



Education Buzz (March 1): Alarm in Indonesia about curriculum | Cambodian education funding dispute | More

By Robert Cannon and Colum Graham
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Indonesia: alarm over new curriculum proposals

The new school curriculum in Indonesia is generating a potent mix of alarm, confusion, and disbelief, according to press reports.

Over several months, and almost daily, deep concerns have been aired in the press. Concerns are with a host of issues including the impact on subjects including [Bahasa Indonesia](#), science and social science, and with other matters including [examinations](#) and even possible [violation](#) of national laws.

According to the Secretary-General of the Indonesian Teachers Unions, teachers are “astounded” to learn that students are to learn ‘how to be disciplined like an electron’ and to ‘behave in a heterogeneous society after studying linear and non-linear equations’. “How is that even possible?” the Secretary is [quoted](#) as saying.

On the one hand the Ministry of Education and Culture wants to boost character building by shoehorning civic and religious education into subjects such as chemistry and mathematics. On the other hand, it is seeking to improve Indonesia’s performance in international tests such as TIMMS and PISA.

An added worry is the Ministry’s intention to use the ‘cascade training’ approach to preparing teachers to implement the new curriculum, due to begin in July. Unless this training is rigorously quality assured at each level of the cascade, messages will be seriously distorted. Even if done well, implementing a major curriculum reform like this in such a short time is unlikely to succeed.

Cambodia: Education funding dispute

Cambodian Education Minister, Im Sethy, abandoned a prepared speech at a European Union (EU) funded workshop and [angrily accused](#) the Ministry of Economy and Finance of consistently failing to disburse sufficient funds to the education sector. "But I'm thankful to our partner that helped us because sometimes Cambodians don't listen to each other", Mr. Sethy said, expressing gratitude to the EU for spending about US \$49 million on Cambodian education initiatives to date.

In another development, the Government of Cambodia and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) [signed](#) grant and loan agreements in January worth USD 230 million to reduce poverty and promote inclusive growth. Six projects are included in the agreement of which the Third Education Sector Development Program is one. Meanwhile, the ADB has also [approved](#) the new Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project II. This Technical Assistance is valued at USD 0.9 million.

Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership in Indonesia

The Education Sector *Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership* (ACDP) is a facility to promote policy dialogue and reform. The European Union and AusAID provide about USD 50 million to support implementation of ACDP from 2010-14. The Asian Development Bank manages finances in support of ACDP.

The ACDP has three outputs related to legislative and regulatory reforms, organizational change and capacity development in government agencies and educational institutions, and improved information and communication. The most recent [annual report](#), for 2011, focuses on ACDP's internal administrative arrangements and plans. Hopefully, the 2012 report due out soon will be significantly more outward looking and be able to demonstrate solid progress in relation to all outputs.

Education networks and newsletters

Indonesia: USAID PRIORITAS website & newsletters. The new USAID Prioritizing Reform, Innovation, and Opportunities for Reaching Indonesia's Teachers, Administrators, and Students (PRIORITAS) project now has an excellent website available [here](#). Material is available in Bahasa Indonesia and in English. One very useful feature for practitioners is the site's e-library of training materials, books of good practices, and reports from earlier USAID projects in Indonesia thus providing a very welcome sense of continuity between projects over the past decade.

'Prioritas' is Indonesian for priority - very appropriate for an education project - but the lengthy expansion of the acronym must surely earn this project name a place in Guiness Book of Records!

ADB Launces Asian Development Blog. This new blog covers a range of development topics. Recent [blogs](#) in education are 'Asia needs to invest more in its people' and 'Developed East Asia soars in math and science test results'.

World Bank: Education for Global Development Blog. The comparable Education for Global Development website now has a [new blog](#) on teacher effectiveness.

ACER Distance Education Research Bank. This ACER [database](#) is a searchable web database containing details of books, articles, conference papers and reports on various aspects of distance and online education, from publishers in Australia and overseas.

Upcoming conferences, 2013

UNESCO symposium: the UNESCO established Education Research Institutes Network will hold a symposium in Bangkok on the transition from secondary to higher education and policy related studies on the integration of non-cognitive skills in education on 7-8 March, 2013. Further information is available [here](#).

ACER Research Conference 2013: 'How the Brain Learns: What lessons are there for teaching?' From 4–6 August 2013 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, Victoria. This multidisciplinary conference will link research in neuroscience, psychology and classroom teaching practice. Details available [here](#).

The UK Forum for International Education and Training will hold its international conference, 'Education and Development Post 2015: Reflecting, Reviewing, Re-visioning' from 10-12 September 2013 at the University of Oxford Examination Schools. More details [here](#).

In brief

Fiji: Access to Quality Education Program. Australia is contributing to the Access to Quality Education Program (AQEP) in [Fiji](#). Through AQEP, Australia will invest \$93 million over five years to ensure that the most disadvantaged children in Fiji can have access to a quality school education.

Education in Myanmar. Only half of all children complete primary school in Myanmar.

The current generation of children is at risk of being the first to have a lower level of education than their parents.

In this challenging context, Australia and the UK will work together through the [Myanmar Education Consortium](#) to provide better access to education. The consortium, with \$15 million in funding from AusAID and \$5.8 million from the UK Department for International Development, will help children in some of the poorest and most remote areas of Myanmar, in particular, girls from ethnic minority groups, and the disabled.

Vanuatu: Teacher development program. A two-week [program](#) for 34 Vanuatan primary school and mission teachers, many without qualifications, has the joint support of Vanuatu's Education Ministry and AusAID.

India: expenditure for children's education. Mehtabul Azam has an article in the journal [World Development](#) on the allocation of household expenditure for children's education. The article reports that there is a bias against educating girls in rural areas, and identifies that boys are often sent to private schools, while girls are sent to public schools.

Research awards. AusAID has [announced](#) the results of the 2012 round of the AusAID Development Research Awards Scheme (ADRAS). This will see \$28.7 million dedicated to research, including [educational research](#), to improve the quality and effectiveness of Australian aid in developing countries.

Scholarships. Applications are now open for Australia Awards Scholarships provided under the Australian Government overseas aid program for study in Australia in 2014. Further details are available [here](#).

Scholarships supported by Taiwan's International Cooperation and Development Fund have also been announced [here](#). Applications close on 15 March 2013.

The Journal of Development Studies. A [Special Issue](#) on education of *The Journal of Development Studies*, [Volume 49, Issue 2](#), 2013, has many articles of interest on topics such as school fees in Indonesia, student learning in the Philippines, corruption in education in Bangladesh, and school governance in India, among others.

New Journal. *The International Journal of Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments* is a newly established journal on the use of web 2.0 tools for teaching and learning. [Volume 1 No 1](#) contains this article on development: 'Educational technology and social media in a developing world context'.

Asia-Pacific Ministerial Forum on ICT in Education. UNESCO Bangkok's Asia Pacific Ministerial Forum on ICT in Education has released a [report](#) from their September 2012

conference along with the presentations from the conference.

New World Bank book series: *Improving learning in Uganda*. Some welcome additions to the country-specific study of educational development have been published very recently. These titles are in a new series of books from the World Bank that are available [online](#). Another fine example of a country-specific study is Guthrie's book on education in PNG, discussed in a recent Development Policy Centre blog [here](#).

Volume I. Community led school feeding practices, by I.M Nujumba, C.L. Bunjo, D. Kyaddondo, and C. Misinde. The World Bank, December, 2012. 113p.

Volume II. Problematic curriculum areas and teacher effectiveness: Insights from national assessments, by I.M Nujumba and J.H. Marshall. The World Bank, February, 2013. 172p.

Volume III. School-based management: Policy and functionality, by I.M Nujumba, J. Habyarimana and C.L. Bunjo, The World Bank, February, 2013. 133p.

Sri Lanka: 'free' education. The paper by Sharmila Gamlath, "Freeing" free education in Sri Lanka, *Asian Education and Development Studies*, Vol. 2, 1, 2013, 34 – 52, demonstrates the need for considerable reform of Sri Lanka's education system, especially with regard to improving the quality of state education and encouraging greater private sector participation.

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