

GENOCIDE EDUCATION PROJECT:
THE TEACHING OF “A HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA (1975-1979)”

A JOINT PROJECT BETWEEN THE DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA AND
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORT

NATIONAL TEACHER TRAINING
Challenges Faced and Recommendations Proposed
July 8, 2009

CHALLENGES

The following list of challenges summarizes a meeting held at the Documentation Center of Cambodia following the National Training. DC-Cam staff, some international scholars, and facilitators participated in the meeting on July 8, 2009. Below are challenges discussed and recommendations proposed:

1. **No Clear Objectives** It appeared that we did not provide participants with clear objectives and rationales of the training workshop. Participants seemed unsure of their roles in and the reasons for their attending the workshop. They also seemed unclear about their duties in the second training.

Recommendation: For the next workshop, it was suggested that we include a short, carefully crafted paragraph that states the aims and objectives of the program and seminar. We should also have the aims and objectives posted at the front of the room as a visual reminder for the participants. It was also recommended that we have conduct an icebreaker activity that asks participants to list objectives and rationales for the training project and teaching of DK. Doing so would smooth over any misunderstandings, allow for expectations to be established, and give participants a “voice” in the Seminar’s organization and outcomes.

2. **No Consistent Model Lessons** It was noted that the National Trainers were never given clear, precise, and consistent model lessons. While the small groups were effective for the participants to engage with the guidebook and material, participants felt that they were not presented with standard and consistent model lessons. Small group facilitators often deviated greatly in their own small groups, using and employing different methodology. Some small group facilitators commented after each teacher lesson while others only gave comments after each day of modeling. Some facilitators took on more detailed lesson plans and covered theoretical concepts while others did not do so. Finally, there seemed to be some inconsistency among the actual methodology of modeling lessons: some facilitators decided to step out of “model” mode and point to the actual theory at work while others modeled the lesson as if it were a regular classroom.

Recommendation: Facilitators and some National Trainers could conduct model lessons in large and small groups. Facilitators should also meet the day before to make sure their lesson plans are specific and that they follow similar guidelines so that the information presented in small groups is consistent across all groups.

3. **Tensions between Teaching and Learning History** There appeared to be tensions between learning *the history* of Democratic Kampuchea and learning *ways to teach* the

history of Democratic Kampuchea. Methodology, in other words, “took a backseat” to history lessons and facts. For instance, history lessons always ran into the time set for methodology and pedagogy. Also, during the time set aside for small group models, books and laptop bags were passed out. Participants also used this time to go into long speeches over the microphone.

Recommendation: The facilitators next time should try to keep the discussions and questions more focused and centered on learning about the history in the book, rather than on more nuanced details. It should be reiterated to the trainees that they are not becoming historians on Democratic Kampuchea, but rather teachers who will be able to relay and teach DK history to high school students. Of course, trainees should have time to ask and answer questions during the history presentations, but questions must be limited. If trainees have questions that do not pertain to the history in the textbook or time has run out, trainees should feel free to meet the historians or scholars “after class” or during lunch and snack breaks, which would be the procedure in any classroom.

4. Western way of teaching verses Cambodian way of Teaching There were fundamental differences in Western, student-centered approaches to teaching and Cambodian, teacher-centered approaches to teaching. Because the teacher-centered model of education makes the teacher into the “end-all, be-all” of knowledge for the students, historical facts become the determinant of success. This approach seems to be preferred in Cambodia because it helps the teacher maintain control over large groups of students and it prevents the teacher’s authority (or competence) from ever coming into question. In the student-centered model, “learning processes” as opposed to “inputs and outputs” of knowledge become the desired outcome rather than simply the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. The student is encouraged to discuss his or her thoughts on ideas, lessons, and information provided by the teacher. In some cases, this could bring the student’s opinion in direct conflict with the teacher’s position on an issue. If the teacher is not familiar with how to navigate these situations, he or she could feel personally attacked or have his or her role as “teacher” directly questioned. Without directly being stated by any participants, I sense this was a fundamental fear underlying any use of open-ended questions and student-centered discussions.

Recommendation: At the heart of this problem lie the very same issues of any Western project coming in and implementing their own set of standards or goals on Non-Western society. It becomes a challenge of “our way” verses “their way.” Arguably, there are some similarities between two ways of teaching and facilitators must utilize the similarities rather than focusing on differences in order for the project to sustain itself.

We should reiterate to the trainees that the Cambodian taxonomy includes discussion questions in steps four through six while it includes the need for fact-based discussion questions in steps one through three. Future seminar trainings should highlight the use of the Cambodian taxonomy in the Guidebook. Rather than asking teachers to abandon one teaching approach, the essential goal is to present a history of the DK period that allows teachers to use the teacher-centered approach, while encouraging greater experimentation and use of the student-centered approach. Also, we could have teachers read aloud in the group some text from articles based on theory. This is a Cambodian way of learning. Then, we could ask them to probe deeper into the meaning, which is more Western. After the activity, we could explain to them the methodology of our asking fact-based and discussion-based questions on the reading and the importance for incorporating the two in the classroom.

4. **No Explicit Coverage of Larger Questions on Genocide** Finally, it seemed that what was missing from the training was we did not cover complex, sociological questions on the history of genocide and mass atrocities. What are the affects of genocide on our current society? What are circumstances that give rise to genocide? Why do leaders select young children and teenagers? Why do people need to identify with groups? Why do people kill?

Recommendation: We should include these types of questions into all model lessons and discussions and reiterate to the trainees that these are the larger and perhaps more crucial questions to ask students. While dates and facts are important, teachers should reinforce these issues into all classrooms.

It was also suggested that we wait to cover more thematic comments in the second or later rounds of training in the following years, focusing the next two phases of training on the history of Democratic Kampuchea. Once basic history is covered and teachers understand and can teach more basic knowledge, we can then move on to more philosophical and theoretical training.

5. **Tensions from National Trainers**

There seemed to be much tension between the National Trainers and DC-Cam staff, perhaps owing to the fact that DC-Cam staff members are much younger than the National Trainers. Tensions also seemed to arise from the fact that the National Trainers did not “feel ownership” to the project. In fact, some asked that their names be removed from the guidebook. It also seemed that the Ministry’s internal agenda dominated the workshop.

Recommendation: In order to mitigate these problems, it was suggested that we bring in more senior level teachers to the next training. We could also state that the guidebook is only a guide, and teachers should feel free to deviate away from it. Furthermore, we could explain in the next meeting that their participation is valued in the project, and we need them for the projects’ success. Boly did a great job speaking diplomatically and politely to the trainees, and we should continue to employ this language. Finally, more leadership may be required from the group facilitators to bring discussions back on track rather than deviating from the purposes of the training.

6. **National Teachers’ Focus on Administrative Tasks Rather than “Larger Picture”**

Accountability and administrative tasks seemed to have a high priority in the classroom and participants were very critical of any teachers who failed to put the date on the blackboard or who did not abide by the 5-Step Process that they learned. Much criticism was given on what Westerners would consider minute details, but apparently are highly valued in Cambodian society.

Some participants gave lessons that were very regimented and focused on simple recitation of basic historical information. These lessons would typically involve the teacher asking questions that were either answered with “Yes” or “No” answers or very short statements. Such teachers would also sometimes ask rather complex or not easily answered questions but they would quickly make these questions rhetorical by answering them very quickly after asking them. Generally, the teacher imposed his or her view of “right” and “wrong” and did not feel comfortable allowing students to discuss their views of right or wrong.

Overall, some of the participants understood the basic methodology behind each lesson (i.e. what is being taught [or rather learned], why it’s being taught, and how it is

being taught), but they lacked sufficient practice in various teaching methodologies in order to effectively use the lessons.

Recommendation: More time in practicing the lessons is required in order for all participants to gain a sufficient skill in training teachers in the lessons. Small group facilitators should recognize the importance of these details in Cambodian teaching methods, but also try to move group discussion and feedback into larger thematic and overall feedback on the lessons.

There were also more nuanced suggestions made, which are listed below:

1. There should be little changes to the schedule for both international and national participants. Post- seminar meetings and dinners should also be included in the schedule so participants can plan their schedule accordingly.
2. An internet connection should be set up at the conference hall.
3. Include a packet to all trainees with a large map of DK, a glossary, a photo book, DVDs, and other supplies.
4. Photo Captions should either be included or we should go over ways teachers can answer questions brought up by students regarding the photographs if teachers cannot offer a description.
5. Color-coded name cards could be given to all participants so that groups are already divided before the workshop begins.
6. All National Trainers should meet before the next workshop to go over logistics.
7. All Seminar readings should be organized according to presentation, with page numbers and by day. This would allow the participants to understand what readings go with what speakers and when they should be read.
8. Day 1 article discussions must be removed or the participants need to be given the articles before the Seminar. It was also suggested that they be removed or moved to a different day.
9. Participants should be allowed ample time for question and answer. Seminar organizers should plan for at least 15-30minutes per presentation of questions.
10. A Seminar Glossary of all translated terms should be circulated to all translators and participants to avoid confusion over difficult terms.
11. A pre-Seminar meeting of all facilitators should be scheduled to outline and define: Which lessons will be modeled? How will small group practicum be run? What methodologies will we teach or explain?
12. It appears that participants are not really reading the Guidebook. To counteract this, we should allow time in small group sessions for a participant to not only “model lessons” but also be required to explain the lesson and rationale behind each one.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

For the next training, I would recommend that we devote specific days to presenting different pedagogical methods in the large group. Each day could have a theme: “Fact Based Methodology,” “Discussion-Based Methodology and Socratic Questioning,” “Incorporating Plays, Music, or Movies into the Classroom,” and “Essay or diary writing Activities,” to only name a few. In two small groups I spoke with, everyone unanimously wanted a “large group” model presentation each day in order to give them clear and consistent methods to use. Each presenter could give all trainees copies of their lesson plans, using the three-column Cambodian approach so that the participants have tangible documents and examples to take home and to the classroom.

Although the trainees indeed responded and worked better in small groups, presenting models in the larger group setting will give trainees clear models and ease uncertainty, which seemed to be the largest problem the National Training faced. Cambodians do lean towards a “right” and “wrong” answer and while facilitators should, in a larger sense, shy away from this right and wrong approach, it must also be embraced in order to make the training as successful as possible.

In order to mitigate tensions between DC-Cam staff, trainees, and foreigners, we could also have National Trainers conduct some “large-group” model lessons. Model lessons should also incorporate the 5-step classroom procedure and be sure to include the 6-step taxonomy as set forth by the Ministry of Education so that we do incorporate Cambodian-ways of training. Then, during the afternoon, we could break out into small groups to give the trainees time to practice lessons based on models and methods they saw the previous day.

I would also recommend focusing less on pedagogy theory and more on “doing.” Dense, theoretical, Western articles that detail methodology are helpful to understand the fundamental philosophies behind teaching practices, but I do not think they are as essential to debate during the training. Using the articles also puts Cambodians on the “defense” as Western models are forced on them. Instead, I think trainees would benefit more from witnessing different theories at work. Once they understand how to do it, they can then move to understand the different theoretical debates behind, and importance of, the pedagogy they use. Many of the methodologies we suggest are already in their Cambodian taxonomy and facilitators should work with and expand upon the framework already established.

Below is a proposed schedule for the next training:

Today’s Theme “Discussion Questions.”

Mornings: Begin the day with a film or something visual. Once the movie is over, ask participants open-ended discussion questions based on the film or play they watched. Some questions could include “What did you think of the film you watched? Compare and contrast the perpetrator and victim’s responses? How would you define a perpetrator?” After the participants debate the answers to this question, ask them if they can explain the tactics or methodology the facilitator used to discuss the film. Explain explicitly that this tactic is in steps 4 through 6 of their taxonomy as set forth by the Ministry of Education. Then, tell the trainees that today everyone will discuss the importance of discussion questions.”

Historians and facilitators then proceed to go over the history text and cover two chapters. A model lesson is given based on one of the chapters Boly has just discussed, using discussion questions format.

After lunch, participants can break into their small groups and model lessons based on the methods presented to them the day before. If “fact-based questions” was yesterday’s theme, participants would model lessons based on using fact-based questions. Teachers would then receive feedback from their small group.

APPENDIX

Below are all suggestions and critiques given during the meeting:

1. Model more lessons in large groups (Sarah Dickens)
2. Objectives weren't clear for participants, never explicitly stated. Should have come in as trainers rather than roundtable type training from participants. (Sarah)
3. Too much historical detailed talk. Facilitators should take charge to move the discussions forward. If participants have questions on nuances, they should take time during breaks or lunches to ask scholars. (Sarah)
4. Schedule should be set and clear for international participants. (Sarah)
5. Provide Clear Expectations for Everyone Involved, especially participants. Should have the Ministry make it clear to them, required learn and become well trained in the project and be able to train others. (Phala Chea)
6. People were not appreciated and respected because they were not asked to do a supplementary material if they can't finalize the process. (Phala)
7. National Trainers didn't feel ownership of the project. (Kosal Path)
8. Short paper of learning objectives and outcomes, carefully crafted paragraph may solve this problem, may stop this issue and mobilizing 24 to complain about it. At the beginning of the program and guidebook have a statement of aims and objectives and learning and outcomes. "At the end of the training, each trainee should be 'x, y, z'" (Laura Summers).
9. As historians and scholars, we should accurately caption the photos and not self-censor ourselves. (Laura)
10. Guidebook needs to include something in the guidebook on how to respond to questions on photos. If you think there is more information needed, DC-Cam is open to be received (Chigas), but should include something in the guidebook on how to deal with students' asking questions on the photographs. (George Chigas)
11. Discussion on trainers' learning in depth history and understanding teaching methodology to teach the guidebook (Sarah, Kosal, George). We should take time to allow them to ask questions and go into depth.
12. We should make sure that the trainers understand that cannot go into depth and teach on a very superficial level. We are not going into depth, not going into details, just come out with a superficial understanding, so teachers don't go into long tangents onto historical. (George)
13. Must keep them focused to implement history into schools and can pursue their own interests with research Ask questions during lunch or breaks. (Sarah).
14. Must manage expectations of National Trainers (Youk)
15. Reiterate that the title of the book is "A History of DK" and not "The History of DK." (Kosal)
16. Tangential conversations (Miriam Morgenstern)
17. Keep to Schedule (Miriam)
18. Tension between history and pedagogy. Pedagogy took a backseat to the history. We should have been teaching pedagogy, it's called a Genocide Education Project. We were there with a very specific purpose and I am not sure if our purposes were fulfilled. Mr Sophal gave a speech. Rasy gave out bags during pedagogy lessons. Many of discussions will ever be important to high school teachers. If they were university professors, those discussions would be fine. I am not sure if we gave them tools to go out and do the second training.
19. In any group, there are people who dominate the conversation, people who don't want to talk, people who do it for the money. This is global. There are people who are

- genuinely passionate about what they are doing, must focus on people who seem to want to get everything out of it that they can. (Miriam)
20. Small groups seemed more open, which didn't come out in the big group. (Miriam)
 21. Aware of their own style (Khmer teaching) and newer/western methods, but supported in own strengths in teaching. (Miriam)
 22. Sometimes a teacher presents facts, sometimes you do have to give information and not do cool lessons. (Miriam)
 23. Need to be more emphasis on guidebook itself (Miriam)
 24. I am not sure if the educational theory was useful unless they were interacting with the theory
 25. Did not include anything on sociological perspective on genocide (Miriam). Talking about the use of power, indoctrination of children, why do we chose children to do dirty work? It doesn't happen only in Cambodia, it's happening right now. How do you appeal to children? It's the same reason why children chose gangs.
 26. "you are a teenager during the Khmer Rouge" (David Chandler)
 27. Chose a lesson from each chapter of the guidebook. Model from each chapter and involve a teacher here to avoid top-down approach. (Miriam)
 28. Should bring in older, senior Cambodian people, not just foreigners and young DC-Cam staff (Youk)
 29. Boly has done a great job dealing with respect and diplomatically (Kosal)
 30. Should include 5 step/6 taxonomy process in model lessons (Sarah)
 31. Boly didn't have the age to make people stop talking owing to culture (Chandler)
 32. Some things in workbook and textbook need to be changed (Chandler)
 33. One of the biggest challenges is to strike a balance between history and pedagogy, can't make the teachers not ask questions regarding history (Kosal)
 34. Should write something up to participants detailing what was discussed in today's meeting (Chandler)
 35. Fundamental difference in education between Western and Cambodian styles of teaching. They had a fundamental disagreement on how education is perceived and see it is as teacher-centered teaching. Maintain facts to be the best teacher ever, and they were missing. They didn't pick up that the approach was student-centered. We were trying to give them the ability to make their students the best. Should the teacher know every minute fact OR does it need to be methodology and how to create the best student possible? They wanted knowledge to give information knowledge and we wanted them to know the processes of learning and how the history of DK can be given? Inputs verses outputs/ processes. (Chris Dearing) We should have done an icebreaker. What are they supposed to do in the seminar in terms of approach?
 36. A lot of unbelievers who simply did not believe that student-centered learning is possible in large classrooms. Bad dynamic and got into grove to learn as much history as possible (Chris). I am not sure if that is possible to change worldviews within a week.
 37. Facilitators should have met on the day before and gone over what lessons to model, what basic methodologies we should use. Small groups were the only way to have a functioning classroom and discussion. (Chris)
 38. Need more time that they have to read the articles before each day (Chris)
 39. Should move away from theory and into practice (Sarah).
 40. Give a simplified text to read and a discussion on what was just read (Kosal, Kok Thay, George).
 41. Have someone read aloud in class (Youk) Cambodian-way of reading
 42. Send out a few specific questions to answer about the reading and contribute (Kosal).
 43. Everyone has to be open-minded in their approaches.
 44. Need to clearly and carefully address the historical scope and state the limits of inquiry. We will discuss the history with the objective of clarifying ambiguities in the book. Restrict questions (George)

45. What is different about teaching about genocide and another historical subject?
(George)
46. Why is it important and what are some challenges about a student-centered approach and a teacher-centered approach? (George)
47. Guidebook needs to be reduced and simplified (George)
48. Logistics concern of training in provinces. We should have LCD, pencils, and large DK map, color coded name cards (Dara)
49. Interview National Trainers for Selection Process (Chandler)
50. Should have asked them to fill out a final seminar evaluation form (Farina So)
51. Internet connection at the meeting (Farina)
52. Need to have large group model to give a sense of consistency and legitimacy (Farina/Sarah)
53. Glossary
54. After the training, I am not sure if they got anything out of the training. There was no set or consistent set of goals. I don't think they understood what was expected until the very last day. They thought they would go back and teach students. The process itself makes it more complicated for them to understand. "What are we going to present like Boly to present," was a question I received. (Savina)
55. They know clearly they will teach, but they are not clear if they will write another guidebook
56. The other part of this whole course on this curriculum is what is missing: What are the affects of this experience on our society? (George)
57. I don't see that the trainers understand the values, asking wrong questions (Kosal).
58. Too much for the Ministry to take on. We have to try to warm them up first and then after evaluation, we propose how to get out of discrimination, etc (Youk).
59. If you aren't making the connections, why even bother with the training?
(Miriam/George)
60. Probe it on a day-to-day basis (Miriam)
61. Emphasize larger rationales in genocide educational training.
62. Teacher trainers worry about how to train, but the problem will solve by themselves.
(Terith)
63. Must be careful about promises. Boly said that he will provide them with a photobook and glossary. They take it seriously. (Terith)
64. Want more photos of evacuation and photos and big maps in DK. Should give them of core material packages (photographs of evacuation, return, map of DK)
65. Chapters be split for more cohesion, morning/afternoon (Kosal)
66. No cohesion with model lessons
67. DC-Cam changes times but never let the teachers know
68. Guidebook was from an international perspective using Western methodology and not having Khmer ways of teaching. They feel resentment towards the book (Little Dara)

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