Towards synergistic policies on MLE in Cambodia: national, provincial, and local levels

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The objective of this paper is to discuss the main findings of a study conducted in June/July 2015 that evaluated the state of multilingual education (MLE) implementation in Cambodia. Following up on Benson’s (2011) evaluation and recommendations, this study updates progress on MLE expansion in the Ratanakiri province through voices from the national, provincial, and local levels.

Prior to arriving in Cambodia, the three-person team reviewed relevant policy documents and reports, including the Multilingual Education National Action Plan and the 2013 Prakas. In the villages, Kreung-speaking state and community teachers, school management committee members, and learners from grades 1-6 were interviewed to understand how MLE policies played out in practice. In the province, Department of Education officers and key representatives from CARE Cambodia were interviewed to understand their unique role as middle men between the national and the local. In the capital, members from MoEYS, UNICEF, and the national CARE office were interviewed to gain a macro-perspective of MLE implementation.

Data collection methods included report reading/analysis, informational meetings, individual interviews, group discussions, classroom observations, and some photographic recordings. Based on our analysis, we support current strategies and recommend further steps to strengthen the quality, improve the sustainability, and further expand the approach to MLE at the preschool and primary levels.

By discussing both the successes and challenges of MLE implementation and expansion in recent years, we hope to contribute to continued synergistic educational planning at the national, provincial, and local levels, with implications for other multilingual contexts.