



UN SDG 4.C TEACHERS' TRAINING AND WORKING CONDITIONS: PROGRESS AND KEY CHALLENGES IN SHORTAGE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN CAMBODIA

AUTHOR: LENA TAEKYUNG KIM

ADVISOR: GITA STEINER-KHAMSI

M.A. IN INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM AT TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



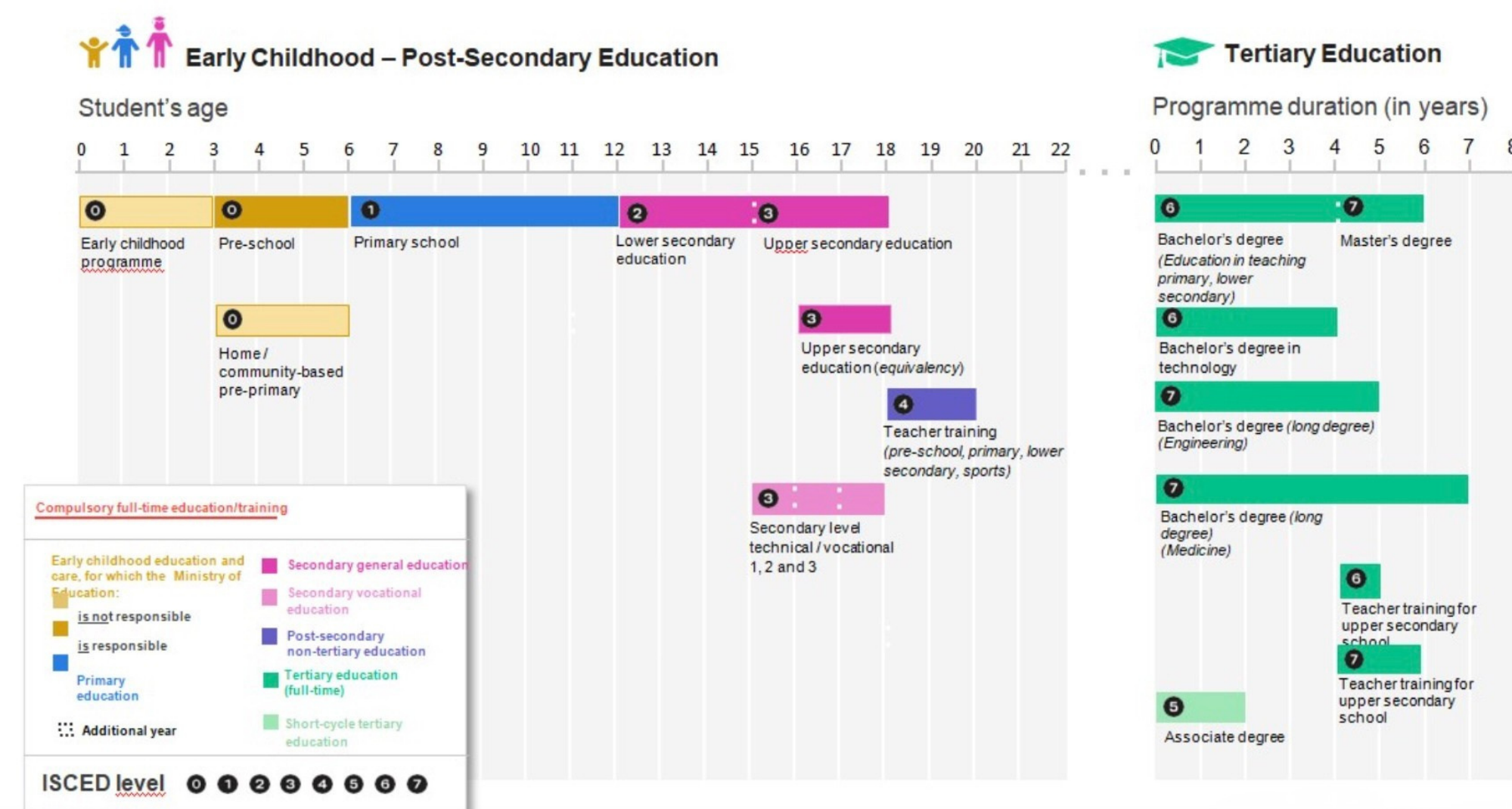
BACKGROUND

Cambodia has experienced rapid economic growth over the past decades; however, improvements in education quality have not kept pace with this development. Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 4c emphasizes the importance of increasing the supply of qualified teachers as a key strategy to achieve equitable and quality education. Despite this global commitment, Cambodia continues to face significant teacher shortages, particularly at the primary education level, which remain a critical barrier to improving learning outcomes.

WHY THIS MATTERS

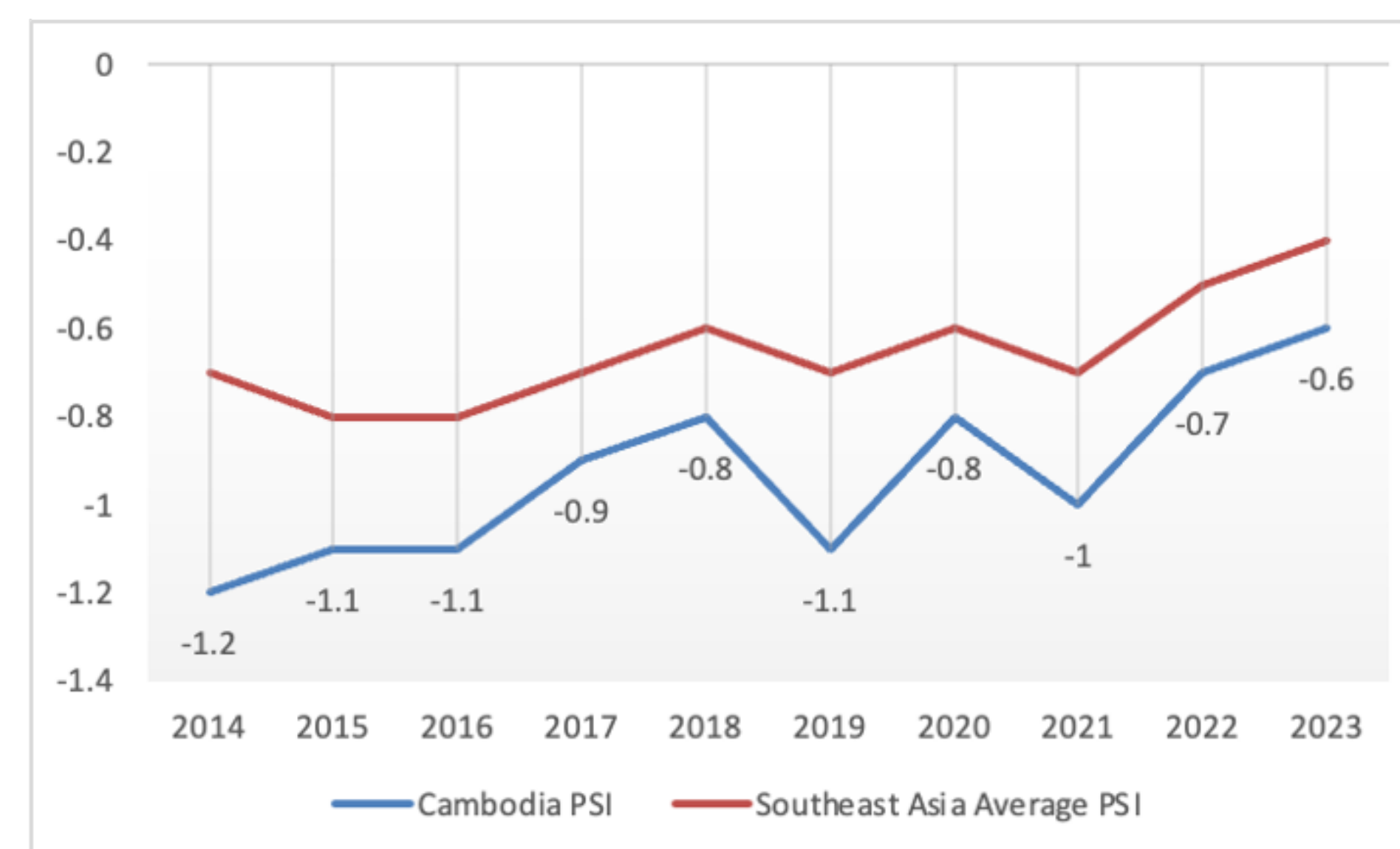
Teacher shortages have direct implications for classroom environments and student outcomes. Overcrowded classrooms, reduced instructional quality, and limited individual attention hinder effective learning. Furthermore, these challenges exacerbate existing inequalities, as students in rural and underserved areas are disproportionately affected. Addressing teacher shortages is therefore essential not only for improving education quality but also for promoting equity within the system.

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CAMBODIA (Source: ISCED, 2023)

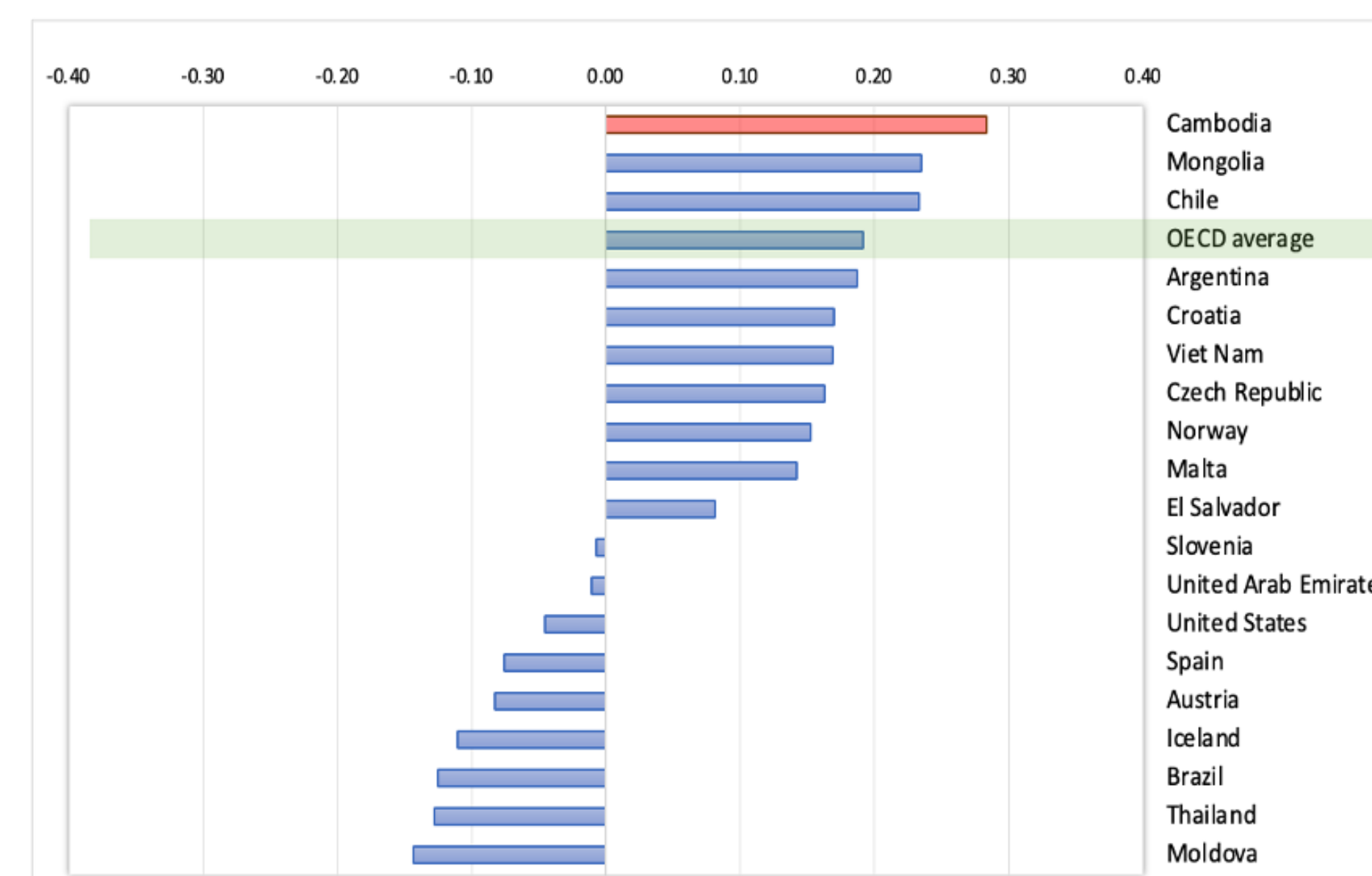


KEY CHALLENGES

Political Stability Index in Cambodia and Southeast Asia, 2014–2023
(Source: World Bank, 2024)



Mean index of shortage of education staff
(Source: OECD, 2022)



ROOT CAUSES

The current situation can be understood through both historical and structural factors. The legacy of the Khmer Rouge period resulted in the loss of a large portion of the educated workforce, including teachers, which continues to affect the system today. In response to shortages, fast-track teacher training programs were introduced; however, these often compromised the quality of teacher preparation. Additionally, weak institutional capacity and significant rural-urban disparities contribute to unequal access to qualified teachers across the country.

POLICY RESPONSES

In recent years, the Cambodian government and international partners have implemented several policy responses to address these challenges. These include efforts to strengthen continuous professional development for teachers, reforms in teacher education systems, and donor-supported initiatives led by organizations such as the World Bank and UNESCO. While these initiatives demonstrate progress, their long-term effectiveness depends on sustained investment and systemic improvements.

METHODOLOGY

- 1 This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research approach to examine teacher shortages in Cambodia within the framework of SDG 4c.
- 2 Data was collected through secondary sources, including reports and datasets from international organizations such as UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank.
- 3 The analysis focuses on national-level data and global comparisons, rather than individual participants, to understand broader structural patterns in teacher supply and demand.
- 4 Data analysis involved comparative and trend analysis, examining changes in teacher availability over time and differences across contexts.
- 5 To ensure analytical rigor, the study relies on validated international data sources and cross-references findings across multiple reports.