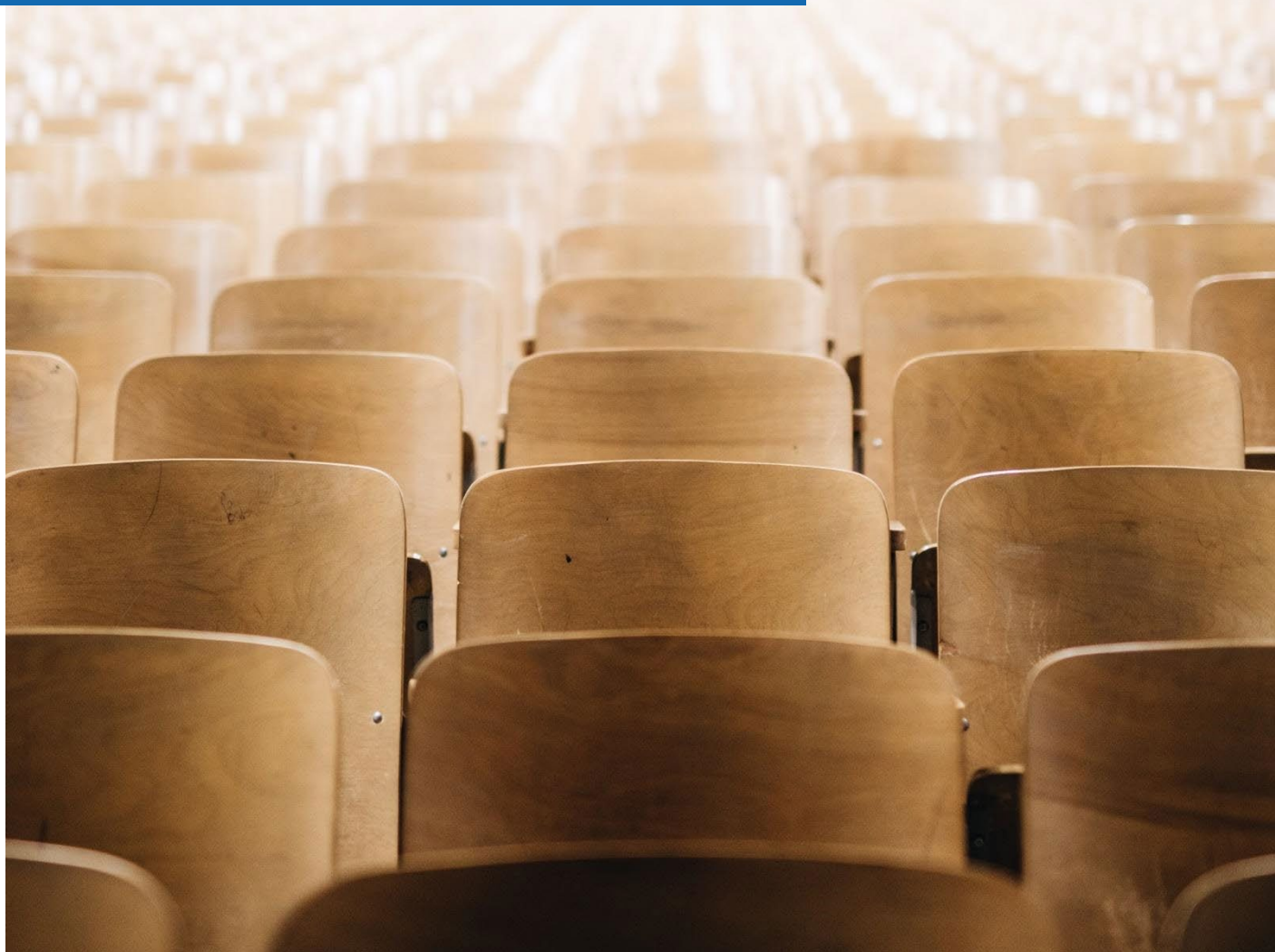


Factbook Education System: Cambodia

CES Chair of Education Systems

CES Factbook Education Systems, No. 19, 2022



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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAMFEBA	Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations
CES	Chair of Education Systems
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CNRP	Cambodia National Rescue Party
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CPS	Community Pre-School
DGTVET	Directorate General of TVET
DHE	Department of Higher Education
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DOE	District Offices for Education
DVV	Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband
ECE	Early Childhood Education
FPS	Formal Pre-School
Funcinpec	United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GDHE	General Directorate of Higher Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Global Innovation Index
GTHS	General and Technical High School
HBEP	Home Based Education Programmes
HDI	Human Development Index
IBE-UNESCO	International Bureau of Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
KHR	Cambodian Riel
KOF	Swiss Economic Institute
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NEET	Rate of Young People Neither in Employment nor in Education and Training
NEA	National Employment Agency
NEP	NGO Education Partnership
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NFUAJ	National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIE	National Institute of Education
NIPES	National Institute for Physical Education and Sports
NTB	National Training Board
NTF	National Training Fund
NTTI	National Technical Training Institute
NTDP	National TVET Development Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OPHI	Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative
PET	Professional Education and Training
POE	Provincial Offices for Education
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PPS	Private Pre-School
PSTTC	Pre-School Teacher Training College
PTC	Provincial Training Centre

PTTC	Provincial Teacher Training College
RCAF	Royal Cambodian Armed Forces
RTTC	Regional Teacher Training College
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
TTC	Teacher Training Centre
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVP	Technical and Vocational Parks
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEVOC	International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USD	US-Dollar
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VPET	Vocational Professional Education and Training
VSTP	Voucher Skills Training Programme
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization
YLMI	Youth Labour Market Index
YLILI	Youth Labor Index for Low Income Countries

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Foreword

The increasing competitiveness of the world economy as well as the high youth unemployment rates after the worldwide economic crisis in 2008/9 have put pressure on countries to upgrade the skills of their workforces. Consequently, vocational education and training (VET) has received growing attention in recent years, especially amongst policy-makers. For example, the European Commission defined common objectives and an action plan for the development of VET systems in European countries in the Bruges Communiqué on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for 2011-2020 (European Commission, 2010). In addition, a growing number of US states and other industrialized, transition, and developing countries (for example Hong Kong, Singapore, Chile, Costa Rica, Benin and Nepal) are interested in either implementing VET systems or making their VET system more labour-market oriented.

The appealing outcome of the VET system is that it improves the transition of young people into the labour market by simultaneously providing work experience, remuneration and formal education degrees at the secondary education level. If the VET system is optimally designed, VET providers are in constant dialogue with the demand-side of the labour market, i.e. the companies. This close relationship guarantees that the learned skills are in demand on the labour market. Besides practical skills, VET systems also foster soft-skills such as emotional intelligence, reliability, accuracy, precision, and responsibility, which are important attributes for success in the labour market. Depending on the design and permeability of the education system, VET may also provide access to tertiary level education (according to the ISCED classification): either general education at the tertiary A level or professional education and training (PET) at the tertiary B level. PET provides occupation-specific qualifications that prepare students for highly technical and managerial positions. VET and PET systems are often referred to together as “vocational and professional education training (VPET)” systems.

Few countries have elaborated and efficient VPET systems. Among these is the Swiss VPET system, which is an example of an education system that successfully matches market supply and demand. The Swiss VPET system efficiently introduces adolescents to the labour market, as shown by Switzerland’s 2007-2017 average youth unemployment rate of 8.1 percent compared to 14.8 percent for the OECD average (OECD, 2017).

Though not many countries have VPET systems that are comparable to Switzerland’s in terms of quality, efficiency and permeability, many have education pathways that involve some kind of practical or school-based vocational education. The purpose of the CES Education System Factbook Series¹ is to provide information about the education systems of countries across the world, with a special focus on vocational and professional education and training.

In the CES Factbook Education Systems: Cambodia, we describe Cambodia’s vocational system and discuss the characteristics that are crucial to the functioning of the system. Essential components comprise the regulatory framework and the governance of the VPET system, the involved actors, and their competencies and duties. The Factbook also provides information regarding the financing of the system and describes the process of curriculum development and the involved actors.

The Factbook is structured as follows: First, we provide an overview of Cambodia’s economy, labour market, and political system. The second part is dedicated to the description of the formal education system. The third section explains Cambodia’s vocational education system. The last section offers a perspective on Cambodia’s recent VPET education reforms and challenges to be faced in the future.

¹ From 2013 to 2019, the Factbooks were produced within the framework of the Education Systems research division at the KOF Swiss Economic Institute. From 2020 they will be produced by the Chair of Education Systems (CES) group.

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The Education System Factbooks have to be regarded as work in progress. The authors do not claim completeness of the information which has been collected carefully and in all conscience. Any suggestions for improvement are highly welcome!

Contact: factbook@ethz.ch

1. Cambodia's Economy and Political System

One of the main purposes of an education system is to provide the future workforce with the skills needed in the labour market. The particularities of a country's economy and labour market are important factors to determine the current and future demand for skills. Therefore, these are briefly described in the first chapter of this Factbook. In addition, this chapter provides an overview of Cambodia's political system with an emphasis on the description of education politics. Table 1 describes key statistics and information about Cambodia, which are further discussed in this chapter.

Table 1 Key Statistics and Information on Cambodia

Category	Outcome
Population	15,535,000 (in 2020)
Area	Total: 181,035 m ²
Location	Southeast Asia
Capital City	Phnom Penh
Government	Constitutional Monarchy with two legislative houses (Senate and National Assembly)
Official Language	Khmer
National Currency	Cambodian Riel (KHR)

Source: own table based on Encyclopaedia Britannica (2021a)

1.1 Cambodia's Economy

In 2019, according to the World Bank, Cambodia's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita** was 1,643.1 US-Dollar (USD). This is lower than the GDP of its neighbours Laos (2534.9 USD), Thailand (7,806.7 USD) and Vietnam (2,715.3 USD). Cambodia's GDP is below the GDP of the group of East Asian and Pacific countries², which is 11,502.9 USD (World Bank, 2021a). Compared to the average GDP per capita among OECD member states of 39,482.1 USD in 2019, Cambodia's value is relatively small (World Bank, 2021a). Between 1994 and 2019, the **annual GDP growth rate** of Cambodia averaged 6.05%. This rate is a little bit smaller than the average annual growth rate in Vietnam (6.77%) and Laos (6.97%). However, it is higher than the average annual growth rate of Thailand (3.67%) or the group of East Asian and Pacific countries (4.23%). The OECD average annual growth rate from 1994 to 2019 is 2.15% (World Bank, 2021a).

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Cambodia belongs to the medium human development category. Its **Human Development Index (HDI)** value for 2019 is 0.594, which

² This group includes Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand, East Timor and Vietnam.

puts it on rank 144 out of 189 countries and territories. Cambodia's value is below that of the average HDI of 0.747 for countries in East Asia and the Pacific. Between 1990 and 2019, Cambodia's HDI value increased from 0.368 to 0.594. Specifically, looking at the different indicators, Cambodia's life expectancy at birth increased by 16.2 years, mean years of schooling by 2.3 years and expected years of schooling by 4.8 years (UNDP, 2020, pp. 2–3). To get a better understanding of Cambodia's level of development, it is worth having a look at the **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)**. The MPI helps in understanding the sources of poverty more profoundly. It reflects the intensity of deprivation and the proportion of the people who live under deprivation (headcount ratio) with respect to three dimensions: education, health and living standards. The smaller the value, the more developed the country is (OPHI, 2020a).

In the last elevation (2014), Cambodia's MDI value was 0.170 and therefore higher than the corresponding values of the neighbouring countries Laos (0.108 in 2017), Thailand (0.003 in 2015-2016) and Vietnam (0.019 in 2013-2014). Moreover, Cambodia exhibits higher values for almost every indicator that the MDI compounded of, when compared to its neighbours. Only for Asset and Child mortality, Laos scores marginally higher (for details see table 2).

Table 2 Head Count Ratio of MPI in Cambodia and neighbouring countries

Dimension	Indicators	Cambodia	Laos	Thailand	Vietnam
Health (deprivation in percent)	Nutrient	22.4	12.0	0.4	0.0
	Child mortality	1.8	1.9	0.3	0.9
Education (deprivation in percent)	Years of schooling	21.6	16.6	0.6	3.6
	School attendance	10.8	9.1	0.3	1.3
Living Standards (deprivation in percent)	Cooking fuel	36.2	22.9	0.3	4.4
	Sanitation	30.6	17.2	0.2	4.0
	Drinking water	21.3	10.4	0.1	1.5
	Electricity	26.2	6.1	0.1	0.4
	Housing	21.8	12.0	0.2	3.1
	Assets	6.6	7.1	0.1	1.2
MPI		0.170 DHS (2014)	0.108 DHS (2017)	0.003 DHS (2015–2016)	0.019 DHS (2013–2014)

Source: own table based on OPHI (2020b)

From 1997 to 2012, according to the Standardized World Income Inequality Database Cambodia's **Gini Coefficient** for consumption has fallen from 40.4% to 29%. In the same time, the Gini Index for disposable income also declined from 36.7% to 33.9%. From 2012 to 2015, the Gini Index for consumption remained unchanged, while the Gini Index for disposable income has risen again to some extent. The current values are lower than the average value across the ASEAN countries³, implying that the distribution of income and consumption in Cambodia is more even than in an average ASEAN country (Hansen & Gjonbalaj, 2019, pp. 5–6). The **Gini Index** measures the inequality of the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households. It is a numerical measure. A value of 0 corresponds to equal distribution and a value of 100 corresponds to extreme inequality, where a single person owns everything (World Bank, 2021b).

Table 3 summarises the added values and employment by sector for Cambodia; and the average of the group of East Asian and Pacific countries in the year 2018. Looking at the **added value**, in both, the

³ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an economic union of Southeast Asian states. Members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

average East Asian and Pacific country and Cambodia, the tertiary sector is the largest. While in the East Asian and Pacific countries it makes around three fifths of total added value, in Cambodia it is only around two fifths. In the secondary sector, Cambodia's added value represents more or less the average South East Asian and Pacific country (32.3% compared to 33.5%). In the primary sector, there is again a huge difference between the average South Asian and Pacific countries and Cambodia: While the region's added value in the primary sector with 4.5% is relatively low, Cambodia's added value lies at 22%. To summarise, the primary sector in Cambodia is still relatively large with roughly one-fifth of the value generated there. While the secondary sector is approximately the same size as the regional average, the third sector is smaller in Cambodia.

Table 3 Value added and employment by sector, 2018

Sector	Cambodia: Value added (%) ⁴	East Asian & Pacific countries: Value added (%) ⁴	Cambodia: Employment (%)	East Asian & Pacific countries: Employment (%) ⁵
Primary sector	22.0	4.5	36.4	25.6
Secondary sector	32.3	33.5	36.6	26.2
of which: Manufacturing	16.3	22.8	n/a	n/a
Tertiary sector	39.5	60.5	27.0	48.3

Source: own table based on World Bank (2021a)

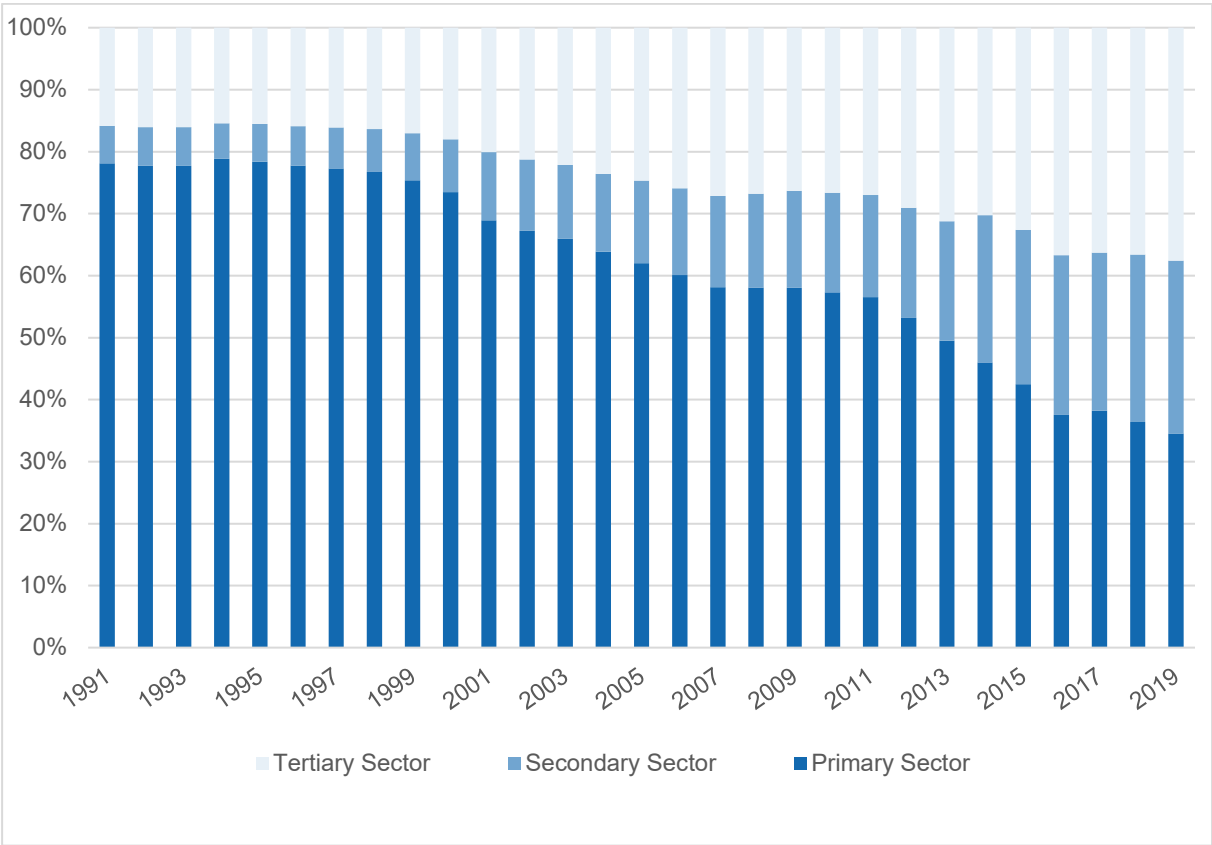
The numbers are, however, quite different when we look at the **employment shares by sector**. In Cambodia as well as in the region of South-East Asian and Pacific countries, more people are employed in the primary sector than the added value suggests. While it is about one quarter in the South East Asian and Pacific countries (25.6%), which is still the smallest share of the three sectors, it makes up over one third in Cambodia (36.4%). The share of employees in the secondary sector in both Cambodia and the average South East Asian and Pacific country is more or less the same as the share in the primary sector (36.6% and 26.2%). The numbers in added value and employment in the secondary sector are for both the most similar to each other. A bigger difference from value added to employment is again visible in the tertiary sector. In Cambodia as well as in the South East Asian and Pacific region, the share of employees in the tertiary sector is lower than the value added. In Cambodia it makes 27%, in the South East Asian and Pacific region 48.3%. The share of the labour force in the various sectors is an important indicator when examining education systems.

Figure 1 shows the development of employment by sector as a percentage of total employment from 1991 to 2019 in Cambodia. In 1991, over 78% of the total workforce was occupied in the primary sector. Around 16% worked in the tertiary sector and only 6% of the total labour force was occupied in the secondary sector. This changed rapidly in the last three decades. The share of employees occupied in the primary sector decreased constantly, while the share of the workforce in the secondary and tertiary sector continually increased. For the first time in 2018, the tertiary sector had the largest share of the labour force. In 2019, the size of the sectors in terms of the labour force distribution was almost equal, with the tertiary sector occupying 37.6% of the labour force, the primary sector 34.5% and the secondary sector 27.9%.

⁴ In most developing countries, frequent censuses and survey of industry and businesses are not the norm. Due to this irregularity, a lot of economic activity go unreported and therefore unrecorded, including work that women and children do for little or no pay, work of self-employed, one-person businesses or also large businesses or corporates, that operates in the informal sector. Such activities must often be estimated, using techniques that are not that accurate. This makes it difficult to have coherent numbers. This might be a reason for numbers, that are not summing up to 100%.

⁵ Due to rounding differences, the sum of all sectors is above 100%

Figure 1 Employment by sector (as % of total employment), 1991-2019



Source: own figure based on World Bank (2021a)

In the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) **Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 (GCI)** rankings of 2019, Cambodia ranked 106 out of 141 countries. This is a slight rise by two positions from the 110th rank in the 2018 report. With a general score of 52.1 out of 100, Cambodia is ranked behind its neighbours Thailand (rank 40; a score of 68.1) and Vietnam (rank 67; a score of 61.5) but ahead of Laos (rank 110; a score of 50.1) (Schwab, 2019, p. xiii). Cambodia on one hand has a relatively strong labour market (65th rank), advanced ICT adoption (71st rank) and macroeconomic stability (75th). On the other hand, it scored substandard in business dynamism (127th rank), institutions (123rd rank) and human capital skills (120th rank) (Schwab, 2019, p. 130).

In the **Global Innovation Index (GII)** rankings of 2020, Cambodia ranked 110 out of 131. This put Cambodia three positions ahead of Laos (113th), 66 positions behind Thailand (44th) and 68 positions behind Vietnam (42nd). Cambodia scored 21.46 out of 100 points. Amongst the South-East Asian, East Asian and Oceania countries it ranks 15th out of 17 and 21st out of 29 in the group of the lower middle-income countries (Dutta et al., 2020, pp. xxv, xxxii–xxxiii). Cambodia is ahead of its rank in the subcategory of market sophistication (rank 72) and knowledge and technology outputs (rank 96) but lacks in human capital research (rank 122) and infrastructure (rank 120) (Dutta et al., 2020, p. 235).

In conclusion, Cambodia is a lower-middle income country with strong economic growth. Its economic performance lies below the neighbouring countries Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. Its added value comes mainly from the secondary and tertiary sectors. Most employees are in the primary sector and the secondary sector. In the GCI and in the GI Cambodia ranks in the lower one-third of all countries. It is ranked behind Thailand and Vietnam but in front of Laos. The reports accentuate Cambodia’s strong market sophistication and an advance in the ITC enclosure on the one hand, and a lack of infrastructure, human skill and research and business dynamism on the other hand.

1.2 The Labour Market

In the first part of this section, we describe the general situation of Cambodia's labour market. In the second part, we focus on the youth labour market in particular.

1.2.1 Overview of the Cambodian Labour Market

Basic labour rights in Cambodia are guaranteed by law. The responsibility of enforcing the labour laws lies with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT). Private sector workers are allowed to form and join **labour unions**, bargain collectively and strike. However, there are large restrictions to these labour rights. Certain categories of workers are generally excluded from joining unions. These categories include teachers, civil servants, workers employed by state-owned enterprises and workers in the banking, health care and informal sector. They are only allowed to form "associations" that provide them with less working protection as compared to trade unions. Illiterate workers are not allowed to hold union leadership. Unions must be registered to operate and registration requires handing over of private information about union leaders such as intelligence about family members and banking details. Union organisations are highly restricted and the law facilitates government intervention in internal union affairs. Also, the **right to strike is highly restricted**. Unions must meet several requirements, like the successful registration as a union, a secret-ballot vote of the absolute majority of union members, a 60-day waiting period, foregoing conciliation, mediation as well as arbitration and notices to the employer and the government (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, 2020, p. 28).

The **government often fails to enforce the applicable law**. Employers and local government officials frequently refuse to provide paperwork for the formation of unions. It is also not uncommon that designated union officials get dismissed during the long-drawn registration process, making it difficult for unions to organize themselves. There are reports of government harassment of labour leaders in independent unions. The opposition has also been observed by the use of spurious legal charges and detention. Union workers are repeatedly facing charges for their union activities and sometimes even violence. The government often fails to protect union members and participants of strikes from getting dismissed by their employers (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, 2020, pp. 29–30).

The Cambodian **law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labour**. Nevertheless, forced labour is an actuality in Cambodia. Official reports indicate that it is most common in the construction sector, but is not restricted to this sector. An important issue driving forced labour is third party-debt of microfinance lenders that leads individuals into dependency. Another widespread problem is forced overtime. There are several reports of workers losing their jobs as they did not accept working for unpaid overtime hours. Although the government is aware of those problems, it does not effectively enforce the law. Even the penalties imposed are often only for minor offences (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, 2020, p. 31).

In Cambodia, the legal **minimum working age** is 15 while the legal age for hazardous work is 18. These age standards are however only applicable for formal employment relationships. Children between the age of 12 and 15 are permitted to engage for seven days on school-free days and four hours on school days in "light work", if it does not affect school attendance and takes place between 8 pm to 6 am. Persons violating child labour provisions get fined, but sanctions are rarely imposed because of the government's failure to enforce the law. **Child labour** mostly takes place in rural areas, but child labour inspections mainly take place in urban areas. In 2019, the government stated they imposed penalties on only three firms for violating child labour standards, even though child labour is widespread. Labour organisations estimate that five to ten percent of the workers on rubber, cassava, cashew, and banana plantations are children. Minors also work in sectors such as brick making, housekeeping, textile and commercial sex (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, 2020, pp. 32–33).

A standard legal work week in Cambodia contains 48 hours and a working day may not exceed eight hours (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, 2020, p. 34). Cambodia has a **minimum**

wage, but it applies only to the garment and footwear sector. In 2016, the regular minimum wage was around 140 USD a month (ILO, 2016, p. 1). In all sectors, however, there is a rate of 130% of daytime wage for night shifts, 150% for overtime and 200% if overtime occurs during the night, holiday or Sunday. Excessive overtime is theoretically forbidden, meaning that only up to two hours of overtime a day is allowed. Overtime must be voluntary (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, 2020, pp. 34–35).

Table 4 shows the **labour force participation rates** and the **unemployment rates** by age in Cambodia and OECD countries' average. In both OECD countries' average and Cambodia, youth labour market participation is lower than total labour market participation. While in the OECD countries' average, youth labour market participation is slightly below 50%, in Cambodia it is much higher at around 73%. This might be due to the lower minimum age to work in Cambodia. Also, total labour force participation is higher in Cambodia than in the average OECD country. A huge difference is visible in comparing Cambodia's unemployment rate to the average OECD country. Cambodia has much lower rates of both youth and total unemployment than the OECD average. However, the concept of unemployment can only be compared to a very limited extent between high and low-income countries. According to the ILO definition of unemployment, people need to spend an entire week doing no work to be registered as unemployed (Fields, 2012, p. 5). This is possible in high-income countries that have well developed social security systems. However, in less developed countries, where social security is hardly existing, people are often in a position where they have to work to be able to cover basic necessities. Many people in these countries cannot afford to spend a week without working. They often have no choice but to take low-quality jobs that are badly paid or below their skill levels instead of relying on social security systems and spend some time off the labour market to look for a job that matches their skill level. The lack of opportunity to spend time out of the labour force lowers the unemployment rate in these countries. Ultimately, due to the inability to consider the low wage rates in Cambodia compared to the OECD, table 4 should be interpreted with caution (Fields, 2012, p. 5; Kudrzycki et al., 2020, p. 1).

Table 4 Labour force participation rate and unemployment rate by age in 2016

Age group	Labour force participation rate		Unemployment rate	
	Cambodia	OECD average	Cambodia	OECD average
Total (15–64 years)	84.4	71.8	0.7	6.6
Youth (15–24 years)	72.9	47.4	1.1	13.3
Adults (25–64 years)	25–54 years: 92.3 55–64 years: 76.1	77.5	25–54 years: 0.5 55–64 years: n/a	5.7

Source: own table based on ILO (2020a, 2020b) and OECD (2021)

Table 5 shows the labour force participation rate and the unemployment rate by educational attainment for Cambodia and the OECD. Here the numbers for the average OECD country and Cambodia are quite different. Cambodia has the highest labour force participation as well as the highest unemployment rate for graduates of the upper secondary education level. However, labour force participation rates for graduates of less than upper secondary, upper secondary and tertiary education level are quite similar. This is not the case in the average OECD country, where the labour force participation rate is the highest for tertiary education at 84.3% and more than 25% points lower for classes below upper secondary. Unemployment rates differ highly, the highest for less than upper secondary education level and the lowest for tertiary education. Even though the enrolment rate in higher education is still comparably low, there are education-job mismatches among university graduates. Students are mainly enrolled in subjects such as economics, management and law, while the Cambodian labour market is foremost in need of technical graduates, such as engineers (Sam, 2019, pp. 85–87). It is assumed that one of the reasons for this mismatch is the cost of STEM programmes at universities. Due to the cost factor, only a handful of institutions manage to teach the courses. In the end, the graduates end up with a degree that is not asked for in the labour market and start having problems finding an accurate job (Madhur, 2014, p. 8). In general, the quality of employment in Cambodia seems to be low compared to the number

of jobs. Enrolment rates in education went up in the past years while the quality of jobs did not catch up to the rise in education. This will be explained further in chapter 1.2.3 The YLILI in Cambodia.

Table 5 Labour force participation rate and unemployment rate by educational attainment in 2016

Education level	Labour force participation rate		Unemployment rate	
	Cambodia	OECD average	Cambodia	OECD average
Less than upper secondary education	81.7	57.0	0.6	11.8
Upper secondary education	86.2	74.8	1.3	7.0
Tertiary education	79.7	84.3	0.9	4.6

Source: own table based on OECD (2020a, 2020b) and ILO (2020a, 2020b)

1.2.2 The Youth Labour Index for Low Income Countries

The KOF Swiss Economic Institute developed the KOF Youth Labour Market Index (KOF YLMI) to compare the youth labour market situation across countries (Renold et al., 2014). The foundation for this index is the critique that a single indicator, such as the widely used youth unemployment rate, does not suffice to describe the youth labour market situation adequately nor provide enough information for a comprehensive cross-country analysis. To increase the amount of information considered and to foster a multi-dimensional view, the KOF YLMI considers twelve indicators that are grouped into four dimensions.

Dimensions and indicators of the YLILI

<p>Transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share of youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET rate) - Relative unemployment ratio - Youth skills mismatch rate
<p>Working conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth working poverty rate - Youth time-related underemployment rate - Share of youth in informal employment - Youth Vulnerable employment rate - Share of youth in elementary occupations - Share of youth in agriculture, fishery, or forestry
<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share of youth with no secondary education - Youth illiteracy rate - Harmonized test scores
Source: Kudrzycki et al. (2020)

Building on KOF Youth Labour Market, which primarily relies on high-income country data, Kudrzycki et al. (2020) proposed an **index for lower-middle and low-income countries (YLILI)**. This index, which is the first to combine indicators specifically tailored to the realities of low-income countries, provides an assessment of individual countries' progress in addressing the needs of young workers. The YLILI helps to make a complex and multidimensional phenomenon more tractable by generating country-specific rankings that allow for comparisons across countries (for an overview of the different dimensions and indicators, see the information box to the right).

To construct the index, **12 youth-specific labour market indicators** were selected from three broad dimensions that best reflect the situation of the youth in the labour market: transition from education to the labour market, working conditions in the labour market, and educational background. The indicators were obtained from three reputable compilers of international data: the ILO, UNESCO and the Demographic and Health Surveys. The index score is calculated as the arithmetic mean of the three

dimensions and is scaled to vary from 0 (dysfunctional youth labour market) to 100 (functioning youth labour market).

The transition dimension reflects the **quantity of employment** for youth and encompasses (1) the share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET), which captures the share of inactive youth, (2) the relative unemployment ratio, which measure the degree to which unemployment affects young people more than adults and (3) the skills mismatch rate, which shows whether unemployment disproportionately affects those with high or low education.

The working condition dimension captures the **quality of employment** and contains six indicators. The youth working poverty rate measures the proportion of working youth in poverty (1). The youth underemployment rate measures the share of employed youths who are willing to increase their workload (2). The informal employment rate captures the share of young people employed without contracts and/or social security (3). The vulnerable employment rate measures the share of own-account workers and contributing family workers (4). The share of workers in elementary occupations measures the proportion of young workers in low-skilled basic tasks, which may require great physical effort and can carry a high risk of injury (5). Finally, the share of workers in agriculture complements the previous indicator, as jobs in agriculture are generally low-paid and labour-intensive (6).

Finally, the education dimension captures the **skill level of youth** and comprises (1) the proportion of youth with no secondary education, (2) the proportion of illiterate youth, and (3) a measure of schooling quality in the form of harmonized test scores.

1.2.3 The YLILI for Cambodia

Cambodia's YLILI score is 67.45. It is ranked 15th out of 48 countries for which enough data was available to compute the index. Its score for transition is 82.19 (rank 15), for working conditions 52.65 (rank 31) and for education 67.5 (rank 9). For Cambodia, every indicator is available except for the youth underemployment rate. Data for the different indicators are from different years, the earliest time point being 2012 and the latest 2018. Therefore, the scores of the individual indicators are not perfectly comparable. However, the YLILI still gives a good comprehensive measure of low and lower-middle-income country's youth labour market (Kudrzycki et al., 2020, pp. 18, 37).

Cambodia scores comparatively high on education and is ranked third out of ten in the group of South-East Asian and Pacific countries. For transition, Cambodia ranks first out of all South-East Asian and Pacific countries that have value in this dimension. In the working condition category, Cambodia scored last but one among the group of ten South East Asian and Pacific countries that have a value for this dimension, just after East Timor.

The results suggest that the **quantity of employment is relatively high**, but the **quality of employment is rather low**. This makes sense in regard to the low youth unemployment and participation rate compared to OECD countries (see therefore table 4). Young people seem to have jobs, but the quality of these jobs is rather low. This is an example of the misleading and unidimensional character of unemployment rates as an indicator of the quality of a labour market. Also, Cambodia seems to have a rather skilled youth compared to other low and lower-middle income countries.

1.3 Cambodia's Political System

Understanding the basics of a country's political system and getting to know the political goals with respect to its education system are crucial points for the understanding of the education system in a broader sense. Therefore, in section 1.3.1 we start by presenting Cambodia's political system in general. Then, in section 1.3.2, we focus on the politics and goals of the education system.

1.3.1 Historical Outline

The Kingdom of Cambodia gained its **independence from France** in 1953. However, the first constitution was already written in 1947 after the young King Norodom Sihanouk declared independence during the Japanese occupation of Cambodia in the second World War. Responsible for the constitution was a constituent assembly that had been democratically elected in 1946. The first Cambodian constitution to a large extent modelled on the French constitution of the fourth republic. King Sihanouk served as first head of state, but not as head of the government. Nevertheless, the King had strong emergency powers. On a legislative level, the **National Assembly** as well as a second chamber, the **Council of the King**, have been established (Menzel, 2013, pp. 42–43).

However, after two lost elections that were overthrown by the King and supportive French troops, Sihanouk overtook the government and dissolved the parliament in 1952. He remained the leading figure in Cambodian politics until 1970 – firstly as King, from 1955 on as Prime Minister and after 1960 as “Head of State”. In 1970 Sihanouk was removed as Head of State through a non-confidence vote by the national assembly, orchestrated by his own government and supported by the United States (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). On October 9, 1970, Cambodia was **declared a republic** and a new constitution was introduced in 1972. The new constitution established a presidential system with a bicameral legislative and extended basic rights protected by a constitutional court. Unfortunately, the constitution never really got applied due to the following **civil war** between the government of former general Lon Nol and the communists as well as to the effects of the Vietnam War on Cambodia, especially the massive violence caused mainly through **US bombardment** and extensive corruption⁶. The government lost more and more parts of the country until on April 17, 1975, finally the Khmer Rouge took over the capital Phnom Penh and installed its violent regime in the most extreme form of communism (Menzel, 2013, pp. 263–264).

From 1975 until 1979, the terror regime of the **Khmer Rouge** under its “brother number one” Pol Pot has led to the death of around 1.7 million people (conservative estimations), that was about 20% of the population. Former leaders and “intellectuals” in the eye of the Khmer Rouge were executed, money, market and private properties have been abolished and whole cities have been evacuated, to bring inhabitants on forced marches to the countryside (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). Khmer Rouge rule was characterised by torture, forced labour, arbitrary executions, poverty and a starving population. According to historian David Chandler, there has not been any form of legal system in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979 (Menzel, 2013, p. 264).

Although the Khmer Rouge initially had been trained by Vietnamese forces, the regime grew suspicious of Vietnam and started an open conflict against its neighbour in 1977. Following these confrontations, **Vietnamese forces occupied Cambodia** in 1979, drove off the Khmer regime and a Vietnamese backed government took control (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). Still, conflict and violence continued in the internationally isolated country. In 1981 a socialist constitution with a single-party system and hardly any legal framework was adopted. The Constitution however, was reformed in 1989 after the reduction of Soviet assistance to Vietnam and the missing capacity of Vietnam to further interfere in Cambodia. The state’s name changed from “People’s Republic of Cambodia” to “**State of Cambodia**”, hoping to leave behind radical socialism. In 1991, the Paris Agreement, an international treaty, was introduced to overcome Cambodian isolation and to settle internal as well as external conflicts. A **UN peacebuilding mission** has been established in Cambodia and the process led to the democratic election of a Constituency Assembly in 1993. The election led to a coalition government between the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) of prime minister Hun Sen and the United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (Funcinpec) sponsored by the former King, Prince Sihanouk, that returned from exile. Cambodia became a kingdom again and Sihanouk its monarch for the second time. Cambodia was admitted into ASEAN in 1999 and joined the WTO in 2004, which was

⁶ According to estimates, the US attacks on Cambodia of the early 1970s killed between 150’000 and 750’000 people.

a sign of stabilization and openness for integration into the international community (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018).

1.3.2 Overview of the Cambodian Political System

Cambodia's legislative is bicameral, consisting of the directly elected **National Assembly** (lower chamber) and the indirectly commune councilors elected **Senate**. A parliamentary legislature lasts five years for the National Assembly and six years for the Senate (Freedom House, 2021). Head of State and therewith chief commander of the armed forces, called the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), is the king. However, most executive power lies within the prime minister and his or her cabinet. While the prime minister is chosen by the king based on recommendation of the chairman of the National Assembly, the other members of the government are selected from the different parties in the parliament. **Active voting age** in Cambodia is 18 for all citizens, passive voting right is for all citizens aged 25 or older (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021b).

In the early 2000s, Cambodian politics has been formed primarily by three parties: The **Cambodian People's Party (CPP)**, a non-communist party descended from the pro-Vietnam and communist Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party, the **Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP)**, that functions as the main opposition party, and the **United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (Funcinpec)**, composed of royalist supporters. While between 1993 and 2018, CPP's prime minister Hun Sen shared his position with either an SRP or a CNRP co-prime minister (from 1998 to 2008 there were even three prime ministers), after the 2018 election, where the CPP gained all parliament seats, Hun Sen remained as the sole prime minister (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021b). While the country's elections were at least semi comparative, the 2018 elections were held in a rather repressive manner. The main opposition party, the CNRP, has been officially banned in 2017. Cambodia is developing itself over the past decades into a one-party system, where the CPP and prime minister Hun Sen's government put pressure on opposition parties, the media and demonstrators – longer the more with intimidation, politically motivated prosecutions and violence (Freedom House, 2021).

The judiciary is composed of lower courts, an appeal court and a Supreme Court. There exists a separate military justice system and a constitutional council that determines the constitutionality of the legislation. However, the judiciary is not independent from the government and has often been suspected of corruption even though with the Supreme Council of Magistrates, there also exists also a court that appoints and disciplines judges (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021b).

On a local level, there exist provinces (khet) and municipalities (krong) that are led by a governor (in the case of provinces) or a mayor (in the case of municipalities). Provinces are divided into districts (srok), communes (khum) and villages (phum), municipalities into sectors (khan) and wards (Sangkat). The People's Assembly, composed of representatives elected by popular vote, chooses a People's Committee that has formal responsibility within the locality for public administration and security. Tax collection, civil bureaucracy and effective control over the armed forces and security lies in the hands of the governors and provincial officials (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021b).

In the 2020 **Freedom House Index**, Cambodia has been labelled "not free". Its total score is 25 out of 100. It only scores 5 out of 40 points in political rights and 20 out of 60 points in civil liberties (Freedom House, 2021). Considering the **World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators**, Cambodia did not really show a positive trend towards comparatively good governance. It better though its values in the category "Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism"⁷ from a low of 20.7% in 1998 to 53.8%

⁷ Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism captures perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be overthrown or destabilized by unconstitutional or violent means (Kaufmann et al., 2010, p. 4).

in 2016⁸. The value fell again recently to 46.2% in 2019. “Voice and Accountability”⁹ is steadily decreasing (from 25% in 1996 to 15% in 2019) as well as “Regulatory Quality”¹⁰ (from 46% in 1996 to 30% in 2019). “Rule of Law”¹¹ is around 18% and “Government Effectiveness”¹² at around 32% after a recent rise in values. “Control of Corruption”¹³ is low at around 10%. The last finding is also supported by data from the **Corruption Perceptions Index**, where Cambodia ranks 160 out of 180 countries in 2020 (Transparency International, 2021). In the **Economist’s 2020 Democracy Index**, Cambodia reaches rank 130 of 167 countries (The Economist, 2021).

1.3.3 Politics and Goals of the Education System

Education in Cambodia unfortunately also fell **victim to its violent history** in the second half of the 20th century. During the Democratic Kampuchea period, meaning the ruling of the Khmer Rouge, only a few primary schools were kept open for a politically tinged propaganda education. The only options for older students were irregularly scheduled political and technical courses in the communes (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021b). This horrific period in Cambodian history had not only an effect on education during that time, but weakened the system until today. The government estimates that during the time the Khmer Rouge was in power, 75% of all teachers, 96% of all university students and 67% of all primary and secondary school pupils were killed. Furthermore, infrastructure, learning material and equipment got destroyed on a massive scale (Benveniste et al., 2008, p. iii). After 1979, secondary school and higher education institutions reopened again. Today, a large number of children attend some form of education, but **transferring rates from primary to secondary education remains low**. Schools and colleges are severely hampered by shortages of funds, books, equipment and adequately trained and compensated staff (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021b).

The education system in Cambodia in recent decades has been primarily geared towards **increasing access to education**. Less focus has been placed on increasing the quality of education. This has been the case since independence, when Prince Norodom Sihanouk urged for a rapid inclusion of the rural population into school, but has not been able to guarantee quality education. The result was overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructure, untrained teachers and inadequate teacher facilities as well as learning materials. Also, after the Khmer Rouge years, quantity was the main goal –purged by a Vietnamese lead communist mindset, that meant building a nation of socialist workers. Still, after the Vietnamese drawback in the late 1980s, the quality of education has not been raised. **Corruption was widespread** in the cabinets to follow, and ministers were accused of being chosen not because of fitness to the job, but because of being loyal to the ruling party. In addition, substantial differences between the national officials and international donors in educational policies slowed reforms. The national government's focus was more on prestige projects and populist measures, like increasing teachers' salaries or infrastructural expansion. Due to external and internal pressure, the focus on quantity slowly changes. Still, **policy reforms are hard to promote** (Kelsall et al., 2019, pp. 132–136).

Even today, children in Cambodia are failing to reach learning standards appropriate for their age. Of course, enrolment has increased by a lot, the number of children enrolled in pre-school more than doubled since 2007 and enrolment for primary went to almost 100%, but school dropouts are massive, inadequate literacy a huge problem also among school children and learning standards are low. **Current challenges** in the education system are a lack of qualified teachers, infrastructural deficits that

⁸ The percentile in the World Bank’s Worldwide Government Indicators indicates the rank of a country among all countries in the world. 0 corresponds to the lowest rank and 100 corresponds to the highest rank (World Bank, 2021c).

⁹ Voice and Accountability captures perceptions of freedom of expression, freedom of association, free media and the citizens abilities to participate in selecting their government (Kaufmann et al., 2010, p. 4).

¹⁰ Regulatory Quality captures the perceptions of the government’s ability to formulate and implement policies and regulations aimed at the private sector development (Kaufmann et al., 2010, p. 4).

¹¹ 5. Rule of Law captures the perceptions of the extent of confidence in law enforcement elements such as the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence (Kaufmann et al., 2010, p. 4).

¹² 3. Government Effectiveness captures the perception of the quality of public service, civil service, policy formulation and implementation and the government’s commitment credibility to these policies as well as the degree of political pressure on the policies (Kaufmann et al., 2010, p. 4).

¹³ Control of Corruption captures perceptions of how much public power is used for private gain as well as the extent to which public power is owned by elites and private interests (Kaufmann et al., 2010, p. 4).

especially discriminates adolescent girls and children with disabilities, violence in schools, with teacher using corporal punishment and a lack of comprehension for education mainly in rural areas of the country (UNICEF, 2018).

2. Formal System of Education

2.1 Formal System of Education

Article 65 of Cambodia's 1993 constitution guarantees the **right to quality education for all citizens**. Further on, article 66 mandates the government to build an education system on the principles of educational freedom and equality that ensures equal opportunity to earn a living to all citizens and article 68 says "the State shall provide primary and secondary education to all citizens in public school", meaning free basic education (Chhinh & Dy, 2009, p. 114; Universal Management Group, 2019, p. 6). The constitution further states that the state shall control public and private schools at all levels (Chhinh & Dy, 2009, p. 114). To implement this education system, the government passed the 2007 Education Law. Therein, the responsibilities to manage the education system are provided in accordance to the administrative division of Cambodia (Universal Management Group, 2019, p. 6):

- On the national or central level, the responsibility lays within the **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS)**;
- on the provincial or municipal level, the responsibility lays within the **Provincial Offices for Education (POEs)**;
- on the district or Khan level, the responsibility lays within the **District Offices for Education (DOEs)**;
- On the educational institution level, the responsibility lies within the different institutions (schools).

Cambodia has a **6-3-3 education system** that contains six years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education and three years of upper secondary education (UNESCO, 2004). In addition, there are six to twelve years of **higher education** (four years for a bachelor's degree, two years for a master's degree and three to six years for a doctorate) (Universal Management Group, 2019, p. 6). **Basic education** thereby is made up of primary education and lower secondary education, summing in total up to nine years (Chhinh & Dy, 2009, p. 113). These nine years are compulsory and free of charge. However, free education is not only provided for basic education, but also for pre-primary and upper secondary education (UNESCO, 2013, p. 26).

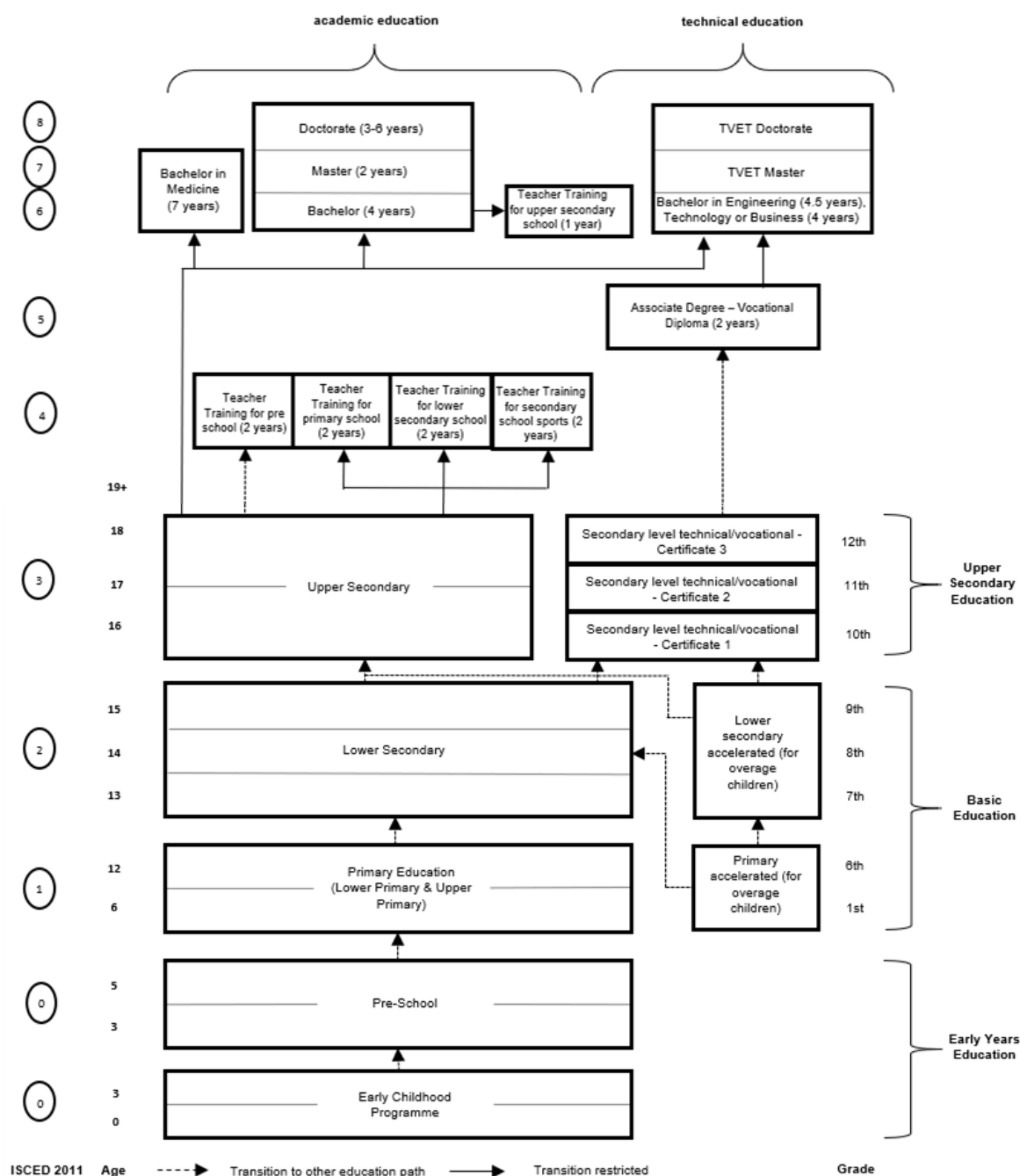
The education system covers **seven sub-sectors**: (1) early childhood education (ECE), (2) primary education, (3) secondary and technical education, (4) higher education (5) non-formal education, including adult and continuing education, (6) youth development and (7) physical education and sport. The MoEYS has the major responsibility for those sectors, except for technical and vocational education and training (TVET), even though certain aspects and activities of TVET are still within the responsibility of the MoEYS. Those run under the subsector "secondary and technical education" and includes the provision of operational budgets to and curriculum development for General and Technical High Schools (GTHSs) and the provision of career counselling services for secondary school students (Universal Management Group, 2019, p. 6).

Beside public schools, there are also a number of different **private schools**. According to the numbers in table 6, the role of these private schools on primary and secondary level is rather marginal compared to public institutions. At pre-primary, these schools make up for roughly a fifth of all institutions in 2019. Private institutions seem to be of more importance at post-secondary, non-tertiary and at tertiary level, where more than half of the students are enrolled in private institutions rather than public institutions. On primary and secondary education level, private school can be characterized as falling under one of three categories: (1) school in which the language of instruction is Khmer, (2) non-Khmer language school mainly for international or immigrant learners or Cambodians that want to undergo education in languages other than Khmer, and (3) religious schools (mostly Buddhist monastic school or Islamic schools) (Universal Management Group, 2019, p. 7). In the school year 2018–2019, there has been a

total of 1222 private schools, whereas 509 were for pre-primary, 488 for primary and 225 for secondary education (MoEYS, 2019). The 1993 constitution states that the state shall control public and private schools at all levels (Chhinh & Dy, 2009, p. 114)

One of the four government priorities for the Cambodian government to bring Cambodia into the group of upper-middle income countries by 2030 is **human resource development through education**. It stresses the connection between quality education and economic growth, improved employment prospects and income-generating opportunities. The government wants to achieve its education goals through (1) training of skilled and productive labour to meet market demand and increase added value, (2) developing regulatory frameworks and improving educational and vocational training institutions, (3) encouraging private sector participation in education and (4) strengthening the quality of education, promoting scientific research, technology development and innovation (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2014, p. 1). Figure 2 shows Cambodia's educational system.

Figure SEQ Figure 2 Mapping of Cambodia's education system, 2016



Source: own figure based on UNESCO (2016)

Table 6 shows the **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)**¹⁴ and the **Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)**¹⁵ by education level for Cambodia. The NER quantifies the total number of students in the theoretical age group for a given education level enrolled at that level expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The GER quantifies the number of students enrolled at a given education level—irrespective of their age—as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education. For example, for the primary education level, the NER indicates how many students of the typical primary school age are actually enrolled in primary school, while the GER sets

¹⁴ The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2021a) defines the Gross Enrolment Ratio as the “number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education”.

¹⁵ The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2021b) defines the Net Enrolment Ratio as the “total number of students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group”.

the actual number of students in primary education—irrespective of their age—in relation to those who are in the official age to attend primary education.

Table 6 Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in %, latest numbers available

Education level	ISCED 2011	Net Enrolment Ratio	Gross Enrolment Ratio	Percentage enrolled in private institutions
Pre-primary education ¹⁶	020	n/a	25.1 ^(d)	18.2 ^(d)
Primary education	1	90.6 ^(d)	106.5 ^(d)	5.7 ^(d)
Secondary education	2–3	n/a	45.2 ^(a)	2.0 ^(a)
<i>Lower secondary education</i>	2	86.7 ^(c)	70.1 ^(d)	4.5 ^(d)
<i>Upper secondary education</i>	3	43.9 ^(a)	28.7 ^(a)	4.9 ^(a)
<i>Percentage enrolled in vocational secondary education</i>	2–3	2.3 ^(a) (<i>upper secondary 7.4^(a)</i>)		
Compulsory education (primary and lower secondary education)	1–3	n/a	95.2 ^(d)	n/a
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	4	n/a	4.6 ^(b)	54.6 ^(b)
Tertiary education	5–8	n/a	14.7 ^(d)	68.1 ^(d)
<i>Short-cycle tertiary education</i>	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Bachelor or equivalent level</i>	6	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Master or equivalent level</i>	7	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Doctoral or equivalent level</i>	8	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: own table based on World Bank (2020). Data is from: (a) 2008, (b) 2010, (c) 2015, and (d) 2019

2.2 Pre-Primary Education

Pre-Primary Education in Cambodia exists basically in four forms: There are (1) formal pre-schools (FPS), (2) private pre-schools (PPS), (3) community pre-schools (CPS) and (4) home-based education programmes (HBEP). **Formal pre-school** usually takes place in special pre-school classrooms or in primary schools. Teachers should be qualified to teach at pre-primary or primary education level. **Private pre-schools** are mostly aimed for children from the international community and teachers often hold international qualifications. Quality assurance of private pre-schools is not yet standardized by the MoEYS. In 2019, around 18.2% of pre-primary learners were enrolled in private institutions (see therefore table 6). **Community pre-schools** are commonly situated in rural areas, where there is a shortage of formal pre-schools. Classes can take place at private homes, in community centres or if possible in primary schools. Teachers are normally not qualified teachers, but MoYES provides in-service programmes for those teachers. Teacher's salaries are often paid by the commune councils. **Home based education** programmes are mostly organized by local mothers on a voluntary basis. Mothers are led by a core mother, who is trained and provided with materials by MoEYD and NGOs. The programme is not only aimed at children between zero and six years but also their mothers that can discuss issues related to health care, well-being and education of their children (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2014, pp. 3–4).

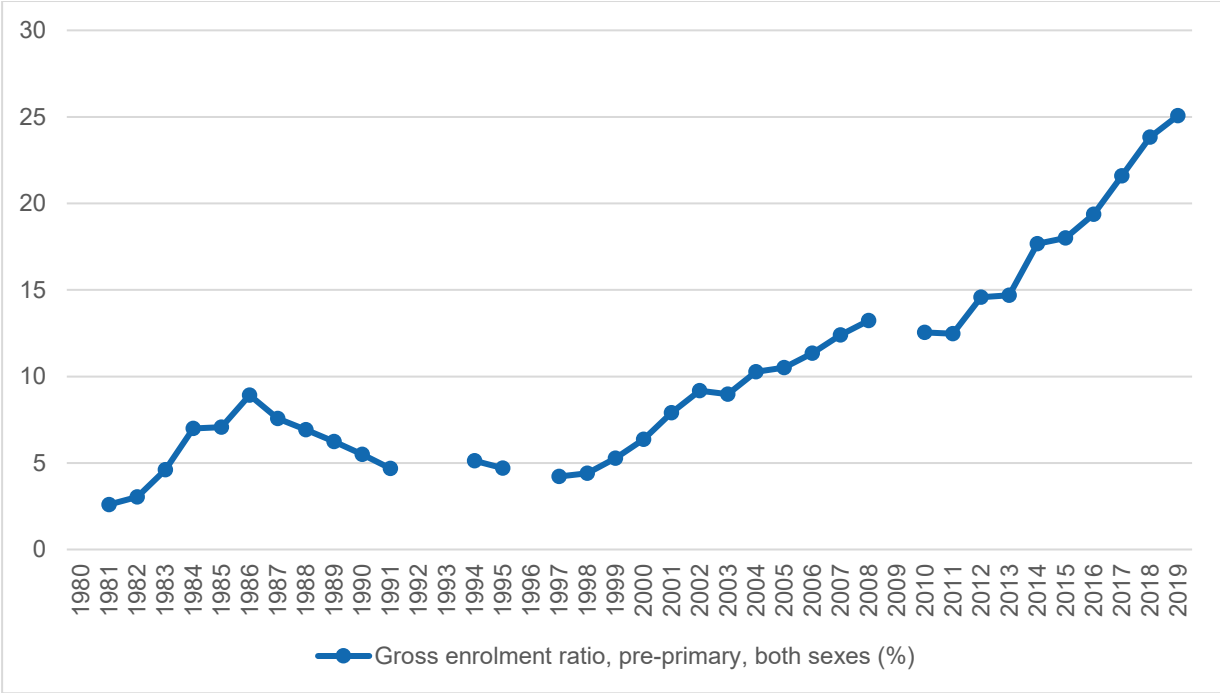
FPSs are under the direct responsibility of the MoEYS (Rao & Pearson, 2009, pp. 15–16). Pre-primary education is not part of basic education and therefore not compulsory. However, public pre-school is free in Cambodia (UNESCO, 2013, p. 26). Children normally enter formal pre-schooling as well as CPS at the age of three and leave for primary school at the age of six (UNESCO, 2016). The curriculum includes around 30 hours per week. Subjects are psychomotricity (six hours per week), pre-math (three hours per week), Khmer language (four hours per week), science (three hours per week) and social studies (14 hours per week). A school week consists of five days, six study-hours a day and one study

¹⁶ In the school year of 2018, the new 2-6-6-3 CBC education system has been introduced in pre-primary. Therefore, pre-primary as part of basic education has been made compulsory. This may explain the jump in the GER from 2018 to 2019 in pre-primary (NER has not been available for 2019).

hour is 30 minutes (Department of Curriculum Development, 2015, p. 10). In the school year 2018–2019, there were around 4301 pre-primary education institutions in Cambodia (Department of Education Management Information System, 2019).

Figure 3 shows the GER for formal pre-primary education in Cambodia between 1980 and 2019. Enrolment rates massively expanded from 2.6% in 1981 to around 25% in 2019. After an increase, followed by decreasing numbers another rising in number took place between 1997 and 2008. The strongest increase, though, took place after 2011, which is possibly caused by the expansion of pre-school classes in primary schools that started in 2009 and as a result of the implementation of the Global Partnership for education funded programme after 2010 (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2014, p. 4). The large increase in enrolment rates in the past years has also affected the pupil-teacher ratio for pre-primary education: The number was lower in 2013 (around 28.6) than it was in 2019 (around 33.6) despite a massive increase in qualified teacher from 5096 to 8075 during that time (World Bank, 2020).

Figure 3 Cambodia enrolment rates for pre-primary education, 1980–2019



Source: own figure based on World Bank (2020)¹⁷

2.3 Primary and Lower Secondary Education

Primary education in Cambodia consists of six years of schooling (grade 1–6). Children are six years old when entering primary education and normally leave it at the age of twelve (UNESCO, 2016). Primary education is part of basic education. It is free and compulsory (UNESCO, 2013, p. 26). The purpose of primary education is (1) to strengthen basic skills such as reading and writing, (2) raise student’s awareness and appreciation of the value of arts and entertainment and (3) to provide students with opportunities to develop their interests in and understanding of their traditional culture (Royal University of Phnom Penh - Faculty of Education, 2019, pp. 16–17). In the school year 2018–2019, there were around 7,228 primary education institutions in Cambodia. Of these, 6,553 are located in rural areas and 675 in urban areas (Department of Education Management Information System, 2019).

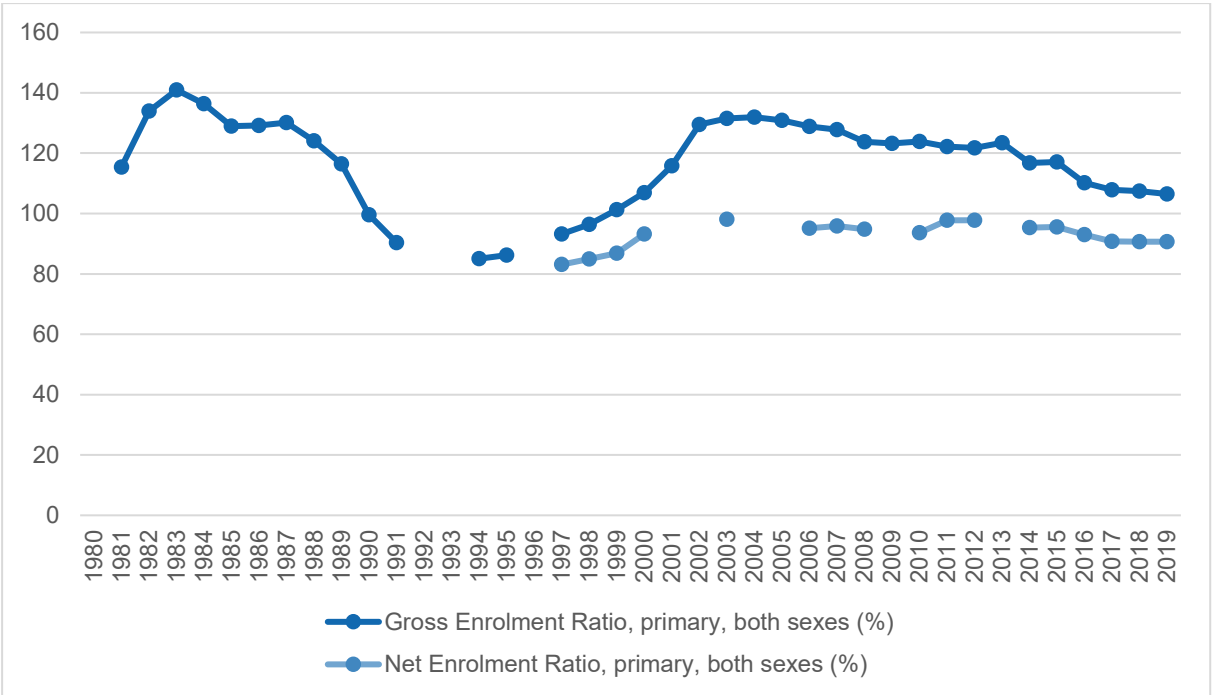
The **curriculum** includes around 30 hours per week for each grade. Subjects are Khmer language and culture (eleven hours on grades 1–3 and nine hours on grades 4–6), mathematics (seven hours on

¹⁷ Gaps in the figure are due to missing data.

grades 1–3 and six hours on grades 4–6), science (three hours per week), computer (one hour per week, only on grades 4–6), social studies (three hours per week), arts education (one hour per week), physical education and sports (two hours per week), health education (one hour per week), foreign languages (two hours per week) and local life skills (two hours per week, but only on grades 4–6). A school week consists of six days, five study-hours a day and one study hour is 40 minutes (Department of Curriculum Development, 2015, p. 11). Foreign languages on primary education level mean English or French (Department of Curriculum Development, 2015, p. 2). In a UNSECO supported programme managed by the Primary Education Department, **older students get the chance to catch up** on primary schooling. The programme takes only three years instead of six years (UNESCO, 2016).

Figure 4 shows the **NER and the GER** in Cambodia for primary education from 1980 to 2019. The GER in the 1980s is well above 100%, because during this period the "missed" years before were to be caught up (between 1975 and 1980, there was effectively no education system under Khmer Rouge rule). Many children who were actually beyond primary school age made up the primary school years during this period. After the rate fell, it rose again to over 100% in early 2000, when free primary school was slowly implemented by the government. The following decrease is mainly the result of a reduction in enrolment of overaged children that goes back to easier mapping of school children, the introduction of accelerated learning programs for overaged students and investment in schooling infrastructure in rural areas (Royal University of Phnom Penh - Faculty of Education, 2019, p. 10). In 2019, the GER was at 106.5%, still over 100%. The NER meanwhile was around 90.5% in 2019, being smaller than it was in the previous 20 years. The pupil to qualified teacher ratio was relatively high with 41.9% in 2019 (World Bank, 2020).

Figure 4 Cambodia enrolment rates for primary education, 1980–2019



Source: own figure based on World Bank (2020)¹⁸

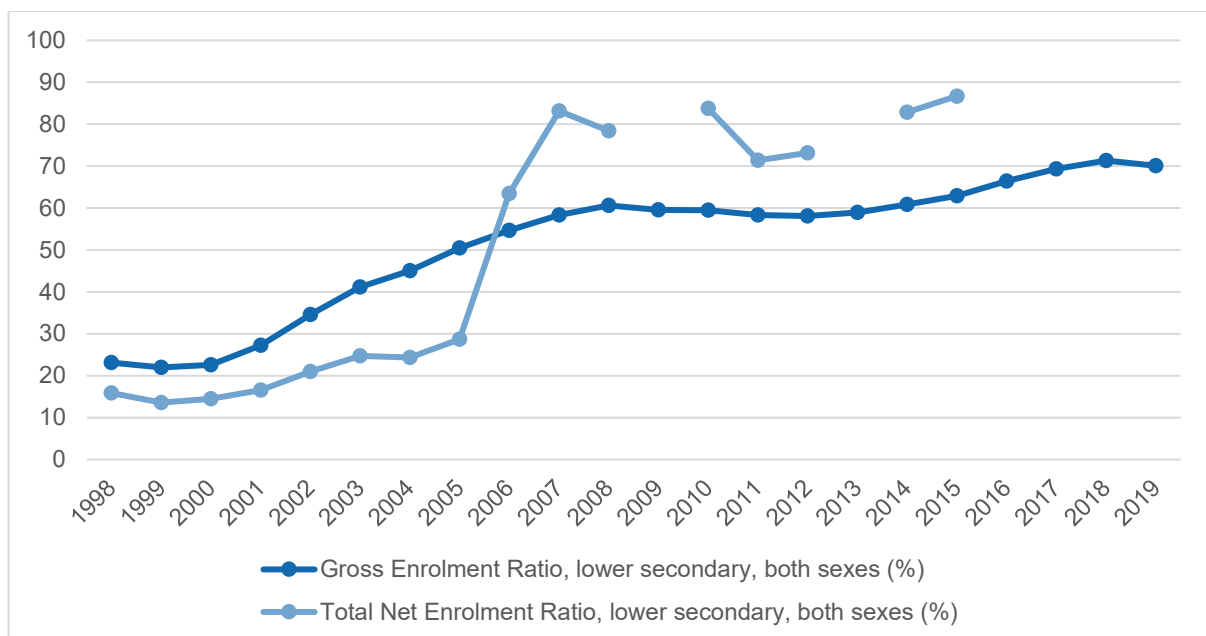
Lower secondary education consists of three years of schooling (grade 7–9). Children enter normally at the age of twelve and leave lower secondary education at the age of 15. There is a **nationwide examination** at the end of grade 9, that is determining for progression in education (UNESCO, 2016). Lower secondary education is part of basic education. It is compulsory and free (UNESCO, 2013, p. 26). In the school year 2018–2019, there were around 1,739 lower secondary education institutions in Cambodia (Department of Education Management Information System, 2019).

¹⁸ Gaps in the figure are due to missing data.

The **curriculum** includes around 40 hours per week for each grade. Subjects are Khmer language (seven hours per week), foreign languages (six hours per week), mathematics (seven hours per week), science (six hours per week), social studies (seven hours per week), ICT (two hours per week), physical education and sports (two hours per week), arts education (one hour per week), health education (one hour per week) and local life skills (one hours per week). A school week consists of six days, four to seven study-hours a day and one study hour is 50 minutes (Department of Curriculum Development, 2015, p. 13). There is a **programme for overaged children** who are given the possibility to catch up on lower secondary school. It is given in the same schools, but the older students are grouped in different classes (UNESCO, 2016). After lower secondary school, learners can continue with formal upper secondary school or entering secondary-level vocational training programs (UNESCO, 2013, p. 26).

Figure 5 shows the **NER and the GER** in Cambodia for lower secondary education from 1998 to 2019. The GER steadily increased from 1999 on, where it was around 22% to more than 71% in 2018. The NER also increased, most dramatically from 2005 to 2007, where it rose from 28.7% to 83.1%. Reason. In recent years, the NER was higher than the GER, implying that the share of enrolled students regardless of age compared to the official school-age population is lower than the share of enrolled students in the relevant age compared to the official school-age population.

Figure SEQ Figure 5 Cambodia enrolment rates for lower secondary education, 1998–2019



Source: own figure based on World Bank (2020)¹⁹

2.4 Upper Secondary Education

Upper secondary education in Cambodia consists of three years of schooling (grade 10–12). Children are generally 15 years old when entering upper secondary education and leave at the age of 18. There is a **nationwide examination** at the end of grade 12, that is determining for progression in education (UNESCO, 2016). Upper secondary education is not part of basic education and therefore not compulsory. However, it is also free of charge (UNESCO, 2013, p. 26). Learners have the choice of **three different further studies**, namely science, social science and technical education (Department of Curriculum Development, 2015, p. 2). While technical education is part of TVET, it will be covered in

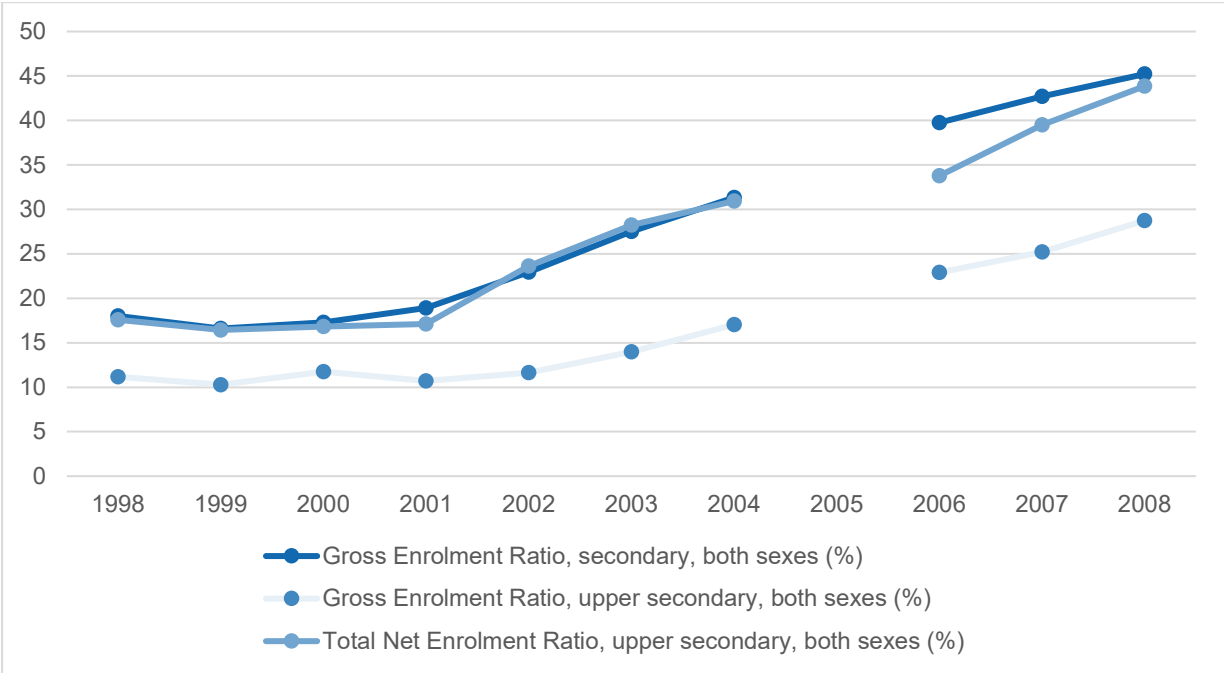
¹⁹ Gaps in the figure are due to missing data.

chapter three accordingly. In the school year 2018–2019, there were around 525 upper secondary education institutions in Cambodia (Department of Education Management Information System, 2019).

The **curriculum** includes around 40 hours per week for each grade. Subjects are Khmer literature (five hours per week for science and six hours for social science), mathematics (six hours per week for science and five for social science), foreign language (six hours per week), physical education and sports (two hours per week), home economics (one hour per week), physics (four hours per week for science and two hours for social science), earth-environmental science (two hours per week), chemistry (three hours per week for science and two hours for social science), biology (three hours per week for science and two hours for social science), history (two hours per week for science and four hours for social science), geography (two hours per week for science and three hours for social science), moral-civics (two hours per week for science and three hours for social science), ICT (one hour per week) and health education (one hour per week). A school week consists of six days, four to seven study hours a day and one study hour is 50 minutes (Department of Curriculum Development, 2015, pp. 14–15). There exists also an equivalence programme for students that are 16 years or older and have a lower secondary diploma. This programme for older students takes only two instead of three years (UNESCO, 2016). After completing upper secondary education, it is possible to enter universities or the TVET path on post-secondary, non-tertiary education. This consists of a two-year associate programme (ISCED 5) (UNESCO, 2013, p. 26).

In the school year of 2016–2017, only one in five students completed upper secondary education. In rural areas, the completion rate was even lower, at 15% (ADB, 2018, p. 15). Figure 6 shows the GER for secondary and the **NER as well as the GER** for upper secondary education. In 2009, the GER for upper secondary was around 29%, the NER higher at around 44%. Since 2000, the enrolment rates increased steadily, being there on 12% for the GER and 17% for the NER.

Figure 6 Cambodia enrolment rates for secondary and upper secondary education, 1998–2019



Source: own figure based on World Bank (2020)²⁰

²⁰ Gaps in the figure are due to missing data.

2.5 Postsecondary and Higher Education

Students in Cambodia are expected to finish upper secondary education at the age of 18 and start higher education at that age. A Bachelor's degree, in general, takes three to four years to complete, a Master's degree takes two years and a Doctorate for three to five years. Exceptions are the Bachelor's degree in Medicine, which takes seven years, the Bachelor's degree in Engineering, which takes five years and the Bachelor's degree in Technology, which takes four years (UNESCO, 2016). Supervision of higher education institutions in Cambodia falls under not less than 16 ministries. Over two third of the institutions fall under the **supervision of the MoYES and the MoLVT**, whereby there is no clear cut between what is vocational or technical education, for which the responsibility should lay within the MoLVT, and what is academic education, for which the responsibility should lie within the MoYES. By law, there should be one regulatory, coordinating institution, the **Supreme National Council of Education**, but until now, this council has not been established. The two "streams" (academic and TVET) are governed separately. The academic stream is governed by the General Directorate of Higher Education (GDHE) of the MoEYS, whereby the Department of Higher Education (DHE) is in charge of associate and undergraduate programs, and the Department of Scientific Research overviews graduate and postgraduate programs and research. The TVET stream is governed by the General Directorate of Technical and Vocational Training of MoLVT. Another important player is the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) that overviews financial management and government funding (Un & Sok, 2018, pp. 1–2).

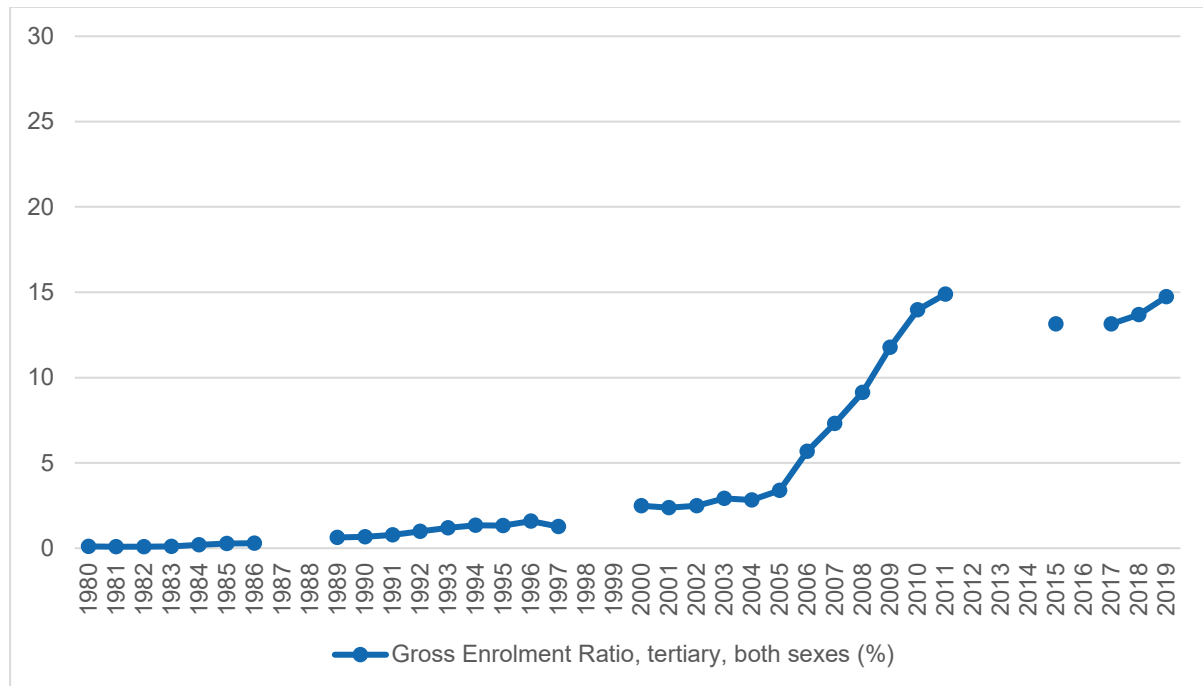
In 2016, there were 121 higher education institutions in Cambodia, of which 73 were private and only 48 public (MoEYS, 2017, p. 49). Higher education, like almost every sector of education, had to start again from zero in the 1980s after the Khmer Rouge regime. Between 1979 and 1991, it was supported by the socialist bloc and public investment in higher education was low. Also, after 1991, public investment in higher education remained limited. Public expenditure on education as a percent of GDP is comparably low in Cambodia and the share of **educational expenditure on tertiary education** is especially low. In 2014, Cambodia only spent around 4.6% of total education expenditure on the tertiary level, while the same number was around 24 % in Australia, 26% in the US and even 35% in Malaysia. Expenditure on higher education as a share of GDP was around 0.1% in recent years, which is very low compared to the estimated world average of 1% (Un & Sok, 2018, pp. 4–6). Where public institutions failed to create a service, **private providers** stepped into the breach. In 199, private sponsorship of higher education institutions was made legal, which triggered a large number of private initiatives in the sector. In 2019, almost 70% of tertiary education enrolment was at private institutions (see therefore table 6).

On average, **tuition fees** are around 280 USD a year. Tuition fees decreased heavily due to the higher competition among institutions that was fostered by higher demand. Fees charged by some private universities were in recent years as low as 100 USD, which is massively lower than the costs of some undergraduate degrees of around 600 USD in 1997. The government started to grant **scholarships** around 20 years ago, like free seats at tertiary institutions or living stipends for students through merit and quota-based allocations. Scholarships to cover a part of tuition fees are normally around 130 USD (Un & Sok, 2018, p. 7). Government funding forms around ten to 30% of public universities expenditure in urban regions, but is much larger in rural areas (Un & Sok, 2018, p. 7).

Figure 7 shows **enrolment ratios for tertiary education** that rose massively between 2005 and 2010. Before 2005, enrolment ratios were more or less zero-bound, never raising over 3%. Until 2010, the rates rose up to 14 percent before they stagnated again. The rapid increase in enrolment after 2005 and the high share of private tertiary education institutions with little state supervision raised concerns about the quality of education and relevance to the labour market and national development needs. The current situation seems to result in an **oversupply of graduates** in certain areas, especially in business administration, and an **undersupply of graduates** in other areas, especially in STEM subjects. It is rather business-related subjects that most students are enrolled in. Other popular subjects are English

language or IT. Relatively lower are enrolment rates in STEM subjects or creative or liberal arts (Un & Sok, 2018, pp. 2, 9). Also, there seems to be a **shortage of teaching staff** at tertiary institutions. While student numbers increased over five times in the first decade of the 21st century, the number of instructors only doubled. Moreover, there are concerns about the qualification of the staff, since teaching staff with a doctoral degree only was around 7.5 percent in the academic year of 2017–2018. Around 70 percent of the teaching staff holds a Master’s degree. In 2014, roughly 44 percent of students were female (Un & Sok, 2018, pp. 7–8).

Figure 7 Cambodia enrolment rates for tertiary education, 1980–2019



Source: own figure based on World Bank (2020)²¹

2.6 Continuing Education (Adult Education)

Literacy rates in Cambodia are rather low. In 2015, the adult literacy rate (15 years and older) was at 81 percent, youth literacy rate (15–24 years) at 92 percent and elderly literacy rate (65 years and older) at 53 percent. There is a huge gap between literacy rates of females and male for the age group of 65 years and older. While the rate is at 77 percent for men, it is only 37 percent for women. There is hardly any gender difference for the youth age group (+/- 0.5 percent, smaller number for female) and smaller for the adult literacy rate (+/- 10 percent, smaller number for female). A similar scheme is visible in urban and rural regions. The numbers are smaller for rural regions for all three groups and the difference is the largest for the group of the elderly (World Bank, 2020).

Adult and continuing education in Cambodia is part of non-formal education. The Cambodian government considers non-formal education as part of the official education system (IBE-UNESCO, 2006). Responsible for the national coordination of non-formal education is the MoEYS’s Department for Non Formal Education (MoEYS, n.d.). To promote lifelong learning and therefore adult education, the government established Community Learning Centres (CLC) as well other institutions for adult, informal and non-formal education. CLCs offer programmes for functional literacy, post-literacy, re-entry, accelerated learning, basic education equivalency and income generation. However, there are several issues regarding adult education. Cambodia has a lack of infrastructure, human resources and

²¹ Gaps in the figure are due to missing data.

knowledge about the programmes in the population as well as limited funding. Training also seems to be unattractive among the target audience and there is a traditional mindset that does not give high value to education (Piseth, 2020). For 2006, it is estimated that only around two percent of all illiterate persons were reached by the programmes (IBE-UNESCO, 2006).

Besides governmental institutions, there exist several projects from different NGOs such as the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ), the DVV, NGO Education Partnership (NEP) in Cambodia and other organizations (Piseth, 2020). Adult education as part of non-formal education is quite unique in Cambodia because the setting and location are flexible and varied. Programmes can take place not only at CLCs, but also at churches, local community houses, the houses of village chiefs and at pagodas (Piseth, 2019).

2.7 Teacher Education

There are **five types of teacher's education in Cambodia**: (1) teacher training for preschool, (2) teacher training for primary school, (3) teacher training for lower secondary school, (4) teacher training for secondary school sports and (5) teacher training for upper secondary school. While the first four are education on post-secondary, non-tertiary level (ISCED level 4), teacher training for upper secondary school is on tertiary education level and equivalent to a Bachelor's degree (ISCED level 6). Schooling duration is two years except for upper secondary teachers, where training takes only one year. To become an upper secondary level teacher, the entrance requirement itself is having a Bachelor's degree in another field. Teacher training for upper secondary school therefore is normally a second education on tertiary level. On the other levels, an upper secondary education diploma is the minimal requirement to begin training. An exception is teacher training for pre-primary schools, where the minimum entrance requirement is only to have completed grade 12, no matter if candidates pass or fail the final exams (UNESCO, 2016). Every year, up to 5000 teacher trainees are accepted to enter **Teacher Training Centres (TTCs)**. To select candidates, there are entrance examinations for TTCs. Applicants that belong to an ethnic minority or that are from remote and disadvantaged areas as well as contract teachers get extra points on their score at the entrance examinations. Female applicants are given preference over male ones with equal scores to foster female teaching staff (Tandon & Fukao, 2015, p. 41). There is in general a lack of female role-models. By ensuring to have at least one qualified female teacher per school, the officials want to provide strong role models for female students (Booth, 2014, p. 48).

In reality, the **requirements for teachers are not met accordingly**. In the 2005-2006 academic year, only about a quarter of primary school teachers hold an upper secondary school degree, while about two thirds hold a lower secondary degree. On secondary level, almost two thirds of the teachers have completed at least grade 12. Nevertheless, four fifths of primary school teachers have received a training certificate. At secondary level, almost all school teachers at that time have gone through teacher training. Younger teachers tend to have achieved higher education. However, what remains low is in-service training that only roughly 15 percent of lower secondary teachers have attended (Benveniste et al., 2008, pp. iii-iv).

There is **still a shortage of a comprehensive teacher education and training system** in Cambodia. Teacher trainers generally are not able to apply student-centred teaching methods and are focused more on academic improvement than on teaching methodology and teaching practices (Tandon & Fukao, 2015, pp. 58-60). Another point is that teachers, but also trainers at TTCs, do not know about existing teaching standards. In 2012, only 40 percent of trainers were aware of existing trainer standards and even fewer had a written copy of it (Tandon & Fukao, 2015, p. 48). However, under-qualified teachers on a broader level are also still a consequence of the destructive Khmer Rouge era that eradicated almost any individual with pedagogical education or experience. Teachers in the early 1980s got trained through a wide variety of short-term courses that lasted only from one week up to a month. Also, learners on higher grades educated learners on lower grades (Pich, 2017, p. 44). Today, the lack of teachers is especially high in rural and remote areas, where teachers sometimes are forced to take

double shifts. Covering double shifts and giving extra lessons in a lot of cases occur also due to low salaries that teachers receive (Pich, 2017, pp. 75–79; Tandon & Fukao, 2015, p. 41). The pupil-teacher ratio for primary education in 2018 was at around 41 (World Bank, 2020).

The programmes are offered at different TTCs, meaning the centre of Pedagogical Secondary School for Pre-School Teachers for pre-primary level (also Pre-School Teacher Training College PSTTC), the Provincial Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs) for primary level, the Regional Teacher Training Colleges (RTTCs) for lower secondary level, the National Institute for Physical Education and Sports (NIPES) for secondary school sports teachers and the National Institute of Education (NIE), previously named Faculty of Pedagogy, for upper secondary level (UNESCO, 2016). All in all, there were around 26 TTCS in 2012: one PSTTC, 18 PTTCs, six RTTCs and one NIE (Pich, 2017, p. 43; Tandon & Fukao, 2015, p. 41).

Teacher training in Cambodia has a practical component. In the two years programmes, there is a six-week teaching practice in the first year and an eight-week practicum in the second year. At the end of the programmes, there is an examination. Failure rates for this examination are very low, so almost all students pass the examination. Courses at TTCs are free and students receive a small monthly stipend of 9000 riel (approx. 2.20 USD) (Tandon & Fukao, 2015, pp. 41–42).

3. The System of Vocational and Professional Education and Training

This section of the Factbook describes the VET system at the upper secondary level and the PET at the tertiary level in more detail. Thereby, the term vocational and professional education and training (VPET) refers to both, the VET and the PET system. In Cambodia however, VPET system is called TVET (Technical and vocational education and training) and VET and PET are referred to as VET and TET (technical education and training).

Cambodia has the youngest population in the Pacific Asian region. 63 percent of the population is aged under 24 years in 2018 and 300,000 new people enter the labour market annually (DEZA, 2018). This young population is an opportunity for Cambodia as well as a challenge. According to the 2012 labour force survey, only about 28 percent of Cambodia's working age population had completed secondary education and only about one percent attended TVET while two percent were able to graduate at university (SEAMEO VOCTECH Institute, 2020).

Formal TVET in Cambodia basically consist of four different levels (UNESCO, 2013, p. 30):

1. Certificate Level (lower secondary): short courses up to a year or less, delivered in provincial or vocational training centres or in communities, lead to a certificate;
2. Diploma Level (upper secondary): training for lower secondary completers, delivered in provincial and vocational training centres, lead to different diplomas depending on the duration (one to three years training);
3. Higher Diploma Level (post-secondary): training for upper secondary completers, delivered in technical institutes and polytechnics, to a higher diploma (two years of training);
4. Bachelor Level (tertiary): courses for upper secondary completers (four to four and a half years for the degree) or higher diploma holders (two or two and a half years for the degree), lead to a Bachelor degree in engineering, technology or business administration.

In Cambodia, TVET has two major and often competing aims. On the one hand, TVET needs to address social equity issues and must therefore assist the poor to master skills that will enhance family income, foremost in rural and agricultural regions. On the other hand, TVET has to meet the needs of the economy to deliver a skilled and adaptable workforce with competency-based training. Due to limited resources, it is not easy for the officials to decide on what issue they need to focus more: link TVET institutions to the needs of communes as defined by communes themselves or link it to the industry's and the labour market's needs (UNEVOC, 2014, p. 11). In 2018, there were 55 public TVET institutions and 227 private TVET providers in Cambodia (UNEVOC, 2020).

Beside formal TVET, **non-formal TVET** is widespread across the country. It is offered in Provincial Training Centres (PTCs) and also in Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) or Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and Women's Development Centres. While PTCs offer more skill training programmes, mostly in agriculture or craft, CLCs offer literacy and basic vocational training for income generation. PTCs are less standardised and their enrolment ratios, operations, delivery modalities and lengths of training vary from centre to centre (UNEVOC, 2020). Usually, courses take between one and four months. Examples are a two week course on agriculture (being the most offered course by far), a three to six weeks course on technical trade, textile-garments, hairdressing-beauty, computing, tourism, hospitality, business art or language. Their main purpose is to address dislocation and poverty reduction, targeting mostly rural areas (UNEVOC, 2014, p. 7). All over Cambodia, there are around 22 PTCs and

157 CLCs. While PTCs run under MoLVT, CLCs run under MoEYS. Also, NGOs, private providers and small businesses offer informal apprenticeships in their infrastructure. According to the MoLVT there are an estimated 750 private businesses offering fee-based training services. Most of these training sessions are computer or English courses. The duration of the programmes is normally not longer than one to four months and their focus is on basic technical skills in fields like agriculture, construction, motor repair or basic food processing (UNEVOC, 2020).

In-service training is not regulated in Cambodia. Information is either not available or limited to a relatively small scale of activities. In company TVET seems to exist but is limited to the initiatives of a few private companies (UNEVOC, 2020).

For equivalency across the whole country, the Cambodian government introduced the Cambodia National Qualification Framework (CNQF) in 2014. The CNQF provides the possibility to compare the general education stream with the TVET stream and therefore students' movements between them (Yok et al., 2019, p. 28). Table 7 shows the CNQF.

Table 7: Cambodia National Qualification Framework for TVET

Level	ISCED 2011	Qualifications	General Education Equivalent	Admission Requirements	Duration
Level 1	2	Vocational Skill Certificate	Lower Secondary School	No Requirements	< 1 year
Level 2	3	TVET Certificate I	Upper Secondary School	Completed Grade 9 or Bridging Certificate	1 year
Level 3	3	TVET Certificate II	Upper Secondary School	TVET Certificate I	1 year
Level 4	3	TVET Certificate III	Upper Secondary School	TVET Certificate II or Grade 10	1 year
Level 5	5	Technical Associate Diploma Associate Diploma		Completed Grad 12 or TVET Certificate III	2 years
Level 6	6	Bachelor's degree in Technology or Business	Bachelor's degree	Upper Secondary School Certificate or (Technical) Associate Diploma	2–4 years
Level 7	7	Master's degree in Technology or Business	Master's degree	Bachelor's degree in Technology or Business	2–4 years
Level 8	8	Doctor		Master's degree in Technology or Business	3–4 years

Source: own table based on UNEVOC (2014) and SEAMEO VECTECH Institute (2020)

3.1 Vocational Education and Training (VET; Upper Secondary Education Level)

The vocational track of upper secondary education in Cambodia can be entered after completing lower secondary education. Secondary-level vocational training programmes are offered by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) (UNEVOC, 2020). The duration of the programme on upper secondary level is three years, whereby it is possible to leave the programme with a certificate also after the first and the second year. If the trainees leave the programme after the first year, they get the “Technical/Vocational Certificate I” and the title of “Semi-Skilled Worker”. Leaving the programme after the second year gets the trainees the “Technical/Vocational Certificate II” and the title of “Skilled Worker”. Completing the third year of training leads to the “Technical/Vocational Certificate III” and the title of a “Highly Skilled Worker”. Only by completing the full three-year programme, it is possible for graduates to continue vocational and technical education and training on post-secondary level (UNESCO, 2016). The Technical/Vocational Certificate III is equivalent to a high school diploma

(UNEVOC, 2014, p. 9). Students are also able to enter formal tertiary education (undergraduate programme) at universities with the Technical/Vocational Certificate III. Entering the labour market is possible with all three Certificates (UNEVOC, 2020).

Courses on upper secondary TVET are offered in a wide variety of areas, including vehicle repairing, general mechanics, computer technology, agricultural mechanics, electricity, electronics, repairing of cooling mechanics or civil engineering (UNEVOC, 2014, p. 7, 2020).

There exists also a formal TVET course on lower secondary education level (level 1 on the CNQF). The course takes less than a year and completers get the Vocational Skill Certificate. The course includes the learning of agricultural skills such as chicken raising, vegetable planting, pig raising, but also other practical skills like computer design (Yok et al., 2019, p. 28).

Information about the share of students in secondary and upper secondary education enrolled in vocational programs is scarce. Due to missing data, numbers ante 1998 are hardly available and there is no data for after 2008. The share of students in secondary education enrolled in vocational programs seemed to be higher in the early 1970s than from 1998 on. In 1972, the share was around 6.7% while it was only between 1.5 and 3% from 1998 and 2008. The share of students enrolled in vocational education is higher in upper secondary than it is when looking at secondary education in general. For upper secondary education, the numbers differ by a lot and are between 6% and 11% for the time between 1998 and 2008 (World Bank, 2020) .

3.2 Professional Education and Training (PET; Post-Secondary Level)

Formal TVET on post-secondary, non-tertiary level is taught at polytechnics and technical institutes. Admitted are completers of upper secondary general education and holders of TVET Certificate III. Programme completers get a (Technical) Associate Diploma and can either access the labour market, move to a vocational Bachelor's programme or enrol in bridging courses (on level three) to gain access to technology-focused undergraduate programmes in the general academic stream. Courses are offered in various technical areas such as automotive repair, general mechanics, ICT, agricultural mechanics, electronics, civil engineering but also in business areas like sales or basic accounting. The duration of the programme is normally two years (UNEVOC, 2020).

Formal TVET on tertiary level is taught at polytechnics. Admission criteria is a vocational diploma (higher diploma) or learner that completed general upper secondary education and has gone through a bridging programme. TVET on tertiary level is offered at undergraduate (Bachelor), graduate (Master) and post-graduate level (Doctorate). The duration of the programme is two to four years for undergraduate and graduate programmes and three to four years for post-graduate programmes. Polytechnics offer at tertiary level courses in a variety of areas to equip students with industry-relevant skills. Aim of the programme is to develop graduates for careers in engineering, applied sciences, ICT or health science (UNEVOC, 2020).

3.3 Regulatory and Institutional Framework of the VPET System

3.3.1 Central Elements of VPET Legislation

The regulatory and institutional framework for the VPET (TVET) system has been built and is still built on several acts and legislations:

The **National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy 2017–2025** has been launched in 2017 by the government. It has been developed through a consultative process with technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The TVET policy shall support and complement the goals of the medium-term multi sector policy framework, mainly formulated in the Industrial Development Policy 2015–2025 and the National Employment Policy 2015–2025 by Policy presenting vision, goals, objectives and strategies to develop skilled, competent human (ADB, 2018, p. 1). Four main goals structure the policy (ILO, 2019, pp. 20–21):

- 1) Improve TVET to meet national and international market demand by developing a quality assurance system, investing in teachers, trainer training and infrastructure and establishing Technical and Vocational Parks (TVPs) in selected industrial and economic zones;
- 2) Increase equitable access to TVET for employment generation by establishing flexible pathways for learners, providing more opportunities for marginalized groups, expanding the provision of TVET, increasing public awareness and developing TVET related services such as career guidance;
- 3) Promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) and aggregate resources from stakeholders to support sustainable development of TVET by establishing a National Skills Development Fund, developing a general student fee policy and strengthening forms of PPP for curriculum development and delivery;
- 4) Improve governance of the TVET system by strengthening the regulatory framework, developing result-based funding mechanisms as well as TVET and labour market information systems and fostering capacity building in TVET institutions.

The **TVET Sector Development Programme**, which is mainly sponsored by international donors, supports the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy. It runs from 2015 to 2021 and has a total budget of 42.26 Million USD (ILO, 2019, p. 21).

Cambodia's Industry Development Policy 2015–2025 expresses the vision to transform and modernize the industrial structure of the country from a labour-intensive to a skill-driven industry by 2025. Therefore, the share of the manufacturing sector shall be increased to 20 percent of GDP by then. The government wants furthermore to increase the export of non-textile and processed agricultural products and to foster and integrate small- and medium-sized enterprises into regional and global production chains, especially in rural areas (ILO, 2019, p. 16).

An additional **National Employment Policy 2015–2025** shall support the Industry Development Policy by developing targeted measures like promoting decent work and inclusive and sustainable economic growth (ILO, 2019, p. 16)

Qualification standards compatible across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) play an important role in the development of work-based learning and apprenticeships. TVET can thereby help especially young people from rural areas to move to the urban centres and be a part of the labour market (ILO, 2019, p. 16).

3.3.2 Key Actors

Until 2004, TVET in Cambodia was the responsibility of the Office of Technical and Vocational Training of the MoEYS. It managed the institutions and programmes and was directly responsible for the development and administration of TVET. In 2005, the MoLVT was established and TVET further on was under MoLVT's Directorate General of TVET (DGTVET). Non-formal and informal (short course) vocational training, though, has been transferred to the newly created Ministry of Social Welfare. Also, the MoEYS and Ministries of Women's Affairs, Health, Agriculture and Others further operate TVET programmes (UNESCO, 2013, p. 35). By law, there should be a coordinating **Supreme National Council of Education** that regulates the responsibilities of the different ministries, but until yet, the council has not been established (Un & Sok, 2018, pp. 1–2). Therefore, private providers and NGOs have the choice between the MoLVT and the MoEYS for official programme certification. The consequence of this lack of coordination is a variety of institutions that operate widely unregulated (UNESCO, 2013, p. 35).

The **National Training Board (NTB)**, constituted in 1996 in recognition by the government, is responsible to approve policy implementation strategies. It has the main responsibility for the TVET system and a leadership role in linking a national training programme to the needs of the economy. The NTB is the policy determination, consultative and monitoring authority for TVET and therefore is the most important policy setting authority. To fulfil its tasks, the board prepares policies and national training plans for TVET, coordinates TVET to meet the needs of the economy and proposes projects to renew and develop the TVET system. It also sets performance, occupation and certification standards. The NTB is composed of a deputy prime minister and 31 additional members, of whom 16 are other government officials. It includes senior representatives of all involved ministries, employers, employees, trade unions, different training providers (public and private) and donors with limited private sector memberships (UNESCO, 2013, p. 36; UNEVOC, 2014, pp. 7–8). For the current policy, it is tasked with implementing, monitoring and evaluating the 2017–2015 TVET policy. To identify progress and challenges, it prepares annual reports. The NTB has three technical sub-committees:

- The Sub-committee on Skills Standards and Testing
- The Sub-committee on Accreditation Courses, Programs and TVET Institutions
- The Sub-committee on Labour Market Information

The **Directorate General of TVET (DGTVET)** is under the responsibility of MoLVT and acts as secretariat for the NTB. It is mainly responsible for the support, expansion and quality assurance of public and private TVET provision. Therefore, it is mandated to control, monitor and evaluate TVET institutions, screen proposals for the establishment of new institutions, centres and schools in the sector and manage the TVET system. Furthermore, it is the main driver to the development of a national policy for TVET, which also brings the coordination of the communications among ministries, institutions and organizations to promote TVET. In addition it shall also review the needs of the labour market and prepare an occupational policy based on the national policy for TVET (UNEVOC, 2014, p. 8).

The **Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT)** was established in 2004. From 2005 on it took the responsibility for TVET in Cambodia from the MoEYS (UNEVOC, 2014, p. 8). MoLVT consists of two directorates, employment and TVET, as well as the Directorate of Administration and Finance. MoLVT has 24 provincial or municipal offices across the country.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS)

The **National Technical Training Institute (NTTI)**, is an institute training university graduates as TVET teachers and upskill TVET trainers and administrative staff, It was founded in 1999, under the direction of the MoLVT (SEAMEO VOTTECH Institute, 2020).

- The National Training Fund (NTF)
- The National Employment Agency (NEA)
- Provincial Training Centres (PTCs)
- Community Learning Centres (CLCs)
- Schools (especially those designated as resources centres)
- Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA)
- Private companies
- NGOs

3.4 Educational Finance of the VPET System

Relevant actors for the finance of the TVET system in Cambodia are the national government, international organization, donors and other stakeholders. Since 1998, there exists the National Training Fund (NTF) that allocated governmental and non-governmental funds. The major donor agency to the TVET system is the Asian Development Bank. It has funded TVET in Cambodia since 1992 (UNEVOC, 2014, p. 8).

The Cambodian government struggles to provide adequate, stable financing for public TVET. Nevertheless, expenditures on TVET increased by a lot over the last years (UNESCO, 2013, p. 40).

The TVET system is financed by a variety of different stakeholders and donors. Beside central government funding, there is also non-governmental funding and investment, foreign loans, technical assistance and grants as well as local revenues generated by the different schools and communities. Central government funding is primarily used for wage-related recurrent expenses but also for direct financial support to the TVET institutions. However, there seems to be a misfit in expenditure, since besides the large share of available financial resources being put into wages there is not much left to invest into improving quality in TVET (UNESCO, 2013, pp. 40–41).

Types of funding may be direct support to the DGTVET for revenue administration, salaries, scholarships and expenditures related to these recurrent costs, grants and concessional loans, student fees, Voluntary Industry Levies, donations or offered in-house training. Grants and Loans to the government often include direct funding of the programme. There are a lot of international players granting grants and loans, like the governments of Korea, India, Japan and Germany (UNESCO, 2013, p. 40).

NTF's resources originate from the Ministry of Economy and Finance (UNESCO, 2013, p. 40). All PTCs and also some long-course institutes as well as a significant number of NGOs receive support from the NTF. There are several training funds within the NTF. For example, the public subsidized training fund finances the expansion and the delivery of initial training before employment, the prime minister's special fund increases opportunities for skills acquisition by recently unemployed and out-of-work youth and the Voucher Skills Training Programme, that is subsidized public and by donors, increases opportunities for skills acquisition by disadvantaged groups not covered by enterprise schemes (UNESCO, 2013, p. 41).

The national education budget derives from several different sources, including central government funding, non-governmental (private) funding and investment, foreign loans, technical assistance and grants, and local revenues generated by each school and community. While the budget from the central government is mainly used for wage-related recurrent expenses, other operational budget support called 'programme-based budgeting' is used to provide financial support to public TVET institutions. At present, the principal sources of funding by type of TVET provision are: (i) direct budgetary support to the DGTVET for revenue administration, salaries and other recurrent costs, as well as scholarships; (ii)

grants and concessional loans; and (iii) student fees, Voluntary Industry Levies, donations and in-house training. Grants and concessional loans to the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC); include some direct funding of programmes (e.g. VSTP) from a variety of sources, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Governments of Korea, India, Japan and Germany. NTF's resources originate from the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

There are various **non-formal programmes under training funds**, sponsored by the government, international organizations or private donors. Examples are (UNESCO, 2013, p. 31):

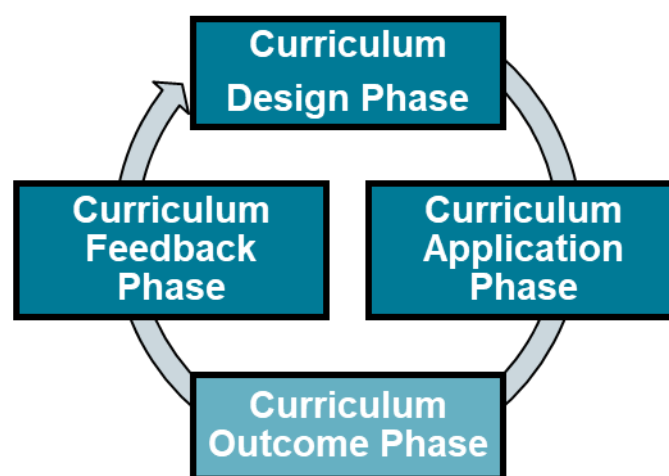
- The **National Training Fund (NTF)** supports initial short-term vocational training programmes before employment. It is offered by NGOs or at PTCs. Finance is guaranteed by MoLVT.
- The **Voucher Skills Training Programme (VSTP)** provides skills development programmes for disadvantaged groups in PTCs, enterprises and communities. The programme responds to demands from communes and villages and is primarily focusing on agricultural and livestock-related programmes. VSTP is funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- The **Prime Minister's Special Fund: Special Fund of Samdech Techo Prime Minister** supports skills development and entrepreneurship for recently unemployed and out of work youth. In addition, the youth in the programme offered by PTCs, NGOs and communities are provided food and shelter.
- The **Post-Harvest Technology and TVET Skills Bridging Programme** provides training in post-harvest skills for agricultural producers and skills training to jobless or out of school youth. It allows them to further proceed with formal TVET.

In 2013, the Cambodian Government **spent less than three percent of GDP on average on education and training**. This is lower than in the neighbouring countries Laos, Thailand and Vietnam (World Bank, 2020).

3.5 Curriculum Development

The curriculum is a central element for the functioning of a VPET system because it defines the framework and the (quality) standards for the education system. The development of a curriculum can be decomposed into a three-step process with a curriculum design, a curriculum application and a curriculum feedback phase. This theoretical concept is called the curriculum value chain and is depicted in Figure 8 (for more details, see Renold et al. (2015); Rageth & Renold (2019)).

Figure 8: Curriculum Value Chain



Source: Renold et al. (2015) and Rageth & Renold (2019)

In the curriculum design phase, the relevant actors decide upon VET curriculum content and qualification standards. Therefore, the discussion in section 3.5.1 focuses on the degree and the amount of

stakeholder participation concerning curriculum design in Cambodia. The curriculum application phase revolves around the implementation of the curriculum. Because learning environments differ substantially across countries, especially with respect to the prevalence of workplace learning, section 3.5.2 focuses on those learning environments. Specifically, it addresses where learning takes place and whether the curriculum dictates both school and workplace learning or only one of the two. Finally, curriculum outcomes can be collected and analysed in the curriculum feedback phase. section 3.5.3 focuses on the curriculum feedback phase. This evaluation process is important because it may render a more refined curriculum design than was possible in the first place.

3.5.1 Curriculum Design Phase

The design phase is crucial for the whole curriculum process. To ensure that the skills taught in the VPET programmes correspond to the needs of the labour market, experts from companies should be involved in defining the qualification standards and learning content of the curricula. Training providers only get access to government training funds if they meet the quality standards set by the Directorate General of TVET (DGTVET) (UNEVOC, 2014, p. 9).

In Cambodia, NTTI is the office responsible for curriculum development in TVET. NTTI is part of the MoLVT, which is accordingly the ministry responsible for TVET curriculum development. The responsible board within the NTTI is composed of people with previous expertise and experience with regards to the Cambodian TVET system. However, there seems to be a discrepancy between the regulatory structure of curriculum design as described and curriculum design in reality. In practice, the present curriculum is developed by an ad-hoc committee that is put together by the MoLVT that is assisted by experts provided by the ADB (UNESCO, 2013).

In general, Cambodia is trying to make a transition to a curriculum that suits a more demand-oriented TVET system better. To do so, the NTTI involves representatives of enterprises. In joint work, they design the curricula in the following manner:

1. Define a job qualification that determines the relevant skills of a competent worker in the respective profession.
2. Derive a modular training plan from the job qualification that includes in-company training.

Furthermore, there seems to be a problem regarding a framework of qualifications that determines the learnings explicitly. There is a lack of quality assured certificates with signalling power that enables smooth a smooth transition into the labour market. However, there appear to be improvements as the design of a national qualifications' framework, national competency standards as well as criteria of accreditation is planned by the NTB (UNESCO, 2013).

3.5.2 Curriculum Application Phase

The way in which a curriculum is implemented, especially with respect to learning environments, is important to achieve the intended learning outcome. Cambodia experiences a multitude of problems concerning this process that impede the establishment of a flourishing TVET system:

1. Lack of concrete regulations regarding concrete vocational education.
2. Lack of quality assurance.

These two main issues show that there is no standardized vocational education, meaning that there is no (little) structure within the Curriculum Application Phase. The programs are 100% school based but there is no public information on the contents of the programs (The Royal Government of Cambodia, 2017).

3.5.3 Curriculum Feedback Phase

The curriculum feedback phase deals with the questions of whether and how educational outcomes are analysed. Based on this, the curriculum could be reworked and improved.

In Cambodia, TVET quality assurance happens through self-assessment and external assessment. In the self-assessment, the institutions assess themselves, while external assessment is conducted by the Department of Quality Assurance. For both types of assessment, the same indicators and the same rating system are used. The responsible give from zero to four points for the following criteria: (1) management and governance, (2) physical resources, (3) staff and teachers, (4) students, (5) curriculum, teaching and learning and (6) research and development. Institutions receiving less than 50 percent of points are according to the quality assurance manual in need for improvement. Acceptable is a score between 50% and 60%, above average a score of 66% to 75%, good a score between 76% and 89% and a score above 90% of the possible points is rated as excellent. However, the examinations are not conducted on a regular basis, which is due to lack of personnel and the large costs associated with quality control and continuous feedback (UNESCO, 2013).

3.6 Supplying Personnel for the VPET System (Teacher Education)

In Cambodia, the responsibility for TVET trainers and administrative staff lays by the National Technical Training Institute (NTTI). This 1999 founded state-owned higher education institution offers a one-year programme for selected university graduates to get capable and professional TVET teachers. It furthermore upgrades trainers and administrative TVET staff. In addition, programmes for Bachelor, Master and Diploma (Associate) degrees are offered (UNEVOC, 2014, p. 8).

Basic qualification requirements in TVET are according to the National Qualification Framework. Trainers and teachers need to be at least one level above the level they provide training for. For example, to prepare learners for a Secondary level technical/vocational Certificate I, the trainer therefore needs to have a Secondary level technical/vocational Certificate II. The selection process functions through an entry examination that tests general knowledge as well as the particular subject the training is about. Courses take place at the NTTI and duration was one year until 2016 and is now one and a half years. The new curriculum allows for trainees to get six months of guided in-industry work as part of the programme (UNEVOC, 2014).

4. Major Reforms in the Past and Challenges for the Future

4.1 Major Reforms

Cambodia's education system experienced a major setback during the regime of the Khmer Rouge during the 1970s. Their reign of terror with mass murders of a substantial portion of the population and displacement throughout the country affected students and teachers as well. Additionally, teaching material was destroyed at a large scale. In the last decade, Cambodia saw various changes to its TVET policies and different Strategic Development Plans to bring the system forward. Many of those are trying to address the most urgent challenges of TVET.

In 2010 the government established a five year **Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training project (2010-2015)**. The main focus of the project was to improve the relevance, quality, and access to the TVET system. Through aligning the system to the labour market needs, the objectives were to promote TVET, create jobs (especially in rural areas), and the establishment of TVET networks. A second phase of the project was introduced together with the ADB (**2014-2015**). The goals are a continuation of the first phase and involve increased access to TVET programmes, improving relevance and quality of the latter, and a stronger governance and management of the TVET system (UNEVOC, 2014).

Between the two stages, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and the Directorate General of TVET defined two **micro policies** and six **development policies** to support the micro policies. The micro policies are poverty reduction and decentralisation. Development policies are more detailed but still broadly defined goals to achieve the micro policies like community and enterprise training or policies around micro credits. In addition, seven **enabling policies** are set in place to sustain demand-driven TVET systems. They focus mainly on Public Private Partnerships and quality policies to guide the future TVET development (UNEVOC, 2014).

Partially influencing TVET legislation are various plans and policies. Examples therefore are the MLVT Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018, the TVET Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018, the Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025, and the National Employment Policy 2015-2025. For example, the **National Employment Policy** addresses issues concerning the labour market side of TVET education. Its main intentions are to strengthen the involvement of private sector players in TVET through increased relevance and additional value for the companies. Furthermore, international coordination and recognition of programmes in SEAN shall further empower this development (SEA-VET, 2021).

Cambodia introduced a **National TVET Policy 2017-2025** as a roadmap for further development. Skill development is the main goal and the government is currently working on a strategic plan for the implementation. The process as a whole is complex and requires many steps. Therefore, the number of involved departments increased. From the initial three departments, the following six departments are currently involved: Department of Labour Market Information, Department of Training, Department of Standard and Curriculum, Department of Quality Assurance, Department of Policy and Strategy, and Department of Institution Management. To support those policies, a further reform in 2018-2019 has been set in place to adapt TVET teacher trainees curriculum to the current needs and to align the knowledge to the skills and technologies currently used in the industry (SEA-VET, 2021; UNEVOC, 2020).

4.2 Major Challenges

Cambodia's TVET system is key to the country's development. The country wants to transform it with its 2017 TVET policy. To do so, the country must overcome many challenges that face the skill system. Therefore, to conclude this factbook, the most important challenges affecting the TVET system are summarised as follows:

- **Limited access to skills training:** Access to the TVET system is mainly a problem among disadvantaged groups like poor people, migrants, school drop-outs and informal workers. Socio-economic constraints, health issues and also a lack of formal education in these groups form strong barriers to TVET. Another huge issue in this matter is the geographical distribution of training facilities, whose accessibility is strongly limited in rural areas (ILO, 2019, p. 41).
- **Insufficient quality of training:** Due to a lack of quality assurance and assessment systems, outdated training methods, inauthentic experience of TVET trainers in industry, but also inadequate infrastructure and equipment and relevant regulation is the TVET system not fully delivering the quality of skilled workers the industry needs. Graduates often lack foundational skills such as reading, writing, mathematics, computing, communication abilities, team work or problem-solving skills. Furthermore, first-time job seekers get no real life and work experience in their training. There is a need for more resources and new management systems to improve the quality of training (ILO, 2019, p. 41; MoLVT, 2017, p. 3).
- **Missing responsiveness to the demand of the labour market:** There is a need for stronger involvement of industry and worker's organization to guarantee the relevance of skills training provided by TVET. The limited involvement of stakeholders cannot guarantee the responsiveness to labour market needs required by TVET. Completers fail to comply with skill-standards of the industry (ILO, 2019, p. 41; MoLVT, 2017, p. 4).
- **Lack of data and research:** To improve informed policy-making and the operation and management of TVET, the government needs to improve research on TVET issues. As of today, TVET but also the labour market information system is heavily underdeveloped (ILO, 2019, p. 42).
- **Limited governance and financing:** As of today, like in many low and lower-middle income countries, the TVET system lacks sufficient funding to meet the demands placed on it. The TVET policy 2017–2025 framework includes various reforms of the system's governance and financing modes that have the support of different development partners. However, the financing issue can only be solved when the TVET system manages to let different stakeholders' participation within, gets rid of widespread corruption and manages to be more decentralized (ILO, 2019, p. 42).
- **Lack of value attributed to TVET:** Enrolment ratios in TVET are very low. This is not only but to a large extent due to the negative perception of TVET compared to university education, what is common in ASEAN countries. TVET is seen as a "second chance" or "second rank" education for the poor, marginalized groups or school drop-outs. The negative perception of TVET remains also because of a lack of promotion by educational institutions, which fail to give quality guidance to students on choice of learning and the importance of TVET (MoLVT, 2017, p. 3).
- **Limited acceptance and connection of TVET across all educational streams:** General education and TVET programmes are insufficiently linked despite the National Qualification Framework. Linkages between general education and TVET streams are limited. Furthermore, the coordination of the different ministries does not work appropriately. There is a lack of joint effort in training TVET trainers and sharing learning materials but also in implementing bridging programmes and certifications. Insufficient coordination regarding bridging programs and certifications is also an

issue for not-public training providers. Stakeholders generally fail in sharing information concerning TVET and the labour market (ADB, 2018, p. 2; MoLVT, 2017, p. 3).

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ETH Zurich
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STB J 16
Stampfenbachstrasse 69
8092 Zurich, Switzerland

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