

## INSIGHTS

### **Charting Cambodia's AI-Driven Education Future: Policies, Readiness, and Reform**

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## **Introduction**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a game-changing technology that transforms and opens up education systems globally, providing new mechanisms and tools to improve efficiency and effectiveness. In Cambodia, where educational reform is a national goal under the Pentagonal Strategy, AI has emerged as a possible path to address persistent difficulties such as access inequities, quality of instruction, and administrative inefficiencies (Kumar 2024; Meas 2023).

As digital transformation continues to unfold at regional and global levels, Cambodia is testing and determining the most influential role for AI in both the public and private education sectors. For instance, local universities, local policymakers, and international actors are currently starting to work with AI-enhanced platforms and curricula as well as utilizing the global movement toward AI-enhanced learning environments (Harry 2023; Zhang and Aslan 2021). This article outlines Cambodia's efforts to incorporate AI into education and discusses opportunities, challenges, and directions for policy development.

## **National and International AI Initiatives**

Cambodia has made remarkable strides towards making use of artificial intelligence in education in a short period, as seen from national strategic plans and through collaboration internationally. A key event was the first EdTech Summit in February 2025 where the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, known as UNESCO, came together with stakeholders to consider the ethical and inclusive use of AI in the classroom (UNESCO, 2025). This included discussions of AI tools that uphold equity, particularly for those in areas that experience limited access to educational technologies.

Furthermore, UNESCO also collaborated with the Cambodian government to establish policy guidelines following the global guidance with AI in education, focusing on implementing a human-centered and data-safe approach (Miao, et al. 2021). These are at the level of a national association and the possible influence on national discussions around digital pedagogy and capacity development. Institutions of higher education within Cambodia are conducting piloting initiatives around AI-assisted learning platforms and academic management systems, primarily in partnership with foreign organizations and technology provision companies (Khmer Times, 2025). Chan (2023) argued that in a higher education context, Cambodia needs to create a comprehensive AI policy framework to promote the sustainability of AI adoption in education. Collectively, these efforts to promote a technologically adaptive education system in Cambodia provide opportunities for leveraging best practices globally with local appropriation.

## **Opportunities and Benefits of AI Integration**

Integrating Artificial Intelligence into the education system in Cambodia can provide opportunities for improvement in a number of teaching and learning quality, access, and efficiency. The most exciting benefit is AI's ability to facilitate personalized learning; AI systems can data-mine student performance and what data can be utilized to adjust the content accessible to each student with respect to their learning pace and style. Personalizing content in this way has been shown to improve engagement and outcomes (Zhang and Aslan 2021; Chan 2023). In Cambodia, where there are still teacher shortages and high student-teacher ratios, AI technologies can provide support for teachers as a “virtual teaching assistant”, which, for example, could provide logical feedback, multilingual support, or supplementary material (Harry 2023).

Some private universities have assisted students in evaluating different AI-sourced assessment platforms, intelligent tutoring systems, and formative assessments that positively influenced the learning performance and satisfaction of their learners (Ros 2024; Hoeurng et al, 2024). AI can also assist, as it is able to in many places in the world, to provide equitable educational opportunities for students from distinct urban and rural backgrounds, which is a serious issue in Cambodia. Take for example, rural students who through AI-enhanced distance learning platforms and back end smart features for offline use can now experience engaging quality content that previously would have been impossible to engage with (Pum and Sok 2024). When looked at through a broader lens, AI is enabling other stakeholders in higher education to take advantage of AI systems to improve administrative functions such as scheduling, grading, and enrollment to support more efficient workloads, while simultaneously helping to achieve institutional capacity. All of these developments suggest that AI can be a strategic enabler of equitable and effective education in Cambodia, provided the application of AI, is implemented thoughtfully and situationally appropriate.

## **Challenges Risks and Readiness Concerns**

While AI in education appears to have the potential to improve learning, there are a number of fundamental challenges in Cambodia that need to be addressed to assist in the ethical use of AI in schools. Infrastructure and access to technology is a fundamental part of the challenge. Many schools, particularly in rural settings, still lack reliable internet access, electricity, and reliable tech equipment (Meas 2025). If AI tools and mechanisms are implemented in certain schools or communities, it risks broadening educational disparities rather than reducing inequities across learning and schooling. Digital literacy is another serious concern, particularly among Cambodian teachers. The majority of teachers in Cambodia have not received training in digital learning or AI-based learning approaches, thereby undermining the feasibility of using emerging technologies effectively (Hoeurng et al 2024).

Without a concerted investment in the proficiencies of teachers and in systems of support, the risk remains that AI will be underutilized or misused. Ethics are vital considerations here, too. Data privacy, algorithmic and other biases, and accountability are still very much alive and unresolved in many AI systems. Miao et al. (2021) argue for the crafting of human-orientated transparent AI policies to avoid encouraging social inequalities. The steady pace of regulatory frameworks in Cambodia, but with no specific guidelines in the education sector for responsible use of AI, hinders the operation. Despite the policy interest increasing, we lack institutional readiness with select universities piloting AI applications, while more lack clear planning with dedicated funding (Ros 2024; Pum and Sok 2024). Overall, the transition within Cambodia to AI-enabled education will require call on more than technology ownership, but careful awareness of equity, capacity-building, and governance, to not leave any students or educators behind.

## **Future Pathways and Policy Recommendations**

In order to leverage the transformational capacity of AI in education, Cambodia needs to pursue an inclusive and ethically oriented strategy. It should, first, develop a national AI-in-education framework. For example, the framework should include guidelines on the responsible use of their data, transparency of the algorithms they will deploy, and providing equitable access for all learners (Miao et al. 2021; Chan 2023). Furthermore, it will be critical to fund schools' digital infrastructure and the professional development of teachers on both, using AI tools, and proper use of AI tools. Professional development must be sustainable as teachers deploy strategies using new AI innovations like Chat GPT (Hoeurng et al. 2024).

Partnering with international organizations like UNESCO will be valuable because they can guide by providing a rigorous and evidence-based approach to ensuring alignment with international best practices while being mindful of Cambodia's specific context in education (UNESCO, 2025). Lastly, partnerships with the public and private sectors can offer innovation and scale, specifically when developing AI tools that can operate in the local languages and deal with issues commonplace in rural Cambodia. This student-centered vision needs to be at the forefront of all policies so that AI becomes the bridge to the learning experience and not a barrier encountered by learners. With the right actionable partnerships in place, Cambodia can lead in developing an ethical AI and inclusive education system.

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