The Role of Teachers in Enhancing Information and Communication Technology-Integrated Education in Cambodia

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The integration of ICT in education can be an effective method of improving the quality of education in developing countries. This paper aims to examine the role that teachers play in enhancing ICT-integrated education by analyzing the perception, belief and behavior of secondary school teachers in Cambodia (N = 121). Its findings suggest that although the teachers have positive perception and belief towards ICT-integrated education, their usage of ICT in the classroom is notably limited. A number of barriers are identified such as inadequate ICT-related infrastructure and insufficient teacher training programs. Interestingly, ANOVA analysis reveals that female teachers have lower self-confidence with respect to ICT skills than do male teachers (p < .05). Policy implications regarding budget allocation and international public-private partnership are discussed.

Keywords: ICT, Secondary Education, Gender, Cambodia, Public-Private Partnership

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is regarded as a fundamental human right and a key driver of sustainable economic development (UNESCO 2004). Accordingly, the importance of education systems in developing countries has been emphasized (Wagner 2010). As a developing country, Cambodia has one of the youngest populations in the world (UNESCO 2010). Historically, Cambodia experienced a destructive civil war in the 1970s. About two decades later the country began to rebuild its education system through teacher training, curriculum revision, and massive distribution of textbooks. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has been at the center of such systematic reform of the Cambodian education system. According to Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2006-2010, a report by MoEYS (2006), the Cambodian government has set priorities such as ensuring equitable access to education and increasing the quality of education services. Even though the goal of equitable access to education has been achieved, at least in urban areas, improvement in overall educational quality has been slow, particularly at the secondary school level (Engel 2010; Symaco and Brock 2013). For achieving sustainable development of Cambodia, however, improving the quality of secondary education is indispensable as the dropout rate remains high and the students’ competency is still limited (VSO 2010).

One way to address this issue is to take advantage of information and communication technology (ICT) in education. It is widely acknowledged that ICT, as a powerful tool for disseminating information and knowledge, facilitates equitable access to education (Khan, Hasan and Clement 2012; Voogt and Gerald 2008). Moreover, ICT-integrated education is known to improve the quality of education through learning by doing, real time conversation, delayed time conversation and directed instruction (Ehrmann 1994). It also can help teachers move toward student-centered teaching and interactive learning, which can be particularly helpful within the domain of secondary education (MoEYS 2004). Given that the dropout rate in secondary schools remains high in Cambodia, the need is to provide students with more relevant curricula that will lead them to employment opportunities (UNESCO 2010). In this regard, ICT-integrated education would be useful by bringing greater value and relevance to secondary school education.

Being aware of the importance of ICT for better education, MoEYS has actively promoted the use of ICT in education, working closely with such developing partners as UNESCO and the Open Institute (MoEYS 2004; UNESCO 2003; UNESCO 2010). In 2008, “ICT in Education Master Plan 2009-2013” was published as a way of underscoring the ability of ICT to accomplish the following: 1) increase access to formal and informal basic/tertiary education and life-long learning even in rural areas; 2) improve the relevance and effectiveness of education by enhancing the quality of teaching and learning; and 3) develop those ICT-related skills that will benefit future employment. Subsequently, ICT in education has