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CURBING PRIVATE TUTORING AND INFORMAL FEES IN CAMBODIA'S BASIC EDUCATION



BACKGROUND PAPER FOR CAMBODIA
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2015

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Curbing Private Tutoring and Informal Fees in Cambodia's Basic Education

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MAY 2014





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reviews the issue of informal fees in Cambodian primary and lower secondary schools, where public education is, in principal, free for all. Informal fees are defined as fees “not officially sanctioned, approved, and/or collected by the state or local government as a prerequisite for school attendance”¹. This report focuses on two main types: fees for private tutoring and fees for specific educational processes. Fees for private tutoring consist of payments to teachers in exchange for tutoring organized by the school or the class teacher to supplement regular class instruction. Private tutoring as it has emerged in Cambodia may be considered a form of informal fee, given the current legal framework endorsing free education for all. Fees for specific educational purposes cover items such as handouts and examination work sheets, along with better evaluations and even advancement from Grade 9 to Grade 10.

Informal fees threaten the quality of education, thwart the principle of equal access, and undermine the integrity of Cambodia’s basic education system. Private tutoring organized by the school, while providing short-term educational benefits to students and serving as a source of additional income for teachers, does not solve any fundamental problems associated with the study program, teachers’ abilities, or the quality of instruction. This is exacerbated by the absence of standardized testing or comparisons of school performances, which makes it impossible to assess teaching quality until students take

the required national examination in the ninth grade. Private tutoring benefits some groups of students more than others, and is therefore detrimental to the fundamental principle of free basic education for all. Institutionalized private tutoring also reflects constricted learning values, in that students focus on learning only to pass examinations. Perhaps most serious, however, is the risk presented to student integrity. The direct involvement of students in monetary transactions with school staff, whether by paying teacher fees, purchasing handouts or snacks, or even for private tutoring, exposes them directly to the expectation of informal payments to those in authority.

Many factors promote a demand for private tutoring, including cultural conditions, parental need to sustain children in school, over-emphasis on examinations, teacher-centered education and economic inducements. Factors fostering informal fees in education include a lack of or unclear regulatory frameworks, teacher incentives, a weak school management system, and an absence of parental and community engagement.

This report puts forth a series of policy options to address the issues of private tutoring and informal fees. The policy recommendations aim to standardize and mainstream private tutoring within the basic education system in such a way as to ensure quality across schools, equity of access and integrity of education service delivery. Regarding informal fees, fee payments and fee collection within

¹ Open Society Institute, Drawing the Line: Parental Payments for Education across Eurasia. New York: Open Society Institute, 2010.

Cambodia's basic education sub-sector should be transparently regulated and managed to promote educational quality, equity and integrity.

The policy options proposed to respond to private tutoring comprise four components: an evolving framework for private tutoring; management decentralization and school accountability; equity assurance; and monitoring of basic education quality. Ultimately, tutoring sessions organized on school premises should be integrated into the regular class schedule in different ways, with fees paid mostly from the government budget. If private tutoring is to be allowed as a commercially run undertaking, either by individual teachers or private business entities, there will be a need to ensure that both commercial and educational requirements are clear. While there could be individual or small group tutoring sessions off school premises offered by commercial enterprises or individual teachers, teachers should be discouraged from tutoring their own students. Using private tutoring to pass the national examination in Grade 9 should be reduced through revised methods of examination.

Solutions for other Informal Fee Issues also contain four components: a legal framework for unsanctioned fees; reform of educational processes; improvement of school financing; and monitoring of results.

The measures proposed to deal with informal payments do not aim to eliminate this problem completely. Instead, they call for a classification of payment types and an institutionalization of legitimate payments. They also call for reform of school management processes in such a way that payment collections are transparent and managed accountably. Community involvement is crucial for curbing abuses of power and ensuring the effective use of collections.

Informal payments and fees are systemic problems requiring a long-term strategy and a series of medium-term solutions. The key to success in handling these problems will be to identify a set of solutions that respond to the symptoms. Equally crucial is the monitoring of short-and medium-term impacts. A good monitoring system will permit adjustments to interventions as necessary.

The reform of the governance structure goes hand-in-hand with mainstreaming sound anti-corruption practices in the management of fee collection from parents. This connection exists because many aspects of informal payments and fees lead to corruption and abuses of power.

INTRODUCTION

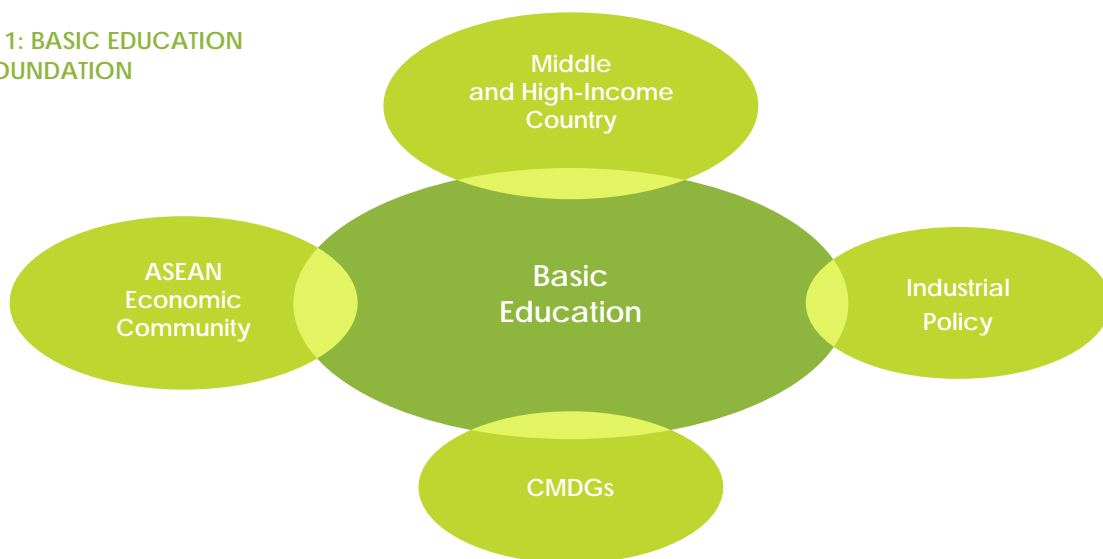
The importance of basic education, particularly from the primary to lower secondary levels (first to ninth grades), is undeniable. It is integral to the development of human capital and confirms the basic rights of Cambodian citizens. From a practical perspective, basic education is fundamental to Cambodia's development objectives. It is central to the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals, is the foundation of Cambodia's vision for industrialization, and is core to the nation's drive to obtain middle-income country status. Without basic, universal education accessible to all Cambodian children, Cambodia will not be able to achieve its inclusive growth and sustainable development goals.

Since 2000, the Royal Government of Cambodia has undertaken a series of educational policy reforms aimed at providing high-quality basic education to all Cambodian children. This emphasis can be seen in key laws and policies such as the Child Friendly School Policy (2007), the Education Law (2007), the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP, 2009-2013), the Education for All policy (EFA, 2003-2015) and the Education Strategic Plan (ESP, 2009-2013). The

Government's commitment notwithstanding, there remain barriers to achieving the goal of universal basic education in Cambodia. One such obstacle is the rise and persistence of unregulated informal fees in basic education processes.

Informal fees are defined as "fees not officially sanctioned, approved, and/or collected by the state or local government as a prerequisite for school attendance"². Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has issued several legal frameworks governing fees related to educational activities and services. In practice, there are myriad unofficial and unsanctioned payments that parents pay to secure advantages for their children at school. This report specifically focuses on fees in two main forms: those collected for private tutoring and those for specific educational processes. The former constitutes payment to the classroom teacher for both sanctioned and unsanctioned tutoring to supplement regular class instruction. The latter involves payment for handouts and examination work sheets, or even for better evaluations and grade advancement.

FIGURE 1: BASIC EDUCATION AS A FOUNDATION



² Open Society Institute, *Drawing the Line: Parental Payments for Education across Eurasia*. New York: Open Society Institute, 2010.

The objective of this report is to inform policy makers and stakeholders of possible policy options to tackle the informal fee issue. As there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problems of private tutoring and informal fees, the main approach adopted in this report is the identification of problem-solution-result relationships within the Cambodian socio-economic and cultural context. The report begins by analyzing the nature of private tutoring and informal fees in Cambodia and their possible “root causes”. It considers how relevant stakeholders, such as schools and non-governmental organizations with their own limited resources, have attempted to address these problems at a school level. The policy options presented here aim to address these fundamental drivers, based both on emerging beneficial practices in Cambodia and on international practices proposed for countries with similar problems.

This report makes use of three key sources of information. First, it has made considerable use of findings from research projects on informal fees in Cambodia’s education sector written from 2007 to the present by Cambodian and international researchers, and has drawn additional findings from a 2013 field study designed to confirm and elaborate on earlier ones. Earlier studies on the overall informal fee problem and the field study on the school management initiatives supplement one another to provide a sketch of fee issues existing at the school level³.

Second, the report consults writings on international approaches to Informal Fee Issues. There are two types of international experience under review. The first addresses informal fees in the education sector from a governance perspective, with emphasis on the institutional framework, the management structure and accountability. The second discusses informal fees from an anti-corruption perspective, emphasizing the

political economy of fee collection, organizational and individual incentives for wrong doing and problems of integrity in the education system⁴.

Finally, the report benefits from direct exchanges with key stakeholders from government and non-government sectors. These exchanges took place as part of the field study and separately validated findings from the field⁵.

The report adds to earlier studies on Cambodia’s informal fee issues in several aspects. It presents an overview of informal fee practices, impacts and motives based on studies conducted in the country. Additionally, it opts for a comprehensive framework for handling informal fee problems, combining governance and anti-corruption approaches. The proposed policy options highlight the need to foster quality, equity and integrity simultaneously in Cambodia’s basic education, and to ensure that parental payments are well regulated and support this goal. The proposed policy framework is results-based, incorporating a monitoring component to track policy impacts and performance. Given the still-limited scope of policy research on informal fees, it is hoped that the monitoring component inherent in the proposed policy framework will help promote further studies and shed light on the forms, scale and intensity of informal fees, as well as the effectiveness of remedial measures.

The report is organized in four parts. Part I summarizes the informal fee issues in Cambodia with specific attention to fees for private tutoring and specific education processes, and preliminary strategies adopted by model schools in Cambodia. Part II provides an overview of international approaches that address problems of extra parental payments for education. Part III presents short- and medium-term recommendations, and Part IV outlines implementation priorities and a road map.

³ A review of earlier writings on informal fees in Cambodia can be found in Kimchoeun Pak, “Literature Review: Informal Fees in the Education Sector in Cambodia,” October 2012. The results of a field study conducted in 2013 by the research team are presented in Kimchoeun Pak et al., “Informal Fees, Private Tutoring and Other School Governance Issues in Cambodia: Problems and Solutions,” November 2013; and Kimchoeun Pak et al., “Technical Note on Addressing Informal Fees in Cambodia’s Basic Education: Problems and Solutions in Eight Good Practices Schools,” December 2013.

⁴ For international experience in handling informal fees from the governance perspective, the report consults policy research publications on the rise and handling of information fees in Eurasian countries, and the study of private tutoring in Asia. See Open Society Institute, *Drawing the Line: Parental Payments for Education across Eurasia* (New York: Open Society Institute, 2010); Bray, Mark, *Adverse Effects of Private Supplementary Tutoring* (UNESCO: IIEP, 2003); and Bray, Mark and Lykins, Chad, *Shadow Education: Private Supplementary Tutoring and Its Implications for Policy Makers in Asia* (Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) and Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2011). For international anti-corruption experiences, the report consults publications from UNESCO, UNDP, U4, GTZ and DFID. Some key publications are: Hallak, Jacques and Poisson, Muriel, *Corrupt Schools, Corrupt Universities: What Can Be Done?* (UNESCO and IIEP, 2007); GTZ, *Preventing Corruption in the Education System: A Practical Guide* (Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH: 2004); Chapman, David, *Corruption and the Education Sector* (USAID and Management Systems International, November 2002); UNESCO and IIEP, *Ethics and Corruption in Education: A Capacity Building Program* (IIEP-UNESCO, 2010). For a summary of international practices, see Thaveeporn Vasavakul, *Towards Equal Access to Quality Education: Good Governance for Informal Payments in the Education Sector*, October 2012.

⁵ High-ranking officials interviewed include: H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of MoEYS and the Permanent Vice-Chairman of SNEC; H.E. Ros Seilava, Under Secretary of State of MEF; Mr. Tep Phiyorin, Deputy Secretary General of SNEC; and Mr. Hay Sovuthea, Director of the Department of Social Policy Analysis, SNEC.

PART



INFORMAL FEE ISSUES IN CAMBODIA



This section focuses on the problems surrounding informal fees in Cambodia and consists of four sub-sections: situation, impact, causes, and overall likelihood of fee payment. The purpose of this section is to identify key problems, the severity of those problems and their causes.

1.1 SITUATION

For Cambodian parents, various fees are involved in sending children to school today, just as they have been throughout the basic education system over the last few decades. A 1999 study by Mark Bray at the University of Hong Kong showed that parent expenditures for primary education increased from between KHR 50,000 and 255,000 (US\$12.50 - \$64) per child in the first grade, to between KHR 224,000 and 507,000 (US\$56 - \$127) by the sixth grade. Per child, this contribution represented 5.3 percent to 20.4 percent of annual family income⁶. Given that the average number of children per family in Cambodia then was between five and six, these informal fees for education were burdensome. In 2007, almost a decade after Bray's study, a study conducted by the National Education Partnership (NEP) confirmed the persistence of parental payments for basic education⁷. The NEP study in 2007 noted that parent-paid school-related costs included matriculation costs (school uniforms, textbooks, school registration); daily costs (food and transportation); educational fees (lesson handouts, private tutoring and payments to teachers for various purposes); and additional costs. The NEP study calculated that in total parents spent KHR 443,800 (US\$108) annually to send one child to school. This represented 8.7 percent of reported annual family income⁸. Expenditures increased with each additional child in school. Fees also increased as students progressed from grade to grade (an estimated US\$60 for grades 1-3, \$90 for grades 4-6 and \$158 for grades 7-9)⁹.

Cambodian parents do not always have a good grasp of which fees are sanctioned by the Government and which are not. According to the NEP study, only one-quarter of the parents interviewed were aware of the Education for All policy or that their children were entitled to nine years of free basic education. In general, the parents interviewed in the NEP study felt that some cost were acceptable and some

unacceptable. For instance, parents endorsed all fees necessary to send their children to school (such as uniforms, food, transportation) but not other school-related fees (such as registration, teacher fees, private tutoring, handouts, examination work sheets, parking, gifts to teachers, money for ceremonies and study record booklets). Many continued to pay fees for education because they were afraid their children would be penalized by teachers if they did not. Some parents paid additional fees because they felt teachers received low salaries and deserved better payment. The NEP study pointed out that the practice of paying informal fees was widespread and even more prevalent in urban areas where parents paid twice as much.

The field study of schools carried out by the research team in 2013 further explored the situation of informal fees at the school level. As its approach, the 2013 field study focused on a group of six select primary and junior secondary schools in geographically diverse provinces considered to have good overall management¹⁰. The study explores how the selected schools have approached the problem of private tutoring and informal fees and the extent to which they may have continued to suffer from Informal Fee Issues¹¹.

According to the field study, a school that has been successful in addressing problems of informal fees and private tutoring is one whose school principal has not only permitted, but also regulated and modified, such practices to ensure that they generate additional income for teachers, promote educational quality for students and gain trust from parents. Collectively, the schools under study demonstrated practices that addressed private tutoring and informal fee issues which fell into four categories: clear collection, stake-holder consultation, measures to support poor students and monitoring by the school principal. Initiatives undertaken by these schools aimed to respond to a

⁶ Mark Bray, *The Private Costs of Public Schooling: Household and Community Financing of Primary Education in Cambodia*, (IIEP/UNESCO, 1990), p. 80.

⁷ See NGO Education Partnership, *The Impact of Informal School Fees on Family Expenditure*, October 2007. The study focused on the four provinces of Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kampong and Takeo.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 1. The report points out that parents annually spent the following: KHR 77,888 (US\$19) for start-up costs; KHR 195,900 (US\$48) for daily costs; KHR 151,5600 (US\$37) for school fees; and KHR 18,600 (US\$4.50) for other additional costs.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ The number is eight if it includes two pilot testing schools that the team worked with to prepare the study tools.

¹¹ Details of the discussion in this section can be found in Pak et al., "Informal Fees" and "Technical Note".

combination of management challenges, including the problems of an overloaded study program and low teacher salaries. The schools under study appear to have seen some positive results. Teachers reportedly were able to deliver the required curriculum and were satisfied with the financial arrangements. Of the respondents, 81 percent said the quality of students' education had improved, while only 19 percent said students' education had not improved¹².

Notwithstanding a systematic approach to management, the field study indicated remaining challenges at the school level. Various informal fees in different forms have continued to persist even in schools regarded as having good management practices. In other words, while a degree of formalization may help make certain collections "disappear", formalization alone is not sufficient to eliminate informal fees completely. Other key findings are:

FORMS OF PAYMENT

Parents continued to pay sanctioned and unsanctioned fees for basic education. Based on interviews with parents, key payments in order of pervasiveness were¹³:

- Contributions to school development (59%)
- Tutoring outside normal class time (45%)
- Examination sheets (36%)
- Teacher assessment in evaluation books (36%)
- Thursday tutoring already paid by the Government (35%)
- Tutoring during school vacation (34%)
- Daily payments to teachers (28%)
- Class handouts (16%)
- Class supplies (14%)
- Grade advancement (13%)
- Tutoring during class hours (12%)

PRIVATE TUTORING

Among items paid for by the majority of parents, private tutoring was a major component representing four of the 11 fee items: outside normal class time (45%), during school vacation (34%), on Thursdays already paid to teachers by the Government (35%) and during class hours (12%).

OTHER FORMS OF INFORMAL FEES

At the selected schools, parents paid other fees not officially sanctioned, including fees for examination worksheets, lesson handouts and classroom supplies. There were also payments considered illicit, such as for good marks in evaluation books, grade advancement and daily teacher gratuities.

NATURE OF FEE PAYMENT

Tutoring was more common in urban than rural schools and in lower secondary than primary schools. At the lower secondary level, private tutoring was most common in ninth grade, mostly in anticipation of the compulsory national examination before tenth grade. Parents in remote areas did not experience as many demands for fees. Parents also seemed to pay less at primary than lower secondary schools. Both legitimate and illegitimate payments are intensified at the lower secondary level. Parents and students invest in various forms of private tutoring, and at the same time, pay other informal fees.

LEGITIMACY OF FEE PAYMENT

The legitimacy of fees for free education has various dimensions. Many fees have questionable legal bearing. While some are sanctioned by the Government, many are unsanctioned, dubious or in a grey area. The study indicated a willingness on the part of parents to pay for school development and private tutoring outside normal class time and during school vacation to improve their child's learning. Private tutoring was also considered a crucial source of income for teachers, whose salaries are relatively low. The field study also found signs of abuses of power: students were pressured to attend tutoring sessions, and private tutoring was used as a conduit for teachers to leak examination questions in advance¹⁴.

¹² Pak et al., "Informal Fees" p. 17.

¹³ Ibid. p. 4

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 4.

1.2 IMPACT

There are arguments both for and against private tutoring and informal fees. Those in favor focus on improved learning and teacher incomes. However, from a medium- to long-term perspective, comparative studies indicate that private tutoring and informal fees raise problems for equity, quality and integrity. Private tutoring fosters educational inequality¹⁵. Tutoring is likely more accessible to students in higher socio-economic groups than to those in lower ones¹⁶. It is also likely that not all students, even in the same school, receive tutoring for the same duration each week. Some may receive tutoring throughout the year, while others only prior to important examinations. Private tutoring does not solve fundamental problems of the study program, teacher ability or quality of instruction. It is likely to affect the quality of teaching and learning for all students, not just the less advantaged (although in the absence of standardized testing or a comparison of school performance, it is not possible to assess teaching quality until students take the required national examination in the ninth grade). Institutionalized private tutoring also reflects constricted learning values in that students focus on learning only to pass examinations. Perhaps most serious, however, is the risk presented to student integrity. The direct involvement of students in monetary transactions with school staff exposes them to the expectation of informal payments to those in authority¹⁷.

There are indications that private tutoring has adverse effects on the equity, quality and integrity of Cambodian basic education. Although at the schools selected for the field study initiatives were taken to formalize tutoring given by teachers to their students on the school premises, such situations challenge the equity of education across schools and classes. An additional challenge to equity at the school level is

that 45 percent of parents paid for tutoring outside normal class time and 34 percent paid for tutoring during school vacation, a situation implying unequal access to services related to basic education. It is possible to argue that informal fee payment of various forms is financially burdensome, especially for low- and middle-income families with a large number of children. Informal fee payment is likely one of the factors that contributes to school dropout, among other factors, including lack of motivation on the part of poor parents and students, potential discrimination against those who do not pay and a need for children to enter the labor market early.

Private tutoring does not guarantee educational quality, and does not help eliminate payments for illicit advantage. Institutionalized private tutoring organized by the school exists in parallel with informal fees for evaluation book submissions and grade advancement. Other forms of informal payment for illicit advantage undermine the credibility and quality of basic education.

Both sanctioned and unsanctioned fee collection are detrimental to the integrity of teacher-student relationships. As indicated in the NEP study and confirmed by the field study in 2013, most fees passed from students to teachers directly, whether in the form of teacher fees, payment for handouts and snacks, or private tutoring charges. The field study also detected apparent abuses of power: students were pressured to attend tutoring sessions, and private tutoring was used as a conduit for teachers to leak examination questions in advance. There is therefore an additional concern about the ethos of children learning at an early age to bribe educators in exchange for access¹⁸.

¹⁵ See Bray, *Adverse Effects of Private Supplementary Tutoring*, and Bray and Lykins, *Shadow Education*.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See, *Drawing the Line: Parental Payments for Education across Eurasia*. New York: Open Society Institute, 2010.

¹⁸ NEP, *The Impact of Informal Fees*; Pak et al., *Informal Fees*.

1.3 CAUSES

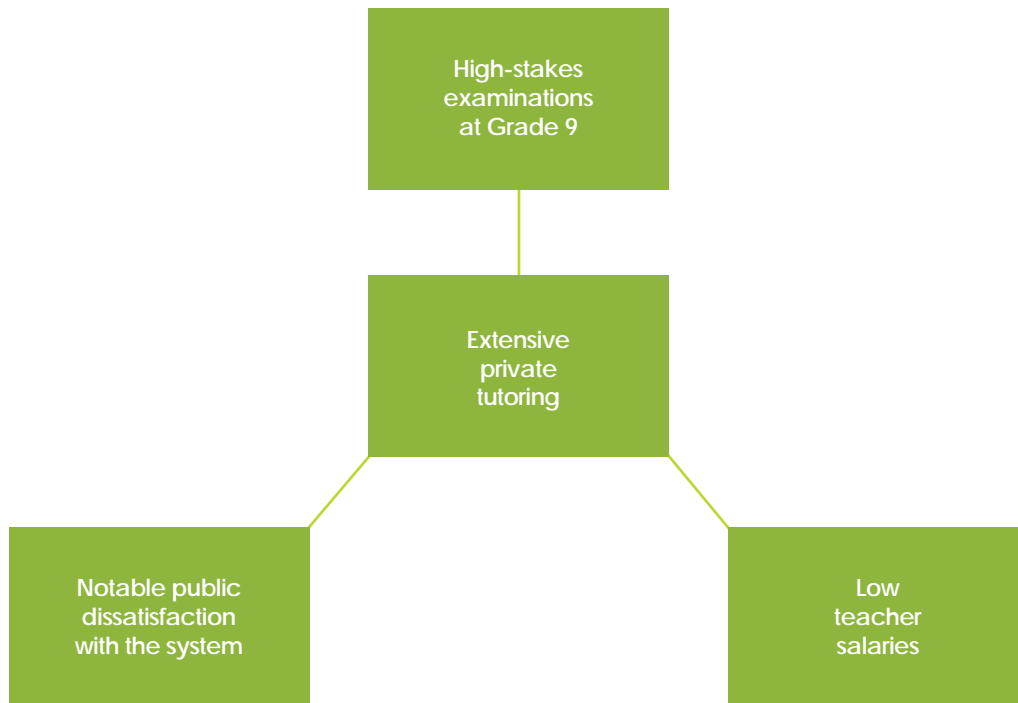
Private tutoring and informal fees each have their own root conditions.

PRIVATE TUTORING

Comparative studies have identified a series of factors that promote demand for private tutoring: cultural conditions, parental need to sustain children in school, over-emphasis on examinations, teacher-centered education and economic benefits¹⁹. There is an argument that the scale of private tutoring is the lowest in countries that do not have high-stakes examinations, where public satisfaction with mainstream education is high and where teachers are paid comparatively well. This international perspective has shed light on how to understand the situation in Cambodia. Cambodia experiences a set of factors that foster private tutoring in basic education (see Figure 2).

In Cambodia, the intensity of private tutoring at the lower secondary level, especially in Grade 9, indicates that parents and students are concerned with national examinations. There is no detailed study on public satisfaction with mainstream education, however, a field study conducted in 2013 indicated that many parents were happy to pay extra for their children to gain knowledge. To many parents the prospect of keeping children in school while they work appears both convenient and cost-effective. Low teacher salaries are a crucial driver of private tutoring, which offers a convenient source of supplementary income. This factor is one of the most problematic in the equation, as several scenarios are possible, but in general it is obvious that low salaries would motivate teachers to encourage private tutoring.

FIGURE 2: DRIVERS OF PRIVATE TUTORING



¹⁹ Mark Bray and Chad Lykins (2012) *Shadow Education*.

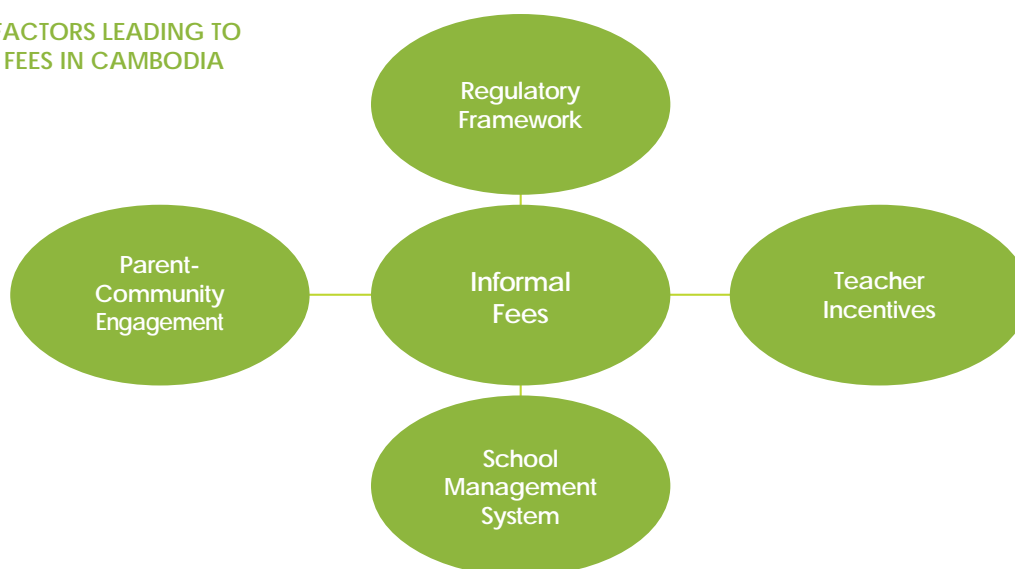
INFORMAL FEES

Comparative studies have identified a number of factors fostering informal fee assessments in education. These factors can be traced either to financial management or to unintended consequences of various educational regulations. Existing writings have highlighted lacking or unclear regulatory frameworks, teacher incentives, a weak school management system and an absence of parental and community engagement (see Figure 3).

The lack of a legal framework, unclear legal stipulations and weak sanction mechanisms encourage the development of various forms of informal fees. Monetary incentives such as salaries are significant factors in teacher motivation. Apart from the inadequacy of

teacher salaries in Cambodia, salary delays and deductions remain an issue, especially in rural areas. When considering school management, parental contributions in the form of fees may imply that the public budget is either insufficient or not sufficiently well managed to cover operating costs. In the current system, school directors have no authority to dismiss teachers, which makes enforcement of teacher professional conduct particularly difficult. The lack of any regular inspection of school quality is another factor. Finally, parental and community engagement in school management matters has been mainly in the form of cash and in-kind contributions, not in the form of monitoring or supervising school management²⁰.

FIGURE 3: FACTORS LEADING TO INFORMAL FEES IN CAMBODIA



1.4 OVERALL LIKELIHOOD OF FEE PAYMENT

There is no study on how pervasive various forms of private tutoring and informal fees are nation-wide. It is nevertheless possible to infer that institutionalized parental payments for private tutoring would be higher at the selected schools than on average nationally. On the other hand, the payment of unsanctioned fees could arguably be lower. A small-scale survey in 2012 of 155 exam takers and their parents to ascertain what payments were given during examinations from lower

secondary to upper secondary school showed that 67 percent of the students had parents who paid informal fees during the exam²¹. Despite the lack of a national-level survey, it is possible to calculate the likelihood of fee payment based on a structural analysis of factors either promoting or discouraging informal fees. If these factors are not dealt with, it will be likely that the problem of informal fees will remain.

²⁰ On legal framework, school management and inspection, see government documents including the Education Strategic Plan for 2003-2008; the Education Law (2007) Article 26; and Article 13 of the Sub-Decree on the Teachers Professional Code (2008). On material incentives, see a recent publication by S. Ang et al., *Assessing the Impact of Incentives on Teacher Motivation*, National Education Partnership, 2012.

²¹ Cited in Pak, Literature Review.

PART



OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES



International experience offers a wide range of measures to regulate and manage fees in education systems. Strategies combine measures for good governance in education management and corruption prevention. They focus on the following features: legal frameworks for informal payments and fees, equity requirements, education finance, reform of the payment process at the school level, integrity in schooling, linking governance measures with anti-corruption and integrity measures, and

community participation in policy making and school management. These measures address the different factors considered root causes of the growth in informal fees in education with the aim of curbing various forms of informal fees. The problems of informal payments and fees cannot be addressed by merely resorting to one solution alone; they require a combination of governance and corruption prevention strategies with participation from relevant stakeholders at various stages.

FIGURE 4: GOVERNANCE AND ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES FOR INFORMAL FEES IN EDUCATION



Although national governments endorse the principle of free education, most governments are not able to provide adequate and sustainable funding to ensure free education for all. To ensure the financial sustainability of the school system, the Government may need to

allow parental contributions as a funding mechanism. To capitalize on parental payments, the legal framework should be clear about what the Government and parents will respectively be responsible for²². Table 1 tentatively lists financial responsibilities.

TABLE 1: DIVISION OF FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES²³

Funded by the Government	Parental Payment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaries • Teacher and staff consumable items • Infrastructure expenses • Operational and maintenance costs • Instructional equipment • Basic tuition costs • Required extracurricular activities • Items that remain school property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil consumable items • Additional tuition costs • Extra fees • Instructional material fees • Optional extracurricular activities • Items that become personal property

Under this framework if governments can provide only school facilities, a portion of teacher salaries and basic training materials, they should then seek agreement from parents and the community on sources for additional funding. They need to clarify that collections from parents are mandatory to supplement state funding. In addition to mandatory collections, there are other, non-mandatory forms of payment whose collection should also be regulated. Specifically:

- Some international practices governing donations advocate that a donation must be voluntary, the purpose needs to be clear, receipts and expenditures should be posted in public places and all donations should be collected by parent associations or a designated staff person. Additionally, good practice requires that donors receive no benefit and non-donors suffer no consequences.
- Supplementary tutoring should be controlled, especially if it involves teachers from the school or serves as a substitute for schooling.

- Gift giving should be regulated to control the value and frequency of gifts, as well as their importance in informal social relations. Reporting procedures should be established along with limits on the value, type and frequency of payments.
- Payments for admission to schools, grade-buying, oversized gifts and bribes should be outlawed.

Defining payments and fees of all types is important for reducing the incentive or opportunity for wrong doing and will also lead to a decrease in the amount of money collected, and thus the financial pressure on households. If a formalization of the payment system encompasses philanthropic donations, public-private partnerships may also increase. These payments may lead to improvements in the critical policy areas of quality, access and equity.

²² This section is based on *Drawing the Line*, chapter 5. *Drawing the Line* emphasizes a clear legal framework and discusses different parties' responsibilities.

²³ Ibid. p. 90.

2.1.1 EQUITY REQUIREMENTS

Existing works on informal fees argue that supplementary payments may have unintended effects on parents and children from low-income and disadvantaged households²⁴. As a result, parents may limit their children's participation in extracurricular activities, study and programs. To curb unintended consequences, policy makers need to review educational equity and make sure that parental payments have little or no inequitable effect on access. Charges for meals, transport, uniforms,

texts, activities or other educational expenses for at-risk households should be reduced or eliminated.

The government should be flexible in allowing varied resources to play a role in maintaining equity, including a combination of philanthropy and taxation for education financing. Policymakers may develop such alternative means for raising revenue as tax incentives for private investment in education.

2.2 EDUCATION FINANCE AND SCHOOL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Education finance is a key factor in moderating informal payments and fees. The key components are the system of educational financing and improved school financial management.

Two aspects of educational finance will help address the problem of informal fees. One is to establish the actual cost of education and the other is to focus on the development of budgeting accountability in the use of allocated funds. Information gathered from tracking and auditing procedures would show where to improve the budgetary process, how to amend legislation and what forms of enforcement would be required. These measures indirectly curb informal payments; if allocations are used efficiently, the school may have no need to rely on other collection sources²⁵.

Research on school financial management suggests measures to sustain a school's financial independence and self-reliance. One measure is to develop a method to analyze school effectiveness in attracting resources and budgetary efficiency. This would identify best practices and estimate costs across a school system. Another measure focuses on school autonomy and community oversight for the management of funds and other resources. This course requires school administrators and their local counterparts in parent

associations and on boards of trustees to learn how to exercise fiscal oversight.

Overall, the Government should make sure that public funds reach the intended schools and are used for their specified purposes. Fundamentally, educational finance and school financial measures should aim to eliminate dependence on parental payments, particularly on those of an ambiguous and informal nature.

2.2.1 REFORM OF THE PAYMENT PROCESS AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

Another approach to handling informal payments focuses on reforming collection and payment processes at the school level. This includes developing clear procedures for different forms of payment, collection, publication of the use of collections, and periodic reviews and reporting²⁶.

Defining roles and responsibilities in payment collection is important for eliminating potential discriminatory practices. The role of both teachers and children in the collection process, from communication to collection, should be diminished or eliminated. A school administrator in cooperation with a parent association

²⁴ Bray in *The Private Costs of Public Schooling* associates payment burden with school dropout. This is particularly the case for families with a large number of children.

²⁵ See, for example, CMI, *Confronting Corruption in Education: Advancing Accountable Practices through Budget Monitoring*, no. 7 (May 2009); and CMI, *Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys: Lessons from Tanzania*, no. 14 (November 2007).

²⁶ See *Drawing the Line*, chapter 5.

representative should become responsible for collection, tracking and reporting all contributions. All funds must be fully documented and contributors given receipts. Schools should provide information on receipt procedures and use of contributions. Guidelines should be established for handling potential problems. The minutes of any meetings should be publicly available. All community members should have easy access to this information in writing.

To support transparency and accountability, measures aimed at public engagement are useful. While parent associations or boards of trustees are good mechanisms, parents must not only be informed of all aspects of the payment and fee process, but also be brought in as participants in planning. To build trust across groups, there should be mechanisms that allow parents to raise concerns and solve problems, such as confidential hotlines.

2.3 INTEGRITY IN SCHOOL

Integrity at the school level is another approach potentially useful in curbing informal fees and payments. While there is a wide range of integrity measures, the most oft-cited measure is the use of a code of conduct²⁷. Regulating teacher-student relations through a code of conduct is particularly pertinent in the area of private

tutoring of students by the class teacher. Although there are challenges yet to be met for the enforcement of such codes and the establishment of bodies responsible for administering sanctions, specific mechanisms or bodies established to ensure enforcement are possible responses.

LINKING GOVERNANCE MEASURES WITH ANTI-CORRUPTION AND INTEGRITY MEASURES

Many national governments mainstream anti-corruption and integrity measures into the education sector²⁸. As a result, many of the practices related to informal payments and fees fall under the category of corrupt acts. This is particularly the case with payments such as bribes for gate-keeping, gifts and extra teaching. Corrupt acts also include the misuse of mandatory parent contributions for private gain. Anti-corruption measures that might help curb these problems are: anti-corruption education, sanctions and capacity-building to combat corruption.

ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES AND INTEGRITY EDUCATION

Many national governments have implemented anti-corruption education in their education sector. This trend opens up an opportunity for teachers and students to become familiar with the concept, while also reflecting on experiences of corruption in their environment. Initiatives in this area include programs on awareness-raising through radio and TV programs and educational material for young people with supporting teacher aids. There are also activities to support the piloting of “integrity clubs” where students take an active role in raising corruption awareness among their fellow students and the wider education community.

SANCTIONS

Sanctions are crucial in guaranteeing that rules and regulations related to informal payments and fees are respected. There are a number of sanctions and disciplinary measures used to deter these “corrupt” practices. They include:

ANTI-CORRUPTION AND INTEGRITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Anti-corruption literature that focuses on capacity development covers institutional, organizational and individual capacities offered by donors, using technical assistance and training for its two main

²⁷ The model of a code of conduct for medical professionals is a good reference for the education sector. A good example of how to structure a code of conduct is from Stanford University Medical Center.

²⁸ UNDP, *Fighting Corruption in the Education Sector: Methods, Tools and Good Practices*, 2011.

- Independent complaint systems;
- Investigators with authority and access to relevant information;
- Criminal sanctions according to the nature and level of wrongdoing;
- Administrative measures;
- Increased powers of school oversight.

Some of the informal payments and fees may fall under a country's anti-corruption framework or anti-corruption law; the latter tends to be administered by anti-corruption agencies, not the education ministry. Aligning sanctions in the education sector with an anti-corruption framework that has a penalty level will discourage wrongdoing.

strategies. At the national level, technical assistance is rendered to different departments of the Ministry of Education and government agencies involved in education policy making, while training on corruption in the education sector targets parliamentary education committees. At the school level, capacity development targets school principals, teachers, parent associations and civil society organizations. As many nations move towards decentralization, building their capacities in school management and finance is a priority, as is their accountability in decentralization initiatives.

2.4

PARTICIPATORY POLICY MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION

In making policy, authorities should adhere to the use of a consultative approach by involving local experts, professionals and other community representatives. Public discussion will encourage scrutiny of questionable practices and present opportunities for the community at large to choose what is necessary and appropriate.

2.4.1 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

One approach to curbing informal payments and fees is community engagement in school management. Outreach activities have a significant role in facilitating such engagement, as much of the population does not possess a solid working knowledge of the full context to which parental payments have taken hold. Some widely held perceptions are based on misunderstandings of what informal payments may or may not do. Public and professional awareness programs should thus be organized to educate stakeholders on these matters. As schools play a pivotal role in youth development, engagement

strategies may consider the creation (or expansion) of external groups that are able to serve as neutral parties. Such groups can serve as resource points for consultation and training, tailoring their services to meet specific needs and tackle systemic issues.

Expert research will provide useful inputs. Research efforts should focus on examining ways to diminish household burdens while improving community support and participation. School and community needs and conditions should be monitored continually to impart transparency to all transactions. Evaluation of school performance and innovation should be carried out to establish practical criteria for broader use in future.

Literature suggests that devolution of power to parents and communities to manage schools has been successful in reducing problems. However, there is a range of factors to be considered when transferring school management to parents. Success depends largely on community willingness, readiness and capacity to undertake such tasks.

PART



PROPOSED STRATEGIES TO CURB PRIVATE TUTORING AND INFORMAL FEE



Cambodia is confronted with the challenges of organizing the collection of unsanctioned, informal fees on the one hand and private tutoring on the other. Private tutoring as it occurs in Cambodia has some unique features. Although the term “private” is used, it is often a misnomer as applied to the “private” elements of tutoring. In most cases, it is the public school or public school teacher that organizes private tutoring sessions. More often than not, tutoring takes place on public school premises. Tutoring sessions focus on subjects and content from the official curriculum and are largely aimed at material not covered during official class hours. In many cases, teachers have also provided tutoring sessions to their own students. Fees collected by teachers are believed to supplement their low salaries. This situation is different from many countries where private tutoring is offered by private tutoring companies and teachers outside the school system to students who strive for additional knowledge to supplement official school programs.

The implementation of private tutoring in Cambodia has raised problems with equity of access, educational

quality and integrity of the system of basic education as a whole. The field study results show that there are students whose parents paid and others whose parents did not pay. There are violations against existing regulations covering tutoring times and distortion of learning emphasis, as seen in the varying fee levels for private tutoring according to school level and location. Additionally, informal fee payment exists even in schools regarded as adhering to “effective practice”. In general, malpractice is detrimental to the quality of basic education.

Proposals to formalize private tutoring and informal fees are drawn from emerging beneficial practices adopted by a number of Cambodian schools to curb undesirable private tutoring and informal fees. They are also drawn from international approaches that focus on governance and anti-corruption measures for improving governance and integrity in the delivery of basic education services. These proposals address factors conducive to private tutoring and informal fees. Box 1 captures the overall and specific objectives of these proposed strategies.

BOX 1: OVERALL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR CURBING PRIVATE TUTORING CHALLENGES AND INFORMAL FEES IN CAMBODIAN BASIC EDUCATION

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Parental payments for Cambodia’s basic education are well regulated to support the improved quality, equity and integrity of Cambodia’s basic education.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1

Private tutoring within the basic education system is standardized and mainstreamed into that system in such a way as to ensure quality across schools, equity of access and integrity of education service delivery.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2

Fee payments and fee collections within Cambodia’s basic education sub-sector are transparently regulated and managed to promote educational quality, equity and integrity.

The remainder of this section focuses on strategies for mainstreaming private tutoring and informal fee regulation.

3.1 REDUCING THE NEED FOR PRIVATE TUTORING

Comparative studies on private tutoring show that government responses and measures generally follow these patterns: ignore, prohibit, recognize, regulate and encourage²⁹. The criterion for choosing a policy option is based on a calculation of cost versus benefit – does the cost of regulation exceed or fall short of the benefit? Private tutoring is not a unique problem to Cambodia. Responses to private tutoring have been examined in Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Mauritius. In Mauritius, public teachers provided tutoring to their regular students. In Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, private tutoring was offered by both private businesses and public teachers. Mark Bray at the University of Hong Kong concluded that South Korea unsuccessfully prohibited private tutoring, Mauritius and Hong Kong regulated it, and Singapore and Taiwan encouraged it³⁰.

For Cambodia, private tutoring is a confluence of various factors, ranging from demand from parents who see private tutoring as a source of additional knowledge for their children to teachers' need for supplementary income due to inadequate financial resources and educational background. In this context, the strategy of prohibiting private tutoring in the short term may not be feasible. As there are signs of problems in school management of private tutoring, ignoring the problem is also not an option. Persistent problems can be

detrimental to a basic education system in the long term.

The recommended approach is for relevant government agencies to recognize positive and negative aspects of private tutoring and regulate potentially harmful practices. Private tutoring could be allowed in the short term to encourage learning and supplement the Government study program. Nonetheless, there is a need to ensure that private tutoring brings about quality education and equity. In the long term, private tutoring should be reduced in what is, principally, a free basic education system. Tutoring sessions organized on the school premises should be integrated into the regular class schedule in different ways, with fees paid mostly from government budgets. While there could be individual or small group tutoring outside school premises by commercial enterprises or individual teachers, teachers should be discouraged from tutoring their own students. Using private tutoring to pass the national examination at Grade 9 should be reduced through revised methods of examination.

The strategy proposed for dealing with challenges in private tutoring has four components: an evolving framework for private tutoring; decentralization of management and accountability of the school; equity assurance; and monitoring of basic educational quality (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5: COMPONENTS NECESSARY FOR MAINSTREAMING PRIVATE TUTORING



²⁹ Mark Bray, *Adverse Effects of Private Supplementary Tutoring* (UNESCO: IIEP, 2003).

³⁰ Ibid.

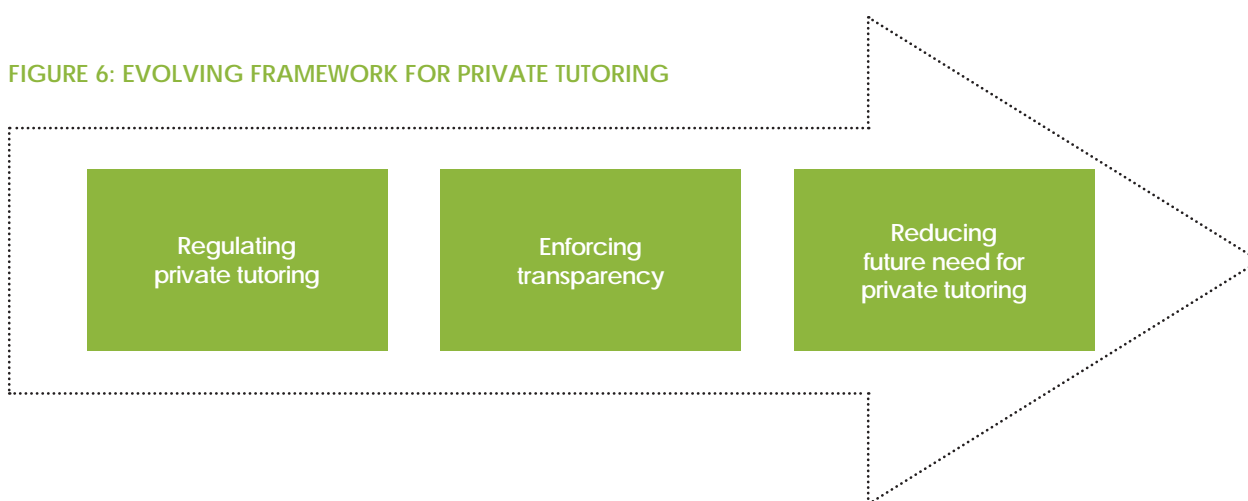
3.1.1 COMPONENT I: EVOLVING FRAMEWORK FOR PRIVATE TUTORING

Component I for developing a legal framework consists of three sub-components that build upon each other: regulation, transparency enforcement and reduction (see Figure 6). Key responsible agencies are central ministries such as MoEYS and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. As private tutoring has commercial implications, central government agencies responsible for trade and commerce may have to be involved, should private tutoring involve commercial or private enterprises.

The first sub-component is regulation and focuses on clarifying the legal framework for private tutoring³¹:

- Who may organize private tutoring (schools, teachers, parents, the school support committee, or private entities)
- Where may private tutoring take place (school premises vs. other locations)
- Duration of tutoring
- What subjects and content are covered (extension of government program, supplementary or remedial content)
- Size of the tutoring class
- Range of fees
- Requirements related to operation (e.g. registration of services by schools or teachers)
- Requirements related to quality control
- Complaint mechanisms
- Enforcement mechanisms.

FIGURE 6: EVOLVING FRAMEWORK FOR PRIVATE TUTORING



If private tutoring is to be allowed as a commercially run undertaking either by individual teachers or private business entities, there will be a need to ensure that both commercial and educational requirements. Commercial requirements emphasize transparency in financial transactions, contractual relationships and the management of tutoring premises to ensure student safety. Educational requirements focus on teacher qualifications, pedagogy, class size and curricular content. Some of the regulatory practices imposed on private enterprises and providers are:

- Registration requirements for tutorial centers
- Regulated times and class sizes
- Advertisement regulations
- Complaint mechanisms

- Official cap on the number of private tutoring hours offered by public school teachers
- School monitoring of teachers who provide tutoring
- Prohibition of teachers tutoring students from their own classes.

The second sub-component focuses on transparency enforcement. Transparency policy may include:

- Educational objectives, expected outcomes, management structure and persons responsible at the national level
- Development and monitoring of plans at local government levels
- Activity plans at the school level

³¹ Hallak and Poisson (2007) *Corrupt Schools, Corrupt Universities: What Can Be Done?* pp. 257-72.

- Public information on private tutoring policies at the local level
- Organizational, financial and reporting transparency.

In concert with regulation and transparency enforcement, the framework’s third sub-component reduces demand for private tutoring. This reduction is predicated on the assumption that supplementary teaching is potentially detrimental to mainstream education. Measures that help reduce the need for private tutoring depend mainly on reforming particular educational processes:

- Reviewing and adjusting broader curricular goals to help integrate private tutoring into the official program
- Allowing additional time in the curricular schedule for students who need review and examination preparation
- Organizing after-school programs to support student learning with primarily government, and only supplemental, parent funding
- Standardizing teaching methods and qualifications and setting commensurate salaries
- Reforming the high-stakes examination at Grade 9 to reduce the need for extra tutoring
- Instituting a benchmark exit evaluation of primary and lower-secondary students’ performance and completion of centrally mandated curricula.

Not all of these measures have to be implemented. Appropriate measures will depend on analysis of specific drivers, be they overloading of the government program, limited learning ability among students, ineffective teaching, or high-stakes examinations.

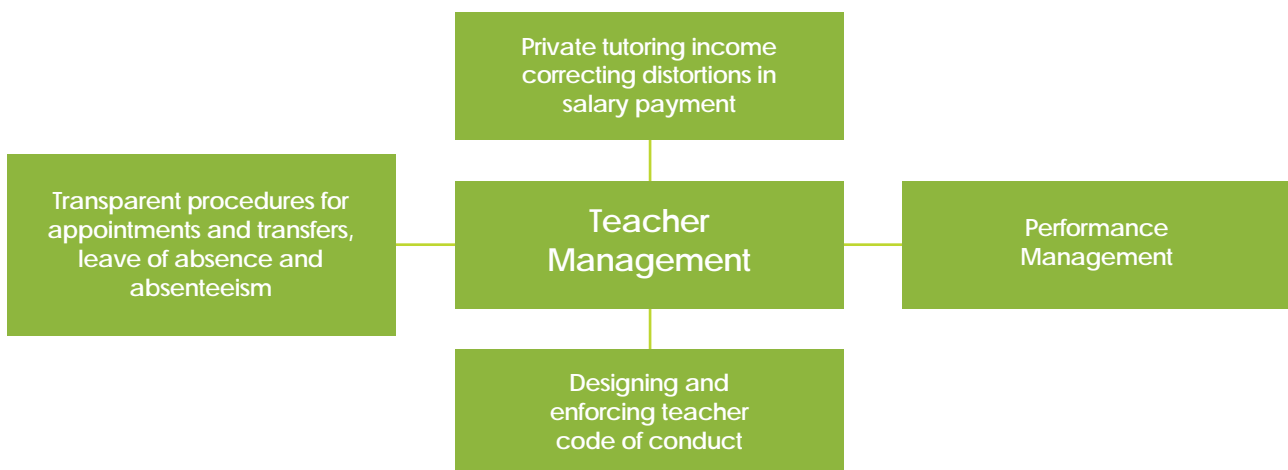
3.1.2 COMPONENT II: DECENTRALIZATION OF MANAGEMENT TO THE SCHOOL, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The second of the four components focuses on decentralization of management to the school, and accountability³². Responsible parties are primarily local education agencies, the school, parents and the communities, all of whom operate within the central regulatory framework. Support from the district education office (DoE) is needed, however experience so far is that support from the DoE and higher levels has been uneven³³.

There are two aspects of management, one related to private tutoring sessions and the other to teachers. Private tutoring management emphasizes:

- Task delegation that places the school and local communities in charge of organizing private tutoring within the government framework
- Parental and school monitoring against collection of private tutoring fees, sessions on unsanctioned Thursdays, or private tutoring during normal teaching hours.

FIGURE 7: KEY ASPECTS OF TEACHER MANAGEMENT



³² In Cambodia, the concept of decentralization of responsibility is often associated with the concept of school-based management that involves the transfer of more authority to school principals, promotion of community participation, and appropriate support and oversight from the district level.

³³ See Pak et al., ‘Informal Fees’ and ‘Technical Note’.

Formalizing private tutoring also requires curbing harmful teacher management practices. Emphasis should be on enforcing the teacher code and transparency of teacher management³⁴. Specifically:

- Local education agencies and schools must enforce a teacher code of conduct
- Local education agencies and schools must become transparent in managing teacher benefits and entitlements³⁵
- The central government, local education departments and school must link additional compensation to better performance.

Regarding the final point, performance measurement will be required to ensure not only that teachers are not underpaid but that better pay actually means better teacher performance and educational quality. MoEYS and local education departments may rely on standardized lesson plans to measure teacher ability; schools may disseminate information on expectations for private tutoring to parents; and schools, parents and local communities may be involved in monitoring.

3.1.3 COMPONENT III: EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

The strategy's third component is equity. In some rural areas, parents were willing to pay extra for private tutoring, thus confirming that formalization is an option. However, in other rural and remote areas, formalization might not be feasible simply because parents have less interest in sending their children to school, let alone paying for private tutoring; children in these areas sometimes stay away even when their fees are waived completely.

Setting up a framework to ensure equity in educational access is the responsibility of central government

agencies. Common social assistance programs would be scholarships, programs to provide remedial classes for disadvantaged children, pilot use of conditional cash transfers to individual families for educational purposes, or community block grants to meet school attendance targets. In any of these cases, implementation could fall just as easily under the purview of NGOs, philanthropic organizations, the school or the school support committee, and engagement from local authorities has been found to encourage parents to send their children to school.

Educational equity may also be promoted through broadcast media during the examination season to support high-school students, and through online platforms staffed by cyber teachers and parent-tutors in support of students needing tutoring. These methods, if carefully designed, could support poor and disadvantaged students in need of supplementary or remedial learning in Cambodia³⁶.

3.1.4 COMPONENT IV: MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF QUALITY

Quality tracking, the last of the four components, is crucial in assessing the impact and outcome of private tutoring and guiding further medium-term steps. The focus of monitoring will be on how well both the specific objective and the overall development objectives of bringing private tutoring into the mainstream have been reached.

The specific objective is the vision that "private tutoring in the basic education system is standardized and main-streamed into the basic education system to ensure quality across schools, equity of access and integrity of the delivery of education services". Box 2 lists some possible questions and indicators for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

³⁴ Hallak and Poisson, pp. 155-83.

³⁵ One key management area is absenteeism, a notion covering various types of absence. Commonly known absences include authorized leave and sick leave. Staff also have "excused" and "unexcused" absences, such as for training and non-teaching government duties, unauthorized leave, or just unexplained absence. To address absenteeism, local education agencies and school principals need to ensure transparency in procedures for transferring teachers, allowing teachers to go on various types of leave and handling teacher absenteeism. Ibid.; and GTZ, Preventing Corruption in the Education System: A Practical Guide, p. 26.

³⁶ South Korea applied these measures.

BOX 2: QUESTIONS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION – MAINSTREAMING PRIVATE TUTORING

MONITORING AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL	
<p>1 SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT</p> <p>INDICATORS Providers, Products and Consumers</p>	<p>QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the provider? • What is the relationship between the regular program and the private tutoring program? • How much do parents in different localities spend for tutoring? What are they offered, and do they get what they expect?
<p>2 MANAGEMENT</p> <p>INDICATORS Transparency and Integrity in Management</p>	<p>QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is private tutoring managed transparently at the school level? • What is the rate of wrongdoing? • How do parents perceive private tutoring to be managed? • Are teachers unduly motivated by the prospect of supplementary income? • What is the school's benchmark for assessing teachers and student progress?
<p>3 EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>INDICATORS Learning Scheme, Quality and Equity</p>	<p>QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the private tutoring scheme at the primary and lower secondary levels and at Grade 9? Has the scheme changed? • Does private tutoring yield the quality of basic education desired at the school level? Do students perform better? What is the average performance of primary and lower secondary school graduates? • Are there indications of inequality between boys and girls in private tutoring delivery? Between rich and poor students? Rural and urban schools?
<p>EVALUATION ACROSS SCHOOLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, but focused on comparison across schools • Standards to be used to assess school performance • Quality of ninth graders graduating into the labor market • Quality of ninth graders taking the national examination to continue into Grade 10 	
<p>LESSONS LEARNED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should the Government's strategy be for integrating school-organized private tutoring into the official school program? 	

Tracking results can be done by a variety of stakeholders (e.g., the school, local government offices, research agencies or NGOs) depending on the unit to be tracked (a school or a school cluster) and the observational focus (conditions, management or effectiveness). At the school level, tracking could

be carried out by the school, in collaboration with research agencies or NGOs, while at the cross-school level, local government agencies should play a more active role. Coordination is needed to ensure the consolidation and supplementary effectiveness of data collection.

3.2 STRATEGIES FOR CURBING OTHER INFORMAL FEES

As with private tutoring, the response to the problem of informal fee solicitation also comprises four components (see Figure 8)³⁷: 1) unsanctioned fee frameworks; 2) educational process reform; 3) improved school financing; and 4) monitoring results. These components

are designed to address four sources of wrongdoing: unclear legal frameworks, inappropriate inducements, weak school-level management and lax community monitoring.

FIGURE 8: STRATEGIES FOR CURBING INFORMAL FEES



3.2.1 COMPONENT I: FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING THE COLLECTION OF UNSANCTIONED FEES

As with management of private tutoring, the starting point for solving the problem of informal fees is to have a clear legal framework for their collection. This framework may cover the clarification of payment responsibilities, regulation of non-mandatory fees, management of sanctioned fees and penalization of unsanctioned fees.

Division of Governmental and Parental Responsibilities: Part 2.1 lists responsibilities according to whether

they fall under the purview of parents or the State. The Government is responsible for salaries, teacher and staff items, school property (infrastructure, operations, maintenance and equipment), tuition and required extra-curricular activities. Parents, on the other hand, are responsible for child expenses such as clothing, food and transportation. For in-between items such as additional tuition costs, fees for instructional materials like textbooks and handouts, and optional extra-curricular activities, the question of who is responsible may point to different stakeholders in different cases.

Regulation of Non-Mandatory Fees: In addition to

³⁷ Hallak and Poisson, pp. 245-52.

mandatory and prohibited collections, there are other non-mandatory payments, the collection of which should be regulated. These payments include donations, supplementary tutoring fees, gifts and bribes. Some common principles forestalling abuses in unofficial fee collection are that:

- A donation must be voluntary. Its purpose needs to be concrete, receipts and expenditures should be posted in public places and all amounts should be collected by parent associations or a designated staff member.
- Supplementary tutoring should be controlled, especially if it involves teachers from the school or serves as a substitute for schooling (see Part 3.1).
- Gift giving should be regulated to control the value and frequency of gifts, as well as their importance in informal social relations. Reporting procedures should be established along with limits on the value, type and frequency of payments.
- Informal school admission payments, grade-buying, inordinate gifts and other forms of educational bribery should be strictly prohibited and rigorously penalized.

Defining payments and fees of all types is important to reducing incentives and opportunities for abuse.

Management of Sanctioned Fees: For all sanctioned fees, there should be requirements for transparent management, including the following:

- A general guideline or handbook from the district-level administration or individual school which lays out the financial procedures for fee collection, clearly states who collects which fees (e.g., school accountant or teacher) and the amount, frequency and purpose of each fee;
- Publication of the regulations and procedures governing fee collection;
- Disclosure of collection and allocation data to the public.

Sanctioning against Illegal Fee Collection: For unsanctioned fees that are criminalized, there should be:

- A school requirement to disseminate information publicly about prohibited fees;
- A compliant mechanism in the event of such fees' being solicited;
- Penalties for soliciting or collecting unsanctioned fees.

The clarification of the legal framework for fee collection is the responsibility of the central government, especially MoEYS and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The central government may set up a broad legal framework while delegating decision-making on specific details to local representative councils. Local education departments may further elaborate on guidelines within the central government framework.

3.2.2 COMPONENT II: REFORM OF PROBLEMATIC EDUCATION PROCESSES

Component II of the response to the informal fee problem focuses on reforming problematic education processes. Certain management processes exist which actually give rise to informal fees. These are processes where there is a monopoly on decision-making, a lack of transparency or no public accountability required. In Cambodia, the processes that most urgently demand attention are those resulting in payments to teachers during examination season. There are several factors that lead to paying and collecting informal fees for consideration during exam periods: academic competitiveness, competition in the labor market, low staff and institutional income in education, lax examination oversight and monopolization of power. These causes may be addressed through improvements in examination methods, the promotion of integrity and sanctions.

There are two possible options for improving examination procedures. One is to address loopholes in the traditional examination system, of which teachers are in charge, by introducing a system of checks and balances in examinations and marking. The other is to develop a standardized test for the primary school level. This test would not only work in the short term to lower the risk of teacher wrongdoing, but would ensure quality across schools.

It could help boost student enthusiasm, encourage teachers to improve the quality of their pedagogy and serve as a benchmark for assessing overall school performance. Such a standardized test would arguably serve as a basis for reforms, ensuring permeability between the formal education system and the TVET system (or for designing bridge programs for drop-outs), for properly differentiating students according to their learning strengths and for catering to the needs of migrant children. While a standardized test at the primary level may help reduce informal fees to teachers during the examination period, it may concomitantly generate more demand for private tutoring at the primary level.

In promoting integrity, some key measures to consider are enforcing the Teacher Code of Conduct and enhancing academic integrity standards and honor codes among students. Penalties should be strictly enforced against teachers and students who violate examination rules³⁸.

Reforming problematic educational processes falls under the jurisdiction of MoEYS and its local departments.

3.2.3 COMPONENT III: IMPROVED SCHOOL FINANCING AND SCHOOL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

After the framework on sanctioned and unsanctioned fees and the reform of problematic education processes, the third component of informal fee abatement is improved school financing and financial management. This component embodies four objectives:

- To ensure that state budgets include necessary educational items and are duly disbursed to the schools on time;
- To ensure that schools manage their allotted budgets as required;
- To ensure transparency in the collection and use of funds from non-government sources (benefactors, NGOs, local collections and contributions; see Component I);

- To integrate into school budgets a social assistance supplement for students in need.

While the expectation already exists that schools be accountable to the upper echelon when managing allotted state budgets, there is still a need to bolster accountability in managing non-state and local funding. This case particularly pertains to funds from parents and local communities, whether as fees for agreed-upon services, products or as charitable donations. Key accountability measures are: transparency in the collection process; the development of transparent financial management procedures; and the setting up of compliant mechanisms at the school level for reporting abuse. Mechanisms that allow parents and local communities to participate in auditing the school's locally sourced finances would also strengthen school financial accountability and help reduce the risk of wrongdoing³⁹.

The task of improving school funding and financial management falls by rights to MoEYS, the Ministry of Finance, local education agencies, representative bodies and communities.

3.2.4 COMPONENT IV: MONITORING RESULTS

As with the proposal to regulate private tutoring, so with abatement of unsanctioned fees: monitoring the results is a crucial sub-component allowing stakeholders to assess the effectiveness and extent of compliance and to detect violations.

As outlined earlier, Objective II states: "Fee payments and fee collections within Cambodia's basic education sub-sector are transparently regulated and managed to promote educational quality, equity and integrity." Box 3 lists indicators and key questions to be used for an informal fee monitoring and evaluation process.

³⁸ See GTZ, pp. 20-1

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 25-7.

BOX 3: POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION – STRATEGIES FOR THE INFORMAL FEE PROBLEM

MONITORING AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL	
<p>1 SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT</p> <p>INDICATORS Form and scope of informal fees; parties involved in informal fee payment; amounts of informal fees</p>	<p>QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the pervasiveness of informal fees in basic education as compared to existing literature? Are there new forms of informal fees? • Are fee payments teacher-driven or parent-driven? • What are the ranges of informal fees?
<p>2 MANAGEMENT</p> <p>INDICATORS Transparency and integrity</p>	<p>QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear framework for fee collection at the national level, and is it transparent at the school level? • Is there management transparency? • What is the rate of abuse?
<p>3 EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>INDICATORS Quality and equity</p>	<p>QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the private tutoring scheme at the primary and lower secondary levels and at Grade 9? Has the scheme changed? • Does private tutoring yield the quality of basic education desired at the school level? Do students perform better? What is the average performance of primary and lower secondary school graduates? • Are there indications of inequality between boys and girls in private tutoring delivery? Between rich and poor students? Rural and urban schools?
<p>EVALUATION ACROSS SCHOOLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, but focused on comparison across schools • Identification of model schools in terms of rates, scope and forms of abuse 	
<p>LESSONS LEARNED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does rehabilitating certain types of informal fees, while prohibiting others, lessen parental economic burdens? 2. Have additional resources contributed to improved quality? 3. Is the school more effective in managing resources? 4. Are there emerging factors precipitating informal fees that should now be considered for integration into the strategy? 	

These twin strategies to confront private tutoring and informal fees are designed to reach two specific objectives, which in turn contribute to the overarching goal that parental payments for Cambodian basic education be “well-regulated to support the improvement of quality, equity and integrity of Cambodia’s basic education”.

In the process of implementing the two strategies, there is a need to track whether they have contributed to the overall development of basic education. The key focus should be on the positive impact of parental payments, such as improved quality, and the reduction of negative impacts on the basic education system’s equity and integrity. Key indicators are:

- Reduced demand for private tutoring at the level of basic education;
- Increased satisfaction with the delivery of basic educational services;
- Improved efficiency in the use and management of fees to support students from various walks of life and locations;
- Increased trust in the integrity of the school-teacher-student relationship.

Tracking this overall impact will be based on evaluation results of the two objectives, as well as additional monitoring of the effects of the strategies at national and sub-national levels. Monitoring may be carried out by central government agencies or research institutes.

PART



PRIORITIZATION ROAD MAP AND STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION



The fundamental drive of the policy recommendations is that the Government should minimize informal fees of various forms and absorb them into the budget in the long term. The report proposes a transitional period when fee collections, if necessary, be allowed but made transparent. This could also be the time when relevant authorities can make adjustments to teacher salaries, study programs, teacher quality and other financial management procedures while comparing school performance across the board.

Specifically, the Government may work with stakeholders within and outside the Government sector to discuss priority areas and a road map for implementation. Following the logic of basic education that covers Grades 1 to 9, it is possible to give priority to the first six years of the primary level, considering it as a foundation for the lower secondary level. Based on the specific proposals in Part IV of the brief, measures to be applied to the primary school level include:

- Formalization of private tutoring in the short and medium term, but aiming to reduce its role by incorporating classes and costs into the Government's current school program and budget;
- Elimination of private tutoring not aligned with the current legal framework, such as during class times or on Thursdays, wherever such practices are found;
- Formal institutionalization of other fees based on a transparent consultative process, along with clear financial management procedures and reporting.

Ultimately, the Government prioritizes the reduction of parental payment for primary education by mobilizing more resources for education investment.

Measures for the lower-secondary level are along the same lines. Nonetheless, this level of basic education

has distinct characteristics, such as multiple subjects and a national examination requirement, which may complicate reform efforts. Here, measures dealing with private tutoring and informal fees need to be systematically supplemented by other measures to reform the school financing system and the examination system.

For both primary and secondary levels, teacher management is a cross-cutting issue. The use of material incentives should be supplemented by a system to manage and promote educational quality.

It is desirable that all component solutions within each framework be adopted so that they may support one another. Nonetheless, not all components will necessarily be implemented simultaneously. While stakeholders may prioritize or invest in certain elements considered spearheads in the Cambodian context, it is recommended that the monitoring and evaluation system be applied as a mechanism to track progress. A good monitoring and evaluation system should help steer implementation in the right direction.

The strategies proposed here involve participation from key stakeholders, including government agencies, schools, teachers, parents, school support committees and NGOs. Within this context there is a need to consider seriously the extent to which, and where, the central and local government may intervene. There is also a need to consider how to coordinate contributions from various stakeholders. At a minimum, the central government should take the lead in developing and institutionalizing the necessary legal framework, the overall monitoring and evaluation, and the institutionalization of beneficial practices to ensure equity of access and quality universal basic education.



PART

V

CONCLUSION



The drivers of informal payments and fees and their impact in Cambodia are found in the structure of educational governance. The legal framework, educational processes, teacher financial incentives, school management and community support for public education are all key factors. Informal payments may certainly be meant to support basic education financially in direct and indirect ways, yet sadly they have adversely affected its quality, equity and integrity.

The strategy proposed here for confronting the issue of informal payments does not aim to eliminate all its forms. Instead, it merely proposes to classify them and institutionalize those with a beneficial role. It also calls for reform of school management processes in such a way that fee assessment is transparent and accountably managed. Community involvement is crucial for curbing abuses of power and ensuring effective assessment of fees.

The reform of the governance structure needs to go hand-in-hand with mainstreaming effective anti-corruption practices in the management of fees assessed to parents. This need arises because many informal payment and fee assessment practices amount to corrupt abuses of power.

Informal payments and fees are systemic problems requiring a long-term strategy, together with a series of medium-term strategies. The key to success in handling these problems will be to identify a set of true solutions that respond to the conditions underlying the symptoms. Equally crucial is the monitoring of short- and medium-term impacts. A good monitoring system will permit interventions to be adjusted as necessary.

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