The Transformation of Buddhist Education in Cambodia: A Case Study of Buddhist Educational Improvement from the Past to the Present

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Abstract

Buddhist education has expanded to increase Cambodia's human resources. By the way, it has been providing new curricula and policy-making for educational areas to ensure the quality of national Buddhist education studies. Essentially, it was distributed many centuries ago to bring knowledge to venerable monks and students and to develop their morality and intelligence cultivation. Cambodian Buddhist education has gone through many periods, but it has remained focused on the purpose of expanding knowledge for Cambodian citizens. On the other hand, Buddhist education is supported by the government budget and some sponsors from Cambodian citizens. And "Buddhist education is the backbone of Buddhism in Cambodia," said Samdech Preah Mahāsumedhādhipati Kittipaṇḍita Am Limheng, who is the acting president of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education of Cambodia. In fact, during the COVID-19 period, Buddhist education announced its educational policy to bring high-quality education to the venerable monks and students in all of Buddhist institutions. Online Learning has been used as the main policy to provide knowledge and lessons for students. To conclude, many venerable monks and students are studying and gaining knowledge from Buddhist institutions such as primary school, secondary school, high school, and university to grow their capacity and contribute to human resources in society. Currently, Buddhist education in Cambodia has introduced an e-learning program to develop students' capacity in the modern era.

Keywords: Buddhism, Morality and Intelligence cultivation, Government Budget, Human resources, and Online learning.

1. Introduction

Buddhism is deeply woven into the cultural, spiritual, and social fabric of Cambodia, with approximately 95% of the population identifying as Theravada Buddhists. The religion influences every aspect of Cambodian life, from daily practices to national festivals, reflecting its historical significance and ongoing relevance. Buddhism's roots in Cambodia trace back to the 3rd century BCE when missionaries from India introduced the faith. However, it wasn't until the 5th century CE that Buddhism began to gain prominence, coexisting with Hinduism. During the Khmer Empire (9th to 15th centuries), Buddhism thrived alongside Hinduism, with King Jayavarman VII (1181-1218) being a notable proponent who declared Mahayana Buddhism as the state religion. By the 13th century, Theravada Buddhism began to dominate, eventually becoming the state religion and supplanting other forms. Buddhism not only flourished within the Khmer Empire but also influenced Khmer culture, art and architecture. Buddhism remarked and integral part of Cambodian culture during the colonial rule of the French. The sangha and the community of Buddhist monks, played an important role in promoting Cambodian identity & culture during this period. In Cambodia, Theravada Buddhism is the predominant sect. This form of Buddhism emphasizes the Pali Canon as its scriptural foundation and focuses on monastic life, meditation, and the pursuit of enlightenment. Although Mahayana Buddhism had a historical presence, particularly during the reign of Jayavarman VII, it is now minimal compared to Theravada. There are also small communities of Vietnamese and Chinese Mahayana Buddhists within Cambodia. Buddhism in Cambodia today is both a spiritual guide and a social force. Despite the devastation of the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), which decimated the Buddhist clergy and infrastructure, the religion has experienced a resurgence. Monasteries and pagodas have been rebuilt, and Buddhist education is thriving once again. Monks play a crucial role in community life, providing spiritual guidance, education, and social services. There are more than 400 temples and 500 pagodas in Cambodia with Angkor wat being the largest of the temples. The leading government-recognized Buddhist organization in Cambodia is the Ministry of Religion and Cults. This ministry oversees religious affairs, supports the activities of Buddhist institutions, and ensures the preservation and promotion of Cambodia's Buddhist heritage. Another significant body is the Supreme Sangha Council, which governs monastic discipline and ordination standards. Buddhism remains a cornerstone of Cambodian identity, influencing its values, traditions, and way of life, ensuring the continued vibrancy and resilience of this ancient faith in the modern world. Buddhism

is the state religion and is referenced in the motto of the Kingdom of Cambodia: "Nation, Religion, King" (IBC, 2026).

1.1 Background of the Study Buddhist Education in Cambodia

Cambodia accepted Buddhism since in the 1st century A.D., according to Mahavamsa Sri Lanka chronical inscription that; there are two venerable monks from India in the Great Ashoka king of ancient India Empire in the 1st century. century. And, he sent Sona Thera and Uttara Thera to propagate Buddhism into the Suvarnabhumi which are located including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand in the current time. After Buddhism landed in Cambodia from the 1st century that it has been ongoing many of Cambodia periods like (Funan Kingdom 1 A.D, Chenla Kingdom (5th – 6th A.D), Angkor Empire (8th – 13th C.E.), Chaktomukh Era (1431–1525s), Longvek period (1529 – 1594s), Srey Sannthor period (1594 – 1620s), Oudong Era (1620–1863s), French colonial rule in Cambodia lasted from 1863 to 1953 (spanning roughly 90 years), Independence Period (Kingdom of Cambodia): The era spanning from 1953 until the Lon Nol coup in 1970, the Khmer Rouge Regime (1775 – 1979s), and the present time. Buddhism education has transformed in every situation on Cambodia leader's perspective and it grown up and declined. Otherwise, Buddhism has played important role to human resource development in Cambodia, Especially, it distributed the Khmer literature-yatra from the Sanskrit, Brahmi and Pali languages transformation. Every pagoda (Vihara) in Cambodia participated the essential place for human resource development including the soft skills and hard skills. As we know that after the Khmer rouge regime is disappeared, so; Cambodia has come on the new stage to promote Buddhist education again until the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019. Buddhist education has reached as the modern education like the public school or government school due to the world situation urgent because of coronavirus pandemic. An another Buddhist historical study that, education is a central component of Buddhism. the Buddha founded the sangha as a community of learning, in which monks could learn from and chastise one another. When Buddhism was introduced to Cambodia, Buddhist education. This is one of the reasons why, in ancient times, there were so many Buddhist educations received due attention. But teaching and learning were carried out in the traditional way in monasteries (wats), mainly by and for monks. The first formal Buddhist education in modern times begans with the founding in 1909 of a Pali school at Angkor Wat in Siem Reap province, northwestern Cambodia. This school was called Parama Buddhavacana Pasad.

Unfortunately, the school was not successful as it was located far away from the city, making administration difficult. In 1911, it was shut down. In 1914, a new Pali school named Parama Buddhavacana Monti was founded in Phnom Penh to replace the one at Ankor Wat, and it was temporarily housed at the Emerald pagoda in the Royal Palace under the royal patronage of King Sisowath. After some time, this school was shifted to a new building adjacent to the Buddhist institute, and its name was changed to Pali High School, then in 1955, two years after Cambodia regained independence, it was again renamed, this time Suramrith Buddhist High School. In 1933, a Royal Decree authorized the establishment of Pali primary schools and in Cambodia, Pali had been studied in monasteries. This is normal practice for Theravada Buddhist monks. To provide higher Buddhist education for monks, Preah Sihnanoukraja Buddhist University was founded in 1954, it was the third oldest Buddhist university in the world. It was headed by Venerable ***Hout That***, who held the ecclesiastical title Samdech Bodhivamsa (Rajagana First Class), and who was also the Director General of Buddhist Education (Khy, 2008). According to the UNESCO Strengthens Distance-learning in Cambodian Education System during COVID-19 press release that in light of the nationwide school closure in Cambodia from 16 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO's Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Programme is working closely with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and relevant partners to ensure the continuity of education for learners in Cambodia. The Organization is strengthening digital and distance learning for over 323,000 early grade students, lower secondary students, out-of-school youth and factory workers in Cambodia. This series of intervention includes the development and production of 200 video lessons, which are available on MoEYS's official online and digital learning platforms, and the Techo TV channel (UNESCO, 2020). An another press release that the framework of digital education quality is played importance role as a wide digital ecology and a training centre for the innovation, and sharing resources. The framework goals supposed to the knowledge and teaching centre training, and educational staffs due to the professional training in high quality including with brilliant sources and opportunity for cooperation. These are five of the educational framework system such as to improve the professional teaching centre training, to transform study approaches, to push the culture of innovation, to establish the professional gaps in leadership, and capacity development (UNICEF, 2025). Otherwise, suggests that MoEYS and local education departments should cooperate with school principals and community chiefs to provide personalized support, such as home visits

by classroom teachers, to students who cannot access online video lessons disseminated by MoEYS through television channels, Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram (Sokna, 2020). An announcement of MoEYS released that on 16 March 2020, Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) declared a nationwide closure of 124 private and public universities in response to the global pandemic. For decades, Cambodia has focused on providing educational services in a traditional university classroom; however, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has needed a rapid transition to online and distance learning (Chealy, C. H. E. T., and S. O. K. Serey, 2020). As the same as, Buddhist educational institutions in Cambodia on 17 May 2021, Acting-president of Inspector General of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education, Samdech Preah Mahāsumedhādhipati Kittipaṇḍita Am Limheng, Inspector General of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education, presided over a meeting on technical professional terms to arrange the procession education learning of national Buddhist education for academic years 2021-2022 through the online learning systems in the period of covid-19 pandemic (Education, 2021). The Ministry of Religions and Cults released that on 12 May 2021, the national examination results of Buddhist primary school, Buddhist secondary school, and Buddhist high school in the covid-19 pandemic phenomena (Cults, 2021).

1.2. Research Question

1. What is the main transformation of Buddhist education in Cambodia?
2. What are the matters of Buddhist Education in Covid-19 pandemic period?
3. What is challenging the educational systems in the modern time?

1.3. Research Gap of Research Study

This research study gap identifies what existing studies have established about modern technology education, Buddhist educational institutions have been adequately represented in previous research, gaps concerning monastic learners, religious instruction, and cultural preservation.

1.4. Research Methodology

This research is the mixed research methods including with the qualitative and quantitative research methods. Also, it based on the primary data and secondary data such as the previous

research study of any articles, journals, documentations, books, the presses, website pages, Facebook pages, e-libraries and jestro research studies. I will design a structure of the research study about the Buddhist Educational Systems all of the levels in Cambodia. And, it based on the foundation sources.

2. The Background of Buddhist Educational Institutions in Cambodia

The organization of Buddhist education in Cambodia, in permitting the monks to obtain even deeper knowledge has contributed to creating a unity of view as to the interpretation of the Doctrine and the application of the moral precept decreed by the Venerated Master. If this identity of religious formation has been able to be expand through the Kingdom, this is owing to Royal religious action followed from the reign of His Majesty Ang Duong, national poet, the fervent adept who organized the teaching of the Tripitaka in the several monasteries that were built in Oudon, and himself gave classes in Pali during the period of "monk training".

The education was oral until the beginning of the 20th century. From time to time, under the High Patronage of His Majesty the King and on the proposal of the order monks, an examination was giving composed only of oral tests of translation from Pali into Cambodian. The title of "Maha Bey Prayok" was giving to all the candidates who could translate three Pali texts drawn from the Dhamapada, one hour accorded for the translation of each text of about two pages of latanier leaves in front of the board of examiners. The titulars then could present themselves for examination to obtain the following title, "Maha Buon Prayok" then the title of "Maha Pram Buon Prayok".

Under the French protectorate (established in Cambodia by the treaty of the 11th of August 1863), Buddhist education Was the object of the official organization at the same time that the first French-Khmer education was established. The Pali was built in Phnom-Penh, Cambodia in 1914, afterwards known as the High Pali School and then in 1933, throughout the Kingdom, known as the Pali Elementary Schools». Among the monks who get diplomas or certificates from the Pali school; some teach in the Elementary Pali School and others teach the traditional education in the "pagoda Schools". In recent years, there have been a total of about 81 thousand students in pagoda schools.

2.1. The Structure of Buddhist Educational Institutions in Cambodia

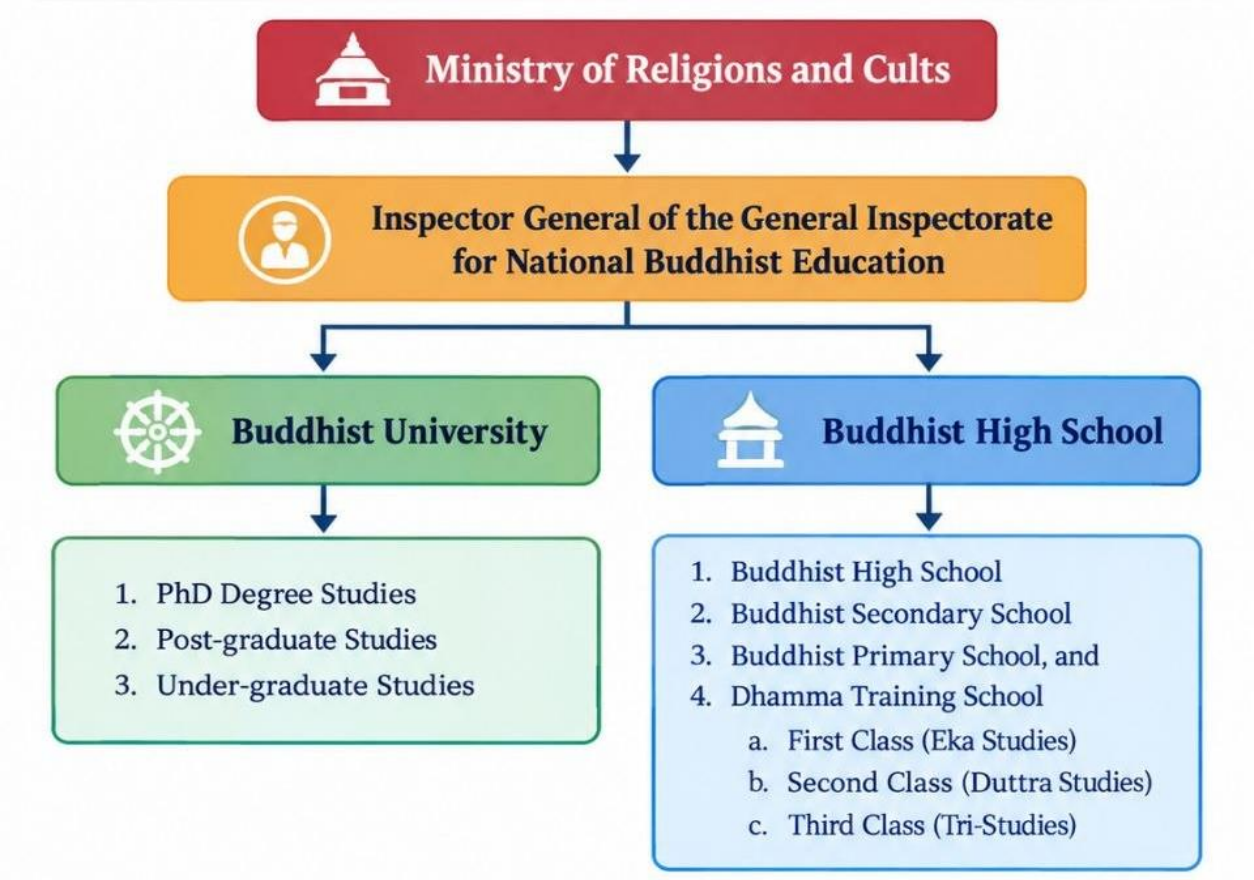


Figure 1: This is the Structure of Buddhist Educational Institutions in Cambodia.

The structure of Buddhist educational institutions in Cambodia

The structure of Buddhist educational institutions in Cambodia is very play important role to develop human resources and improve the quality of education knowledge for the people, especially, it has venerable monks and students to earn knowledge surrounding the country. It provided the knowledge from the seven levels to the upper levels to promote the education field in Cambodia. This structure system is starting from the past until the present of Buddhist educators of Cambodia. Every year, there are positive ways to increase the human resources in education before the Covid-19 and after the its pandemic so on.

2.2. Buddhist University of Cambodia

a. Preah Sihanoukraja Buddhist University, The First Buddhist Higher Educational Institution in Cambodia

Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University was founded on 1st July, 1954, under the royal patronage of King-father Norodom Sihanouk, then the King of Cambodia. It was the only educational institution providing higher Buddhist education to monk students. It was the third oldest Buddhist University in the world. Its first Rector was Venerable Huot Tath, who held the ecclesiastical title *Samdech Bodhivamsa* (Rajagana First Class), and who was also the Director General of Buddhist Education. The founding of this Buddhist University was the direct result of the Venerable Huot That's proposal to the King about the re-organizing of Buddhist education after the country regained national independence on 9th November 1953. It's located in front of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh town, there are four faculties and two branches in the provinces. The two branches are location in the Kompong Chhnang province and Battambang province.

The Buddhist University began by providing Buddhist upper-secondary education to monk students and continued to offer Bachelor's degree courses while still maintaining the former. With the admission of only 40 students for each academic year, the University was able to maintain high academic standard. The graduates possessed so good knowledge of Pali that some of them had also played an important role in the Tripitaka Translation Commission which undertook the herculean task of translating Pali Tripitaka into Khmer language. However, the translation was successfully done in 110 volumes, one page in Pali and one page in Khmer. The publication task which was undertaken by the Buddhist Institute, Phnom Penh, was completed in total in 1969. The translation was highly regarded by intellectuals and scholars, and Cambodia was the first country to have a complete translation of Pali Tripitaka into its national language. Unfortunately, after civil war broke out following the coup d'état on March 17, 1970, the Buddhist University, like other institutions in the country, faced unexpected hardship and difficulties. Its allocated budget was not provided and in due course conditions became so dire that it had to be closed down in 1972. During the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), the Buddhist University met with the worst period of its existence; it received heavy losses and destruction.

The present structure of the University started in 1997, eight years after the first Buddhist primary school was re-established. The University began by offering the Buddhist upper-secondary education, and proceeded to offer Bachelor's degree in 1999. For the first three academic years, it was able to maintain only one Faculty, the Faculty of Buddhist Studies, for which a competitive entrance examination was conducted to select 50 students each year (IATBU, 2007).

b. Samdech Akka Mohasenapadei Techo Hun Sen Buddhist University

Prime Minister Hun Sen has founded the second Buddhist university to be established in Cambodia since 1954, according to an August 23 sub-decree obtained by the Post yesterday. The Buddhist university, in Kampong Cham city's Boeungkok sangkat, has been a Buddhist school for the past three years, but will now be known as Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen Buddhist University. The first Buddhist university in Cambodia, Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University, was founded on July 1, 1954, under the royal patronage of King-father Norodom Sihanouk (Titthara, 2011).

c. Preah Sihamoniraja Buddhist University

Preah Sihamuniraja Buddhist University is located at Wat Svay Pope pagoda nearby the AEON supermarket mall and in front of the Russia Embassy for Cambodia in Sangkat Tonle Basac, Khan Chamkarmor, Phnom Penh. Preah Sihamoniraja Buddhist University (PSB University) was founded by His Holiness Samdech Preah Abhisiri Sugandha Mahasangharajah Dhipati Kitti Udessa Pandita Bour Kry, the Great Supreme Patriarch of the Dhammyutta Order in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Initially established as Preah Sangharaja Bour Kry Buddhist High School within the Svay Pope Monastery in Phnom Penh, the school served as a vital educational institution for students who had completed their secondary studies. Recognizing the need for higher education tailored to the needs of impoverished students, particularly novice monks of the Dhammyutta Order, His Holiness envisioned a new institution that would address this gap. As the result, PSB university was officially established on July 24, 2007, under Sub-Decree No.86, and was later accredited by the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC). Named by His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia and directed by Samdech Preah Moha Sangharaja Bour Kry, the current Supreme Patriarch of the Dhammyutta Order, PSB University has since become a beacon of education. By 2020, the university had proudly graduated 954 students, continuing its mission to provide accessible and quality education to all (PSBU, 2007).

2.3. Buddhist High School

a. Preah Suramrith Buddhist High Lyceum and its relevant

The Buddhist lyceum is under the High Patronage of His Majesty the king. Its reorganization by Kret Nº 265-NS of the 8th May 1955 aims at:

- Fortifying religious practices
- Developing a love of national culture and civilization,
- Developing human sense by the teaching of international culture and civilization,
- Assuring harmonious expansion of intelligence and favoring the formation of the personality.
- Preparing the monks for Higher Buddhist Studies,

Functioning and Personnel:

The establishment is maintained by the State Budget and directly run by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The control functioning of the establishment is assured by a Council of administration composed thus:

- The Minister of Cults or his delegate……President
- The delegate of Chief of Mahanikaya Order……Member
- The delegate of Chief of Dhammayutti Order……..Member
- The Headmaster of the Preah Sumarath Buddhist Lyceum……..Member
- The professor…….’
- A professor of education designated by the Minister of National Education……Member

The Council of Administration is obliged to meet once per year after the final examination. They examine the results obtained during the past school year, propose eventual revisions of the programs as well as all measures and directive judged indispensable for the proper functioning of the establishment.

The direction of establishment is assured by:

- A headmaster: *Preah Boddhivamsa* ***Hout That***

– And a Superintendent seconded by a Director of studies and supervisors,

The Teachers comprise:

On the one hand – religious and lay professors of the regular staff, which is today fifteen persons, in charge of the teaching Pali, Sanskrit, Cambodian and English.

On the other hand, professors and teachers from the National Education in charge of teaching French, Mathematics, History, Geography, Natural Science and Health.

Because of the present scarify of teaching personnel of the secondary cycle, other professors are called into service to tech supplementary classes of Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry in the high classes.

Finally, on the basis of cultural exchange, foreign organizations have offered professors in this service for teaching some subjects.

– An English professor by the Asia Foundation,
– Two French professor by the French Cultural Mission,
– And a professor in Sanskrit by the Embassy of India for Cambodia.

Recruitment

New students are recruited by entrance examination every year among the monks who are graduated from the Buddhist primary School (Certificat d' études Primaires du Bouddhisme).

The admission examination contains only the following written tests:

1. Translation with from Pali into Cambodia,
2. Cambodian dictation with or without questions or Khmer composition.
3. Questions Viniya or Doctrine, Problems on the four operations

Programme of Study

The syllabus containing the above subjects is established according to the following principles:

- Preserve the traditional character of education, Pali and Sanskrit study constituting a solid basis on which to build a deeper knowledge of Khmer language and culture.
- Improve the syllabus by the introduction of new subjects (algebra. geometry. physics, chemistry and English) and by recasting the programme of history, geography, natural sciences and health in such a way as to give a complete secondary education.
- use the national language as the vehicle non. ecclesiastical subjects.

The above time table shows the subjects denoted weekly to each ecclesiastical.

WEEKLY TIMETABLE

Weekly teaching hours by subject and year

SUBJECT	1ST YEAR	2ND YEAR	3RD YEAR	4TH YEAR
Classical Languages — Pali	8 hours	6 hours	6 hours	5 hours
Classical Languages — Sanskrit	—	3 hours	3 hours	3 hours
National Language	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours
English	5 hours	5 hours	5 hours	4 hours
French	4 hours	4 hours	4 hours	4 hours
History	2 hours	1 hour	1 hour	2 hours
Geography	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour
Mathematics	5 hours	4 hours	4 hours	4 hours
Sciences — Natural Sciences & Health	2 hours	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour
Sciences — Physics	—	2 hours	1 hour	1 hour
Sciences — Chemistry	—	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour
Civic Instruction	1 hour	—	—	1 hour
General Knowledge — History of Religion	—	—	1 hour	—
General Knowledge — Civilization & Khmer Arts	—	—	—	1 hour
TOTAL	**30 hours**	**30 hours**	**30 hours**	**30 hours**

— = no weekly hours listed in the source table.

Figure 2: This is the subjects and weekly timetables at Preah Suramarith Buddhist Lyceum.

Sanction of Studies

After the fourth year, the studies are sanctioned in the case of success in the final examination by a "Diploma of Secondary Buddhist Studies".

The examination has only the following written tests:

1. Pali translation of theme.
2. Sanskrit translation or theme,
3. English or French translation or theme,
4. Dissertation on Buddhist Doctrine (Preah Viniya. or Abhidhamma).
5. History-geography.
6. Mathematics.
7. Natural has including with three subjects 1. Sciences, 2. Physics, and 3. Chemistry.

Two sessions of examination are given in every year (Kret N^{O} 206-CR of the 24th of May 1960).

STATISTICS

Complement of students and the results of diverse examinations and entrance examinations since the reorganization of Secondary Buddhist Education.

School Year	Newly Enrolled	Number of Classes	Number of Students	Secondary Buddhist Diploma	
				Candidates Number	Admitted
1955–56	157	9	557		
1956–57	150	10	610		
1957–58	166	11	650		
1958–59	174	12	666		
1959–60	170	12	705		
1960–61	156	12	656		
1961–62	184	13	680		

Diploma entries visible in source:

	Candidates	Admitted
	147	97
1st session	196	112
2nd session	79	12
1st session	218	160
2nd session	53	2

Figure 1: This is the result statistics at Preah Suramrith Buddhist High Lyceum.

2.4. Buddhist Secondary School

The Preah Suramrith Buddhist Lyceum is the only Establishment of Secondary Education of Buddhism in the Kingdom, formerly known under the name of the Pali School School (Ecole de Pali) then Pali High (Ecole Superieure de Pali). Each of these applications corresponds to a special organization. Importantly, Buddhist Secondary School is a part of the Buddhist high school program including all study's subjects and curriculums that it's second levels of Buddhist education in Cambodia. In past time, it has only one place in Phnom Penh city.

2.5. Buddhist Primary School

The Buddhist Primary Schools, founded in 1933 and reorganized by Kret N^{O} 607 NS of the 12th of December 1957, operate in the diverse monasteries of the capital and the interior. Currently education is being given in 590 schools with three classes totaling 10, 150 students, (*The Buddhist Institute, 1961, 81 page*).

Buddhist Primary School has three classes for academic year study which it started with the grade 4 level, 5 level, and 6 level. And then, venerable monks can registration for the national examination to upgrade into the Buddhist Secondary School. Indeed, the pagodas of Cambodia is the main role to educate the venerable monks as finding any support by the Lay-Buddhists around the Cambodia after the government is the first sponsored.

4. Dhamma-viniya (Dhamma – Training School)

Venerable monks of Cambodian Buddhist education must be learning the Dhamma-viniya school because it's the root of the Buddhism to practice in daily life. There are two levels and years to study in-deeply of Buddhist commentary, Jatakas, and tales in Buddhism. After then, venerable monks can get the certificate from the Inspector General of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education and Ministry of Religious and Cults after they had finished the national examination for every year. This study program affected to increase human resources of Buddhist education because it is the scenario of Buddhist education to bring the knowledge to lay Buddhists who attempted the Dhamma as the life experiments or examples study to build up living morality through the feet of the Buddha. So, Cambodian Buddhists learnt the knowledge from the Dhamma talk at the temples to cultivate their purification one's. The Dhamma talk is the lesson to study of

the life experiences from the Buddha's stories and tales that it's also the proofs for Cambodian lay Buddhists to realize the morality cultivation and pay attention within intelligence growing up.

5. Buddhist Education in Covid-19 and Globe Modern Educational System

As Buddhism has been integrated into Khmer culture and society, Buddhist monks have played an integral part in society, particularly in education. In each festival and ceremony, Buddhist monks are ritually invited to preach the Dharma to gatherings of 20 to 30 people or more (Ross, 1987). The teaching is in the form of advising and involves morality, social values, culture, and religious beliefs. Though the learning is not like any formal education with a clear timeline and curriculum, it is conducive for laypeople to absorb knowledge (Sopheavy, 2018). According to Khmer times news released that "how Buddhism can help Cambodia get through the pandemic?" For all Cambodians, 2020 was a tough year characterized by the battle between the nation and COVID-19, an invisible enemy that by today has claimed 1.81 million lives around the world. The year also saw Cambodia face one of the worst socio-economic calamities in its history, with millions of people suffering. In an exclusive interview with Khmer Times, Venerable Khim Sorn, chief of Phnom Penh Municipal monks, says Buddhism, the religion embraced by 90 percent of the population, can help the Kingdom and its people get through this hard time. He added more that as the disciples of the Enlightened One, monks, who are well-versed in the teachings of Buddha, have very important roles to play in order to help people in their community to get through this tough period. They must educate the people about the right paths guided by Buddha for them to be able to take care of their physical and mental well-being. Also, as influential individuals in their communities, the monks must include education on good hygiene and other preventive measures in their sermons to instruct and remind the people of protecting themselves and other people from the deadly virus. They must also lead the charitable movements to help the underprivileged people, who have to survive during this hard time. Buddha wants people to be kind and to help one another. Our traditional beliefs dictate Buddha blesses people with happiness and he will protect us from contracting diseases, especially coronavirus, which is currently causing misery all around the world. But, he only helps those who helped themselves first, so that why people must always protect themselves while relying on Buddha for spiritual support (Times, 2021). Overall, even though there are discussions of the decline of Buddhism and the growing importance of modern education in Cambodia (Black, 2017), it is still noteworthy to acknowledge

that Buddhist temples play a complementary role in enhancing Cambodian education. During the Sangkom Reastr Niyum (People's Socialist Community), the Buddhist educations provided by pagodas were well nourished and flourished. Even during the Khmer rouge regimes when temples were destroyed and monks forced to leave monkhood, the pagoda-based education has resurrected and survived when people were liberated from the genocidal Khmer rouge regime. This reflects that the educations provided by Buddhist pagodas in Cambodia are beyond physical appearance such as buildings, but it is something at the heart and soul of Khmer culture. For centuries, pagodas have been the sole place of education and training of moral values (Filippi, 2011). In the current context, the role of Buddhist pagodas in supporting education in Cambodia remains pivotal. Perhaps as Nicholas Hemingway, a guest editor of Cambodian Education Forum puts it, "the teachings of Buddhist monks are immortal and will remain an essential part of Cambodian culture. The temple and those living in them will remain a relevant part of the Kingdom forever since the values held at these institutions cannot be tarnished by time." (Sokvy, 2020).

In additionally, the Covid-19 virus appeared at the last of 2019 year, it has outbreak in the whole world that it was impacting to Buddhist Education in Cambodia. And, many studies have looked for the origins of SARS-CoV-2, but none have found the answer. The coronaviruses behind Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) developed from bats. COVID-19 first appeared on a small scale in November 2019 with the first large cluster appearing in Wuhan, China, by December 2019. It was first thought that SARS-CoV-2 made the jump to humans at one of Wuhan's open-air "wet markets." Wet markets are partially or fully open-air markets that sell fresh produce and meat. China's in-country World Health Organization office learned of multiple pneumonia cases of unknown cause. People reported symptoms such as fever and shortness of breath that seemed linked to the market (Shruthi N, 2026). In fact, the Ministry of Religious and Cults and the Inspector General of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education have announced a strategy to prevent and study, and to push Buddhist education during the COVID-19 pandemic. To cement the Buddhists education, every institution under the Inspector General of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education has made the education policy to push the knowledge in sufficiency for the venerable monks and students around the Cambodia. Because of this problem, it made a plan to lead the online classes study for education supporting by projects LCD, e-learning TV watching, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Microsoft

term, and study online pages, and other material tools for all venerable monks and students. According to Samdech Preah Mahāsumedhādhipati Kittipaṇḍita Am Limheng, who is acting-president of the Inspector General of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education said that:

"***Buddhist education is the backbone of Buddhism in Cambodia***."

Meanwhile, the world situation has affected from the Covid-19, the Buddhist education must be contributing with the global policy to build up the education as the main key to accelerate the human resources figure out this virus pandemic. As the result, we got the positive result ongoing the Buddhist education in order to capacity development, online learning, maintain quality education at Buddhist institutions in the sufficiency.

6. Buddhist Education and its Decision-Making Policy for the Future Goals

Buddhist education for academic year 2025-2026, it explores an efficiency of innovation in education field and various of positive results. Even though this year we have controversy and turmoil from the war crisis between the Cambodia and Thailand borders. But, Buddhist education was standing on its educational management and expanded in class learning approaches. It has continued with educational modernization through online learning in sustainability. Buddhist education has planned on its orientation's strategies for Buddhist education for academic year 2026-2027 to go ahead most successfully.

For Buddhist education's strategies to grow Buddhist schools, classrooms, and teachers in order of Dhamma-viniya to express the Dhamma-legacy to Cambodian citizens, pay attention and attract their feelings to realize deeply in Buddhist education learning, especially; about Buddhist philosophy. There is an increase of 25% and Buddhist schools are 31% more than last year that it is a great positive signal through Cambodian Lay-Buddhists who have donated their treasures, which is supposed to augment and grow Buddhist education more and more. This is a positive signal that shows Buddhist education development including solidarity, Buddhist heritage, and cultural sharing in Cambodia. Continuing, Cambodian Buddhist education has always stood as the roots of mental phenomena for Cambodian people. Therefore, it based on Buddhist educational analysis resources under the committee's research and recorded teamwork for Buddhist education

who have concerning with quality improvement. Recently, there have been many venerable monks who have dropped out of their education such as Dhamma-viniya studies and primary school students. They were dropped by venerable students at first and second classes in Buddhist primary school with 59% and 66% of Dhamma-viniya studies. So, we have a strong challenging to make sense on Buddhist education improvement. As we know that the matters of the problems because of standard of living, take out the monk-hood, Cambodia and Thailand's border conflict, and the influence of social media. This is the negative Buddhist education development that impacted to venerable students at the moment.

In the world of globalization and digitalization, both Buddhist and public education are significant strategies to increase human resources in Cambodia. As we the Buddhists, we have known that Buddhist education is not only to gain knowledge and develop self-discipline but also provide the peace, harmony and non-violence concepts into Cambodia society.

Therefore, Buddhist education is involved in life's experience and positive thinking who are venerable students participated with mental health development and social crisis in Cambodia. Recently, the Inspector General of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education has fully committed to pursuing the Buddhist education's reformation and facilitated the educational Buddhist modernization system at Buddhist Institutions due to sustainable development approaches. Moreover, we were able to improve teachers' capacity through the bureaucracy, evaluation, surveys, and commendation for every Buddhist institute. And, we have a plan to escalate Buddhist education in balancing and accountability to preserve high-quality sources.

Our commitment is focused on digitalization at all Buddhist institutes in Cambodia. We are supposed to expand digital Tripitaka studies, e-libraries, the benefits of e-learning in Dhamma, and mental motivation as an answer to global educational approaches. That's why it's not only about balancing knowledge but also promoting Buddhist education through modern technology, Buddhist studies, and escalating social moral development efficiently.

Our achievement depended on the cooperation's linking with other organizations which are the Ministry of Religions and Cults, the Buddhist leaders' in all levels, the school's principals, Buddhist community in the provinces. Our team welcomes all audiences' feedback and

recommendations to correct the mistakes to be better for the next year. Through our commitment and sacrificing together to pursue our work and missionary on the way of awakening behavior and spiritual development to establish the national stability, sustainable and prosperity.

a. The Main Goal for Academic Year 202626-2027

The Inspector General of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education and Ministry of Religious and Cults have conducted the main goal's strategy to increase the educational quality in Cambodia. It is an answer for our feedback work to Cambodian society demanding. In this case, we tried to be affordable and focused on the standard of the learning program through the national education reform. This is a new education reform system that is linked with the cooperation of Buddhist and public education such as Pali and Sanskrit languages, and Dhamma-viniya in order to be full of knowledge in spiritual, virtue, and education quality development. Hence, this educational reformation has included a digital administrative system to improve work. It focused on data security (MIS), registration, document saving, and faith certificates. By the way, we are challenged with the administrative system not only wasting time but also escaping from any risks with data security or fake information.

The vision for academic year 2026-2027, the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education has pay much attention for the staffs or teachers capacity development skills who are working at Buddhist Institutes in order to the globalization and its innovation system. Moreover, it pushes and supports the bureaucracy system at Buddhist education system that concluding the leadership management, a new public administrative, foreign languages, and digital capacity development. Improving of the capacity supposes to the leaders and staffs in the modern time. Hence, it provides the leadership concepts to lead the Buddhist education as the same as the national education development.

The essential factor in Buddhist education right now is the bureaucracy of the staffs or teachers to be more sufficiency. The General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education pushes and supports to arrangement of the bureaucracy system that it will be staring from the Buddhist basis class until the graduation studies. It will be the modern exchange study program to the way of active teaching approaches. The staffs and teachers will be train the modern technology's

techniques on going the digital teaching contents, e- learning management skills, and the quality of result evaluation in the balancing to conduct with the basis of education quality at Buddhist institutes.

Finally, the main goal of the General Inspectorate for National Buddhist Education has a good enough to be a core of Buddhist education influence and fruitful as the its reflection as the strongly commitment with the Buddhist education and its policy making. Developing a new reformation of Buddhist education depends on the digital innovation, bureaucracy system, and increasing the teachers' capacity. Moreover, it is a martial power to push the Buddhist education in the standard level. We hoped that the Buddhist educational reform will be a sustainable development to assure the human resources within the behavior and spiritual development in the society of Cambodia (Education T. G., 2026).

Conclusion

Buddhist education in Cambodia from the past and the present played important role to human resources development of venerable monks and Lay-Buddhists in many centuries ago. There is the participatory education study program to transform education quality of Buddhist institutions such as the primary school, secondary school, high school, and university. Otherwise, it has distributed so challenging in the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Especially, in the modern education in 21th century; Buddhist education carried out the education quality policy making to figure out any problems through e-learning or online-learning for venerable monks and students in Buddhist education areas. Distance learning program has been contributing within the online learning materials and tools to educate the venerable monks and students for earn the knowledge as the possibly. Buddhist education is not only education cultivate for students but also it brings the knowledge to Cambodian people through Dhamma talk as the concepts of art of living to improve the Cambodian society.

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