ABOUT THE LEARNING CYCLE ON SECONDARY TEACHER WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

This case study is a result of the KIX EMAP Learning Cycle "Secondary Teacher Workforce Management". Facilitated by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), this Learning Cycle ran from 24 September to 30 November 2024. Across 10 weeks, it equipped participants with the necessary theory and practical techniques to plan and analyse data on their secondary teacher workforce in relation to teacher requirements, deployment, and utilisation and to identify potential policy options. Thirteen national teams took part in this Learning Cycle, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Egypt, Lao PDR, Maldives, Moldova, Mongolia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia and Ukraine.



KIX EMAP Learning Cycle Case Study, December 2025

The KIX EMAP Hub is supported by



Photo by
World Bank / Flickr

Published under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons licence: Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)



All queries on rights and licenses should be addressed to

KIX EMAP Hub / NORRAG

20, Rue Rothschild
P.O. Box 1672 1211 Geneva 1
Switzerland
norrage.kix@graduateinstitute.ch

This case study is a product of the [KIX EMAP Learning Cycle: Secondary Teacher Workforce Management](#) with external contributions. This work was supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX), a joint endeavour with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of the KIX EMAP Hub, NORRAG, GPE, IDRC, its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent. The KIX EMAP Hub / NORRAG does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Mr Om Chandara is a Cambodian educator who began his career as a mathematics teacher in 2004 and has served since 2016 as deputy director of the Department of Digital Transformation at Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). He holds a master's degree in commerce, a bachelor's in mathematics and a pedagogical certificate. He leads and contributes to key national education technology initiatives, including BEEP, USESDP 2, BIEP and the MIL project with DW Akademie, and collaborates with KAPE on the AI Ready ASEAN Programme. His expertise bridges teaching and digital innovation to support inclusive, modernised education in Cambodia.

Mr Khieu Chetra is currently executive director of NGO Education Partnership (NEP), a coalition of 144 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the education sector. He holds a master's degree in development management in Phnom Penh and is a programme management professional with an extensive project portfolio of nearly two decades of extensive experience in child protection, disability and education. As operation director of a local NGO, he managed non-formal education, disability, safe migration and child protection projects. He also worked as coordinator of the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC) administered by Friends-International and supported by UNICEF. He believes in strong collaborative work to achieve the ultimate goal.

Ms Seang Linda is currently a deputy head of office in the Department of Policy, MoEYS, as well the department's gender focal point, in which role she is responsible for conducting research on gender and STEM in general education. She also participates in other research projects related to teaching and learning, recently including the project 'Teacher Professional Identity: What Makes a Good Teacher?' Ms Seang Linda also serves as an associate editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Cambodia Education Review*, published by MoEYS, in which capacity she facilitates and edits research manuscripts submitted for publication.

Mr Yoeng Kimheng is a committed social development and education professional with over a decade's experience in programme coordination, inclusive education and civil society engagement in Cambodia. He holds a bachelor's degree in social work from the Royal University of Phnom Penh and has led and contributed to multiple national and international initiatives focused on education quality, inclusive practices and child protection. In his current position as project coordinator at NEP, he drives advocacy, research, knowledge management and capacity-building efforts across civil society networks. Kimheng is recognised for his dedication to improving learning outcomes, promoting social accountability and advancing the rights of marginalised children, especially those with disabilities.

Ms Long Sophanim is an official in the Department of Planning, MoEYS. She holds a master's degree in management of education from the Royal University of Phnom Penh (2024) and completed her teacher training at the National Institute of Education in 2022. In her current role at the Strategic Planning Office, Ms Sophanim contributes to national education planning and policy development. Her work includes supporting the formulation of the Education Strategic Plan 2024–2028, contributing to Cambodia's mid-term review of Sustainable Development Goal 4 implementation and assisting in the development of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in Education 2026–2030. She is actively involved in educational data analysis to inform national and subnational planning and provides technical support across various administrative levels. Her areas of focus include evidence-based policy, inclusive education and sustainable development in the education sector.

Mr Moun Sotra is an official in the Department of Planning, MoEYS. He holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from Khemarak University and a bachelor's in English for education from the SIU Institute. In early 2017, he earned a master's in English in education from Preah Sihanoniraja Buddhist University. In addition to his government role, he has worked in aid coordination with

development partners and local NGOs. He is currently focused on education policy and planning, with a strong interest in promoting evidence-based decision-making and supporting strategic reforms within Cambodia's education sector.

Mr Srey Borin brings over a decade of experience in international education development to his role as programme director at STEM Education Organisation for Cambodia. He has held key roles at organisations such as Save the Children International, ChildFund International and Room to Read International as well as serving as a university lecturer. Borin's expertise spans programme leadership, strategic planning, education project design, team and budget management, monitoring and evaluation and government engagement. He holds a master of science in teaching and curriculum and instructional design from Syracuse University, New York and dual bachelor's degrees in French for tourism and teaching English as a foreign language from the Royal University of Phnom Penh. He is also a well-connected education advocate, actively contributing to policy and curriculum reform discussions with Cambodia's Ministry of Education and partner NGOs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms and Abbreviations	6
Acknowledgments	7
Executive Summary	8
1. Introduction	9
2. Challenges in Secondary Teacher Management in Cambodia	11
2.1 Secondary Teacher Management	11
2.2 Strategy for a Strengthened Teacher Management System	12
2.3 Challenges to Teacher Management	12
3. Establishing the Demand for Secondary Teachers	13
3.1 Teacher Demand Projection	13
3.2 Teacher Demand by Subject	14
4. Diagnosing Secondary Teacher Allocation	17
4.1 Teaching Staff per Class, Pupil-Teacher Ratios and Teacher Shortage and Surplus	17
5. Diagnosing the Utilisation of Secondary Teachers	19
6. Secondary Teacher Management Policies and Strategies	20
7. Conclusion and Recommendations	21
References	22

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CPD	Continuous professional development
EMAP	Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
GPE KIX	Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
HR	Human Resource Department
HRMIS	Human Resource Management Information System
IIEP-UNESCO	UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning
LS	Lower secondary
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
POE	Provincial Office of Education
PTR	Pupil-teacher ratio
PTTC	Provincial Teacher Training Centre
RTTC	Regional Teacher Training Centre
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TCP	Teacher Career Pathway
TPAP	Teacher Policy Action Plan
TQU	Teacher Qualification Upgrade
US	Upper secondary

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Cambodia Team expresses our sincere appreciation to the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) and the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX) Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific (EMAP) initiative for organising the learning cycle on Secondary Teaching Workforce Management. This report would not have been possible without the collaborative engagement, technical guidance and insightful contributions provided throughout the learning process.

We are especially grateful to the IIEP-UNESCO course instructors—Barbara Tournier, Luc Gacougnolle, Am Gagnon, Germán Vargas Mesa and Sage Capogreco—for their extensive expertise in applied policy research and diagnostic tools for analysing education system performance. Their support greatly enhances our understanding and capacity to identify system bottlenecks and inform education policy planning.

We also acknowledge the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia (MoEYS) for its continued commitment to education reform and for providing access to critical data and policy documents that informed this report.

Finally, we extend our appreciation to all stakeholders—educators, policymakers and technical experts—whose active participation and insights helped shape the findings and recommendations presented here. We hope this report will make a meaningful contribution to ongoing efforts to strengthen secondary teacher management and support a more effective, equitable and resilient education system in Cambodia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cambodia's aspirations to reach upper-middle-income status by 2030 and high-income status by 2050 require strengthening its development framework through improved education systems. Secondary education is a vital preparatory phase for employment or further academic pursuits in higher education, yet this sector faces significant problems, including teacher qualification deficiencies, restricted access to continuous professional development (CPD) and a persistent lack of qualified teachers in remote and disadvantaged regions. Achieving quality, equity and efficiency standards in Cambodian secondary education requires overcoming the specific challenges described below.

Management of Secondary Teachers: The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) oversees teacher recruitment, deployment and professional development through its Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP) 2024–2030 (MoEYS, 2023) and Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2024–2028. Between 2014 and 2024, salaries increased to more than twice their original values, yet qualified candidates remain scarce despite these substantial salary boosts, particularly in rural regions. The recruitment process operates from a central point but faces budgetary constraints, and contract hiring is characterised by significant irregularities. Teacher deployment processes result in an uneven distribution of teachers.

Diagnosing Secondary Teacher Utilisation: Four core concerns characterise the Cambodian teacher utilisation landscape. First, the allocation of teachers is far from uniform; urban schools tend to have extra teachers, whereas rural areas experience shortages in key subjects. Second, overloaded teachers in poor areas teach several subjects, compromising teaching standards in doing so. Third, only one-third of lower secondary teachers possess a bachelor's degree, although that gap is being plugged through the Teacher Qualification Upgrade (TQU) programme and CPD. Fourth, shortages may worsen due to a large number of retirements, particularly at the upper secondary level, if no proactive planning and succession plans are adopted.

Diagnosing Secondary Teacher Allocation: Some provinces are under-resourced or over-resourced, and, depending on

the subject, teacher supply varies spatially between provinces. The districts of Prey Vien, Siem Reap and Kompong Thom are plagued by acute teacher shortages in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and information and communication technology (ICT), whereas Kep and Phnom Penh have a surplus of teachers, especially in Khmer and history subjects. The differences in class size and staffing between urban and rural areas obstruct equity and affect learning outcomes, and these imbalances indicate a need for a more focused deployment approach, recruitment based on subject specialisation and more efficient monitoring using the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS).

Meeting the Demand for Secondary Teachers: To address increasing student enrolment numbers, yearly recruitment needs to increase from 5,900 to exceed 10,000 by 2030. Subjects in high demand include English, Khmer and STEM areas, followed by ICT and physical education. Full-day schooling, curriculum reform and demographic patterns drive the increased demand. Present planning instruments fail to account for attrition beyond retirement and struggle to meet evolving pupil-teacher ratio objectives, underscoring the need for more adaptable forecasting models.

Plans and Policies for Secondary Teacher Management: MoEYS has rolled out a detailed set of reforms to enhance the management of secondary school teachers. School administrators receive leadership training, and teacher training infrastructure sees expanded investment and digital learning tool development. The recruitment of new candidates involves scholarships and defined career paths, with in-kind incentives (such as housing and transportation support) helping to retain staff in remote areas. Licensing standards and professional accountability measures are undergoing elevation supported by advanced EMIS and CPD platforms. The initiatives strive to create a motivated, qualified and equitably distributed secondary teaching workforce in Cambodia while supporting the nation's comprehensive education and development objectives.

1. INTRODUCTION

Investing in human resource development is crucial for Cambodia to achieve its ambitious goals of becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050. As outlined in the Pentagonal Strategy—Phase I (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2023), education plays a fundamental role in this transformation, and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) recognises the pivotal role of secondary teachers in shaping student learning outcomes and workforce readiness. Consequently, strengthening the management of the secondary teaching workforce has become a national priority. Ensuring that secondary teachers are professionally qualified, equitably deployed and continuously supported through career development is a critical focus of ongoing education reforms.

Reforms to teacher recruitment, management and development are central to MoEYS's agenda, particularly in secondary education. One primary objective is the transition from the current 12+2 post-secondary teacher training model to a 12+4 bachelor's degree programme or BA+1 teacher certification model for lower secondary education, with the aim of enhancing teacher competency and ensuring that teachers possess the necessary skills to deliver high-quality instruction. Additionally, the education sector seeks to address teacher shortages, particularly in underserved areas, by implementing equitable deployment strategies. Aligning teacher education policies with the Teacher Career Pathway (TCP) will also create structured career progression opportunities, encouraging teachers to remain in the profession and continually improve their skills. Moreover, the provision of continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities, mentoring and professional learning communities will offer essential mechanisms for enhancing teacher quality and retention.

Despite significant progress in improving access to education over the past four decades, Cambodia continues to face major challenges in secondary teaching workforce management. Learning outcomes among secondary students remain poor, exacerbated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Secondary completion rates are low compared to regional peers, with only 8% of 15-year-olds achieving minimum reading

proficiency and only 10% meeting minimum math standards before the pandemic. The quality of secondary teachers is also a concern, with a significant proportion remaining underqualified. Data show that 61.72% of secondary teachers lack a bachelor's degree, indicating the need for targeted qualification upgrades.

Teacher shortages and inequitable deployment further complicate the education landscape. Rural and remote schools experience acute shortages of qualified secondary teachers, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. Many secondary schools struggle with high pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs), reducing the effectiveness of instruction. Current deployment policies do not adequately incentivise teachers to work in disadvantaged regions, leading to an uneven distribution of teaching staff. Additionally, professional development opportunities remain limited. The lack of access to CPD programmes, mentoring and peer learning communities hinders teachers' ability to refine their pedagogical and subject-specific skills. A shortage of well-trained teacher educators further affects the quality of in-service training, as many Provincial Teacher Training Centre (PTTC) and Regional Teacher Training Centre (RTTC) educators do not hold a master's degree.

A critical gap also exists in workforce planning and career progression. The mismatch between teacher training programmes and the actual needs of secondary schools results in inefficiencies in teacher allocation. Weak linkages between teacher qualifications, career progression and incentives discourage professional growth and retention. Although the TCP offers a structured career trajectory, it requires further strengthening to ensure clear, motivating advancement opportunities for secondary teachers.

A well-coordinated workforce management strategy is essential to address these challenges. Key priorities include upgrading teacher qualifications, enhancing teacher deployment and retention, strengthening CPD opportunities and improving career pathways and workforce planning. Fully implementing the 12+4 bachelor's degree requirement

for new secondary teachers and providing flexible learning programmes for in-service teachers will elevate teacher qualifications, and introducing incentives for teachers in rural and disadvantaged areas—such as financial allowances, housing support and career benefits—will encourage equitable deployment. Expanding mentorship programmes, peer coaching and professional learning communities will strengthen teacher support systems, and targeted training in digital literacy, STEM education and student-centred teaching methodologies will further enhance teacher effectiveness. Additionally, strengthening the TCP to provide clear promotion and specialisation tracks will encourage teachers to invest in their professional growth. Developing a data-driven teacher management system to monitor teacher distribution, workload and CPD participation will also facilitate evidence-based decision-making.

By implementing these strategic reforms, Cambodia can cultivate a more qualified, motivated and well-supported secondary teaching workforce. These efforts will not only improve student learning outcomes but also contribute to the country's long-term economic and social development goals, positioning Cambodia for a more prosperous future.

2. CHALLENGES IN SECONDARY TEACHER MANAGEMENT IN CAMBODIA

2.1 Secondary Teacher Management

Secondary teacher management in Cambodia is governed by national education policies aimed at ensuring high-quality teaching and learning. MoEYS is responsible for overseeing teacher recruitment, professional development, deployment and performance evaluation. This approach is guided by key frameworks, including the already implemented Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP) 2015–2020 and the newly developed TPAP 2024–2030 (MoEYS, 2023). The updated TPAP focuses on four strategic areas: (1) teacher management, (2) transformational leadership, (3) teacher education and (4) teacher identification and development. The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2024–2028 integrates the strategies outlined in TPAP 2024–2030 (MoEYS, 2023) and aligns with the broader objectives of the Teacher Policy.

Currently, teacher recruitment operates as a centralised process, primarily focused on enrolling candidates into initial teacher education programmes, but the number of teachers entering the workforce is constrained by the availability of funding for teacher salaries. Contract teachers, in contrast, are recruited through a separate process managed by Provincial Offices of Education (POEs) in coordination with the Provincial Departments of Civil Service. These contract teachers receive limited preparation before beginning their teaching assignments. The Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted teacher recruitment, with no student teachers recruited in 2020 and 2022. However, recruitment for lower secondary (LS) student teachers under the 2023 quota was completed in May 2024, and recruitment for the pre-primary and primary levels

is ongoing. This structured approach to teacher management aims to address challenges in the education system, improve teacher quality and ensure equitable access to education across Cambodia.

The lack of well-defined and managed teacher transfer mechanisms has worsened teacher shortages in rural areas and created surpluses in urban areas. As of 2023, transfers from understaffed to well-staffed regions have been halted until a suitable transfer strategy is developed. Teacher salaries are structured around three cadres based on the educational level they teach, incentivising primary teachers to upgrade their qualifications and move to secondary levels, which exacerbates shortages of effective primary teachers and widens learning gaps. According to 2023 Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) data, there are 125,498 teachers and education staff, with 22,246 in cadre A, 46,558 in cadre B and 56,694 in cadre C. Between 2014 and 2024, teacher salaries rose by over 120% from an average of USD 211 to USD 468 per month, with primary and LS teachers seeing the greatest increases. Education administration staff also experienced salary hikes of over 100% during this period. However, further salary increases are needed to reflect teachers' growing professionalism and keep pace with inflation, ideally tied to regular appraisals, professional development and career progression. Teacher qualifications vary by level, with upper secondary (US) teachers most likely to hold bachelor's or master's degrees, whereas only 33% of LS, 20% of primary and 12% of pre-primary teachers have a bachelor's degree.

Table 1. Number of Student Teachers Recruited by Level of Education

Level of Education	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2023	Total
Lower secondary	850		768	686	675	600	500	441	5,520
Upper secondary	1,022	877	880	832	867	1,000	1,100	735	8,513

Source: MoEYS

2.2 Strategy for a Strengthened Teacher Management System

MoEYS has long recognised the pivotal role of teachers in shaping the future of Cambodia's education system. As part of the ESP, MoEYS has undertaken a series of reforms to enhance teacher training, professional development and overall education quality. These efforts are essential for equipping teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to meet the demands of 21st-century learning. During the ESP 2019–2024 period, MoEYS focused on (1) enhancing teacher training programmes and pedagogical practices, (2) strengthening the professional capacity of trainers in subject content, pedagogy, teaching methodologies and technology integration, (3) upgrading infrastructure to incorporate modern technology, well-equipped libraries and advanced learning facilities, (4) improving leadership and management within teacher training institutions, (5) ensuring a strong connection between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation of pedagogical curricula and (6) reinforcing quality assurance mechanisms in teacher education.

In the strategic priorities set by the ESP 2024–2028, MoEYS has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening teacher training and education by continuing these key initiatives: (1) improving teacher training programmes and instructional practices, (2) advancing trainers' expertise in subject content, pedagogy, innovative teaching methods and digital learning, (3) modernising infrastructure with state-of-the-art facilities and resources, (4) enhancing leadership and management capacities, (5) bridging theoretical concepts with hands-on teaching experiences and (6) maintaining high-quality standards in teacher training institutions.

As Cambodia moves forward, MoEYS will continue its efforts to reform teacher education by (1) continuing to implement teacher education institution reform (by providing CPD, improving teacher training to meet the 'Professional Teacher Standard' and increasing the qualification of 12+4 or BA+1 for LS teachers and BA+2 for US teachers), (2) implementing teacher licenses (contract teachers) for all teachers in private general education institutions, (3) implementing new teaching methods for secondary education in line with the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), focusing especially on 21st-century knowledge and skills as practiced in the New Generation Schools and on early grade reading and math at the primary level, (4) introducing new teaching methods, learning methods and assessment methods to enable students to develop critical thinking skills and solve problems related to daily life, (5) promoting digital education and e-learning forums to share best practices with teachers and (6) granting professional status to trainers.

2.3 Challenges to Teacher Management

The management of teachers in Cambodia's education system remains a significant challenge amidst recent developments. Major concerns include difficulties in recruiting and supplying teachers, insufficient funding for school operations, limited opportunities for professional development and weak school management. These challenges are compounded by the prevalence of private tutoring, high dropout rates, poor student performance in international assessments and educational inequality. These factors point to the urgent need for stronger teacher management strategies to address both the quality and quantity of educators in the system.

MoEYS (2023) has identified specific challenges in secondary education, including: poor teacher quality, limited practical experience opportunities, a shortage of science teachers and STEM facilities, and a lack of qualified staff in fields such as English, information and communication technology (ICT), health education and architecture. In a 2023 report, MoEYS outlined four major challenges for general education: (a) the absence of science and computer labs, libraries and teaching materials; (b) a shortage of qualified education officials capable of driving education reform; (c) inadequate cooperation and support from the private sector; and (d) limited efforts to disseminate new curricula and teaching methods to teachers (MoEYS, 2023).

3. ESTABLISHING THE DEMAND FOR SECONDARY TEACHERS

3.1 Teacher Demand Projection

To address the expected shortfall in reaching 100% teacher staffing by 2030, as shown in Table 2, recruitment must increase from 5,900 teachers in 2024 to 10,682 in 2030 to replace retiring teachers and fill existing gaps. However, this target is unlikely to be feasible due to limited recruitment quotas constrained by national budgetary considerations. Simulations have been

conducted based on projected retirements and current school requests to estimate the number of teachers needed by 2030, but they do not account for attrition beyond retirement, demographic shifts in the student-age population, the transition to full-day teaching, or changes in class sizes and PTRs. These gaps are further explored in this section, along with strategies to reduce PTRs.

Table 2. Number of Transfer Teachers Needed Based on the Target of 100% Filled (and Retirements Replaced)

Education Level	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Target (2030)
Lower secondary (LS) retirements	163	368	572	887	1,643	2,037	2,801	8,471
LS target (additional)	1,037	832	628	313	157	-237	-1,175	1,555
LS total needs	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,800	1,800	1,626	10,026
Upper secondary (US) retirements	38	58	94	158	248	328	398	1,322
US target (additional)	662	642	606	542	452	372	333	3,609
US total needs	700	700	700	700	700	700	731	4,931
<i>Total needs (all levels)</i>	<i>5,900</i>	<i>5,900</i>	<i>7,500</i>	<i>8,500</i>	<i>10,200</i>	<i>10,400</i>	<i>10,682</i>	<i>59,082</i>

Source: Calculated by the authors based on MoEYS data

3.2 Teacher Demand by Subject

As student enrolment continues to rise, the demand for teachers across various subjects is expected to increase significantly. Based on PTRs for LS and US schools, this report estimates the number of teachers required from 2025 through 2028. English language, Khmer language, and mathematics are among the subjects with the highest student enrolment, leading to a substantial increase in the number of teachers needed. In 2025, approximately 57–59 additional teachers will be required for each of these subjects, depending on whether they are taught at the LS or US level. By 2028, this demand is expected to rise to over 276–283 teachers per subject. This trend highlights the growing importance of literacy and numeracy in the national curriculum and the need for sustained investment in teacher recruitment and training.

Subjects such as biology, chemistry and physics also show a steady rise in teacher demand. In 2025, an estimated 26 additional teachers will be needed for biology and chemistry, and physics will require 34–35 additional teachers. By 2028, these numbers are projected to grow significantly, with over 135 additional teachers needed for biology and chemistry, and nearly 180 for physics. The increasing demand in these fields suggests a strong emphasis on STEM education, necessitating well-trained science educators and adequate laboratory facilities. In addition to traditional science subjects, computer education (i.e. ICT) is emerging as a crucial field. The number of

additional teachers required for ICT will more than quadruple from 11 in 2025 to nearly 49 by 2028. This reflects the rapid digital transformation in education and the workforce, emphasising the need for enhanced ICT training programmes for teachers.

Moral education, history and geography exhibit similar growth patterns, with teacher requirements increasing from approximately 18 teachers in 2025 to over 90 by 2028, indicating a continuous emphasis on civic education, national identity and historical awareness. Physical education also sees an increase in demand, with the required number of additional teachers expected to rise from around 19–20 in 2025 to over 92 by 2028, aligning with broader initiatives to promote student health and well-being through sports and physical activities. While subjects such as art education, local life skills, and technical and vocational subjects have relatively low teacher demand, they remain essential components of a well-rounded education. The number of required teachers for these subjects remains relatively stable, with only slight increases over time. For instance, art education will require only two teachers per year, while local and vocational subjects will need only one additional teacher by 2028. In contrast, home economics and earth-environmental science exhibit moderate growth, with home economics teachers increasing from nine in 2025 to approximately 46 by 2028. This highlights the continued importance of life skills education in preparing students for real-world challenges.

Table 3. Estimated Number of Lower Secondary School Teachers Required by Subject (Teacher-Class Ratio 1:23.1)

Subject	2025	2026	2027	2028
English language	58	97	164	282
Khmer language	51	83	139	237
Mathematics	59	98	165	283
Moral education	18	31	53	92
Biology	26	46	79	138
History	18	31	53	92
Geography	18	31	53	92
Chemistry	26	46	79	138
Physics	35	61	105	184

Subject	2025	2026	2027	2028
Computer education (ICT)	11	18	29	49
Health education	10	17	28	48
Art education	2	2	2	2
Physical education	20	33	55	94
Science	7	7	7	7
Social studies	8	8	8	8
Local life skills	2	2	2	2
Home economics	9	16	27	47
Earth-environmental science	8	8	8	8
Technical and vocational subjects	2	2	2	2
Local and vocational subjects	1	1	1	1

Source: Calculated by the authors based on MoEYS data

Table 4. Estimated Number of Upper Secondary School Teachers Required by Subject (Teacher-Classroom Ratio 1:23.6)

Subject	2025	2026	2027	2028
English language	57	95	161	276
Khmer language	50	81	136	233
Mathematics	58	96	162	277
Moral education	18	30	52	90
Biology	26	45	78	135
History	18	30	52	90
Geography	18	30	52	90
Chemistry	26	45	78	135

Subject	2025	2026	2027	2028
Physics	34	59	103	180
Computer education (ICT)	11	17	29	48
Health education	10	16	27	47
Art education	2	2	2	2
Physical education	19	32	54	92
Science	7	7	7	7
Social studies	8	8	8	8
Local life skills	2	2	2	2
Home economics	9	15	26	46
Earth-environmental science	8	8	8	8
Technical and vocational subjects	2	2	2	2
Local and vocational subjects	1	1	1	1

Source: Calculated by the authors based on MoEYS data

4. DIAGNOSING SECONDARY TEACHER ALLOCATION

4.1 Teaching Staff per Class, Pupil-Teacher Ratios and Teacher Shortage and Surplus

In Cambodia, pupil-class ratio and pupil-classroom ratio are used as indicators for teacher allocation (see Table 5). Average

PTRs by level of education and province were calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled by level of education in a given province by the number of teachers employed at the same level of education in the same province.

Table 5. Summary of Pupil Ratios per Teacher, Class and Classroom

Level of education	Teaching staff per class	Pupil-teacher ratio	Pupil-staff ratio	Pupil-class ratio	Pupil-classroom ratio
Lower secondary schools	1.93	23.1	19.5	45.6	48.4
Upper secondary schools	1.96	23.6	20.3	45.2	48.2

Source: Calculated by the authors based on EMIS 2023 data

Table 6. Shortage and Surplus of Upper and Lower Secondary School Teachers by Province

Province	Lower secondary shortage/surplus	Upper secondary shortage/surplus
Phnom Penh	604	408
Kandal	173	-171
Kep	52	2
Koh Kong	-15	-70
Kratie	73	-93
Kampong Cham	-25	-464
Kampong Chhnang	-17	-112
Kampong Thom	-242	-221
Kampong Speu	-16	-76
Kampot	165	-78

Province	Lower secondary shortage/surplus	Upper secondary shortage/surplus
Takeo	-302	-323
Tboung Khmum	-391	-285
Banteay Meanchey	-125	-226
Pailin	102	-27
Battambang	-235	-344
Pursat	39	-143
Prey Veng	-565	-348
Preah Vihear	-52	-124
Preah Sihanouk	63	-23
Ratanakiri	-100	-93
Siem Reap	-510	-481
Stung Treng	33	-51
Svay Rieng	-94	-91
Odor Meanchey	-146	-130
Monduliri	-26	-45
Total: nation	-1,555	-3,609

Source: Calculated by the authors based on EMIS 2023 data

Cambodia faces a small overall shortage of secondary teachers, comprising 3,609 US teachers and 1,555 LS teachers (all disciplines included) As in many countries, recruiting and retaining teachers in remote and rural areas is challenging, whereas urban schools are overstaffed.

According to Table 6, the distribution of teaching staff at both the LS and US levels varies significantly across provinces, with imbalances in subject-specific needs. The average number of teaching staff per class at the LS level is 1.93 (2.6 in urban schools and 1.8 in rural schools), whereas at the US level, it is just under 2.0 (2.3 in urban schools and 1.8 in rural schools). Provincial disparities are evident, with Kep and Pailin having over 3.0 LS teachers per class compared to only 1.4 in Prey Veng, whereas at the US level, Kep has around 3.7 teachers per class and Stung Treng only 1.3. The national average class size is around 23 students at both levels, though it ranges from nearly 34 in Prey Veng to just under 10 in Kep for LS and from over 35 in Stung Treng to around 12 in Kep and Pailin for US.

MoEYS guidelines recommend a teacher–class ratio of 1.833 for LS and between 2.062 (Grade 10) and 2.187 (Grades 11–12) for

US, with class sizes of 40–50 pupils. While overall the number of teachers align with these guidelines, imbalances exist within specific subjects. There is a shortage of 1,555 LS teachers and 3,609 US teachers, particularly in mathematics, English, geography, moral education, economics, ICT and agriculture. Additionally, home science is a critical shortage area at the US level. Conversely, surpluses exist in some subjects, notably history, which has 950 surplus of LS teachers.

Provincial disparities are also evident in subject-specific needs. Phnom Penh has a significant surplus of both LS and US teachers, particularly in Khmer, ICT and physics, whereas most other provinces face shortages, especially in mathematics and ICT. While some provinces, such as Kandal, Kep, Kratie, Kampot and Pailin, have small surpluses of LS teachers, shortages remain prevalent nationwide. The imbalance is even more pronounced at the US level, in which most provinces experience a shortage of mathematics and ICT teachers, with only Phnom Penh having a significant surplus. Small surpluses of physics teachers exist in some provinces at both the LS and US levels, but ICT shortages remain a pressing concern across the country.

5. DIAGNOSING THE UTILISATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS

The effective utilisation of secondary school teachers in Cambodia is crucial to achieving the goal of ensuring all Cambodians have access to quality, equitable and inclusive education, which includes fostering knowledge, skills, discipline, ethics, good behaviour, health, fitness and lifelong learning. A comprehensive analysis of teacher distribution, workload, qualifications, retention and future demand is essential for policymakers to make informed decisions that strengthen the education system. This section examines the current state of secondary teacher utilisation in Cambodia, highlighting key challenges and potential solutions.

One of the more pressing issues is the uneven distribution of teachers across the country. Urban schools generally have a higher concentration of qualified teachers, whereas rural schools continue to struggle with shortages. This disparity is particularly evident in subject-specific allocations, with STEM fields facing a notable scarcity of educators. The uneven distribution of teachers contributes to regional learning disparities, limiting students' access to quality education, especially in underserved areas.

Teacher workload varies significantly depending on location and subject specialisation. In rural areas, staff shortages often require teachers to handle multiple subjects, leading to workloads that exceed recommended levels. Overcrowded classrooms—caused by high PTRs—further strain educators and diminish the quality of instruction. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions to ensure that teachers are not overburdened and can deliver effective lessons.

Maintaining high teaching standards also depends on ensuring that educators meet the required qualifications. While Cambodia has made progress in teacher training, gaps remain, particularly at the LS level. Nearly all US teachers hold a bachelor's or master's degree, but only 33% of LS teachers possess a bachelor's degree. More than half of them have completed only US education, including those trained under

the initial 12+2 teacher education programmes. To bridge this gap, the Teacher Qualification Upgrade (TQU) programme—funded by the national budget and supported by education partners—provides in-service teachers with pathways to obtain a bachelor of arts or bachelor of education degree. According to the Master Plan for Teacher Qualification Upgrade 2021–2025 (MoEYS, 2024e), four models are available for teachers to upgrade their qualifications. Additionally, the CPD system is integrated with TQU, allowing teachers to earn CPD credits from relevant professional development activities that contribute to their qualification advancement (MoEYS, 2024e).

A forward-looking approach to teacher utilisation also requires careful projections of teacher attrition and retirement. HRMIS data can be used to estimate upcoming teacher retirements, but attrition trends must be assessed separately. Retirement rates are projected to rise significantly between 2024 and 2033 across all education levels, although the trend is expected to slow after 2030, except in US education, where retirements will remain high. Meanwhile, teacher attrition has decreased substantially over the past decade. After peaking between 2013 and 2014, the number of teachers leaving the profession steadily declined, reaching a total loss of only 308 teachers in 2023. While the number of deceased teachers has remained relatively stable, resignations and voluntary departures have dropped sharply. These trends highlight the importance of continuous workforce planning to ensure that Cambodia's education system remains adequately staffed and equipped to meet future demands.

By addressing disparities in teacher distribution, managing workloads effectively, strengthening qualification pathways and preparing for future workforce shifts, Cambodia can enhance the efficiency and quality of secondary education. A strategic, data-driven approach will be critical in ensuring that every student—regardless of location—has access to well-trained, well-supported teachers.

6. SECONDARY TEACHER MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

MoEYS is committed to enhancing secondary teacher management through targeted policies that improve teacher recruitment, deployment and professional development. Recognising the crucial role of teachers in delivering quality education, MoEYS has identified the following key strategies to strengthen teacher management at both national and local levels:

1. Capacity Development at Decentralised Levels

To improve teacher management and support systems, MoEYS is strengthening the capacity of school directors, education officers and local education authorities. Training and professional development initiatives will enhance their ability to manage teacher recruitment, monitor performance and provide career development opportunities.

2. Increased Education Budget for Teacher Development

MoEYS is prioritising greater investment in teacher education and professional growth by

- expanding teacher training programmes to improve pedagogical skills,
- enhancing infrastructure, including teacher training institutions and digital learning resources and
- ensuring adequate salaries and benefits to attract and retain highly qualified teachers.

3. Incentives for Pre-service and In-service Teachers

- To increase the number of skilled teachers, MoEYS is introducing scholarships and financial support for students pursuing teacher education.
- Clear career progression pathways to encourage long-term commitment to the profession.

4. In-Kind Incentives for Teachers in Rural Areas

To address teacher shortages in remote areas, MoEYS will implement housing and transportation support to improve living conditions for teachers in underserved communities, offer financial incentives for rural placements to encourage teachers to serve in hard-to-reach areas and promote mentorship and peer support programmes to enhance professional development in rural schools.

5. Strengthening Teacher Licensing and Professional Standards

To improve teaching quality, MoEYS is enhancing teacher licensing and professional standards by implementing standardised licensing requirements for all teachers, aligning teacher training with national education standards and expanding CPD opportunities for teachers at all career stages.

6. Leveraging Digital Technology for Teacher Management

MoEYS is integrating technology-driven solutions to enhance teacher management by strengthening the Education Management Information System (EMIS) (MoEYS, 2024c) to track teacher deployment and workforce needs and by expanding digital training platforms to support teachers' professional development and lifelong learning.

MoEYS remains dedicated to strengthening secondary teacher management by investing in capacity building, increasing financial support, improving teacher incentives and leveraging technology. These policies aim to create a highly skilled, well-supported and equitably distributed teaching workforce, ensuring that all students receive quality education regardless of their location.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Cambodia's secondary education system is undergoing significant reforms to enhance teacher management and improve student learning outcomes. While progress has been made in expanding access to education and upgrading teacher qualifications, challenges persist, such as teacher shortages, underqualified educators and uneven teacher distribution. To address these issues, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is required, aligned with national education policies and the Pentagonal Strategy—Phase I.

Strengthening capacity development at decentralised levels through leadership training and collaboration between teacher training institutions and regional education offices is essential. Teacher effectiveness will be further enhanced by increasing the education budget to support teacher training, particularly in STEM fields, and by improving infrastructure, including modernised training centres and digital learning resources.

Additionally, offering scholarships and financial incentives to attract high-performing students into teacher education programmes, alongside in-kind benefits such as housing and transportation allowances for rural educators, can remedy workforce imbalances. The integration of technology, including the enhancement of the EMIS for data-driven decision-making and the expansion of digital learning platforms, will support CPD. Furthermore, improving teacher utilisation through flexible career pathways, a workload distribution aligned with student needs and opportunities for professional growth will ensure a more efficient and motivated teaching workforce. By implementing these strategies, Cambodia can build a stronger, more equitable secondary education system that not only improves student learning outcomes but also contributes to the country's long-term goal of achieving upper-middle-income status by 2030 and high-income status by 2050.

REFERENCES

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). (2013). *Teacher's policy*.

MoEYS. (2023). *Teacher policy action plan 2024–2030: Department of Pedagogy and Teacher Training*.

MoEYS. (2024a). *2022–2023 Annual Congress report*.

MoEYS. (2024b). *Citizen budget book 2024: Department of Finance*.

MoEYS. (2024c). *Education management information system 2023–2024*.

MoEYS. (2024d). *Education sector plan 2024–2028*.

MoEYS. (2024e). *Master Plan for Teacher Qualification Upgrade 2021–2025*. NEP Cambodia. <https://nepcambodia.org/documents/master-plan-for-teacher-qualification-upgrade-2021-2025/>

Rin, O. (2023). *Cambodia's plan on \$9 billion national budget for 2024*. Cambodianess.

Royal Government of Cambodia. (2023). *Pentagonal strategy—Phase I for growth, employment, equity, efficiency and sustainability: Building the foundation towards realising the Cambodia Vision 2050*.

Sadsad, J. J. T., Crowley, S., & Schipper, S. (2024). *Teachers in Asia and the Pacific need more support*. Asian Development Bank.

KIX EMAP Learning Cycle Case Study, December 2025



20, Rue Rothschild | P.O. Box 1672
1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland
+41 (0) 22 908 45 47
norrag.kix@graduatenstitute.ch

