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EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

By

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Abstract

Southeast Asia is a poor, underdeveloped area, with most of its countries having been colonized by Western states. Southeast Asia consists of 11 countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thai, Timor, and Vietnam. The overarching goal of this study is to understand what factors can improve education systems in Southeast Asia. Developing countries and regions still depend on external parties for their development. In this essay, I focus on two states: Cambodia and Myanmar. Considering their backgrounds – e.g., culture, economy, politics, etc. – I examine what factors can help to improve the educational environment. My methods involve a desk review of existing scholarship and statistical data, especially that collected or reported by UNICEF, DHS, and EIU. I assume one key factor is colonization, which affects the building of educational systems; Cambodia was colonized by France and Japan while Myanmar (formerly Burma) was colonized by Britain. I hypothesize that one important aspect likely influences education and development: international aid. Cambodia and Myanmar's international relations determine how much they are funded. After the end of the occupation, UNICEF and other international financiers aid and contribute to Cambodia and Myanmar's development. I look at these cases to see whether foreign aid goes where it's needed, looking in particular at the education sector.

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Introduction

"Knowledge is power," said Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States. The word of Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations is powerful; "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family." These quotes tell us how important it is to gain knowledge. Education is an essential tool to make people's lives richer. The more people are educated, the more they get opportunities to find better jobs and earn higher wages. It relatively enriches their country economically. Higher education, particularly tertiary education, expands the world of knowledge and allows people to motivate themselves. People in wealthy countries, including the United States and Britain care about the world university ranking; which university is the best in the world, and how many scholars in the college gained the Nobel prize. So, my research is important because education means a lot to everyone. People need not weapons but common knowledge, and education that allows us to discuss global issues in the same language and make a peaceful world.

I drew my initial research questions in 2017, when I was a freshman in college. I at age 18 started working as a fundraiser for UNICEF in Japan. My job was to interact with people and solicit monthly donations. I learned how international funding organizations had been structured. For instance, Compared to one-time donations, constant donations contributed by a certain number of donors would make UNICEF easy to perform big projects such as building schools and wells, providing educational resources. The purpose, UNICEF USA states, is that " its members provide the steady reliable funding that allows UNICEF USA to be there before, during

and long after conflict or disaster." The experience was the beginning of this report. "Is the world really getting better?" I wondered. Working as a fundraiser, I got more interested in helping others, particularly children in southeast Asia.

I met amazing colleagues who also aspired to help children in developing countries get higher education. Some of them were college students, like me, and had worked volunteer jobs at schools or communities. One of my coworkers, Yamashita, built a middle school in Cambodia. The biggest difficulty, he said, was to collect a certain amount of funds while carrying out the project by himself, not involved in an organization. If he was a part of a big institution like UNICEF, his goal must have been easily accomplished without much effort. When Yamashita started the project, he did not have enough money to build a school by himself and had several part-time jobs. Even after construction had been beginning, the fund was not enough. However, he had a passion and a big community to support him and his goal. The majority of funds were raised through crowdfunding. Also, while managing his NGO, called Lead Smile, he flew to Cambodia, visited towns, and talked to local people and authorities to research where to build a school. Yamashita gave me inspiration and motivation. He eventually accomplished his goal.

However, I question if Southeast Asian countries are getting wealthy and how powerful international aid is. Since the end of WWII, international aid allocated to developing poor countries drastically increased. Some countries had developed and got wealthy because of international aid. Japan, for example, got under international support, particularly the United Nations, after World War II and succeeded in the second largest country in GDP. As a result, she is politically and economically democratized as the United States and European countries do. For example, UNICEF publications show what they achieved in a year and their progress. According to the 2017 annual report of UNICEF, they worked in more than 190 countries to save children's

lives by providing health care services, access to education, and emergency relief. And, I had the following questions: is the international donation really used for aid to people in developing countries? How are supplies allocated? Furthermore, I am curious if the United Nations help developing countries improve the quality of education as they construct a school facility and provide educational commodities such as books and pencils. The data they provide is the only indicator to see how investments affect the countries.

These questions lead me to this report. Specifically, I was interested in Southeast Asian countries. Southeast Asia consists of 11 countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thai, Timor, and Vietnam (Leinbach & William, 2020). Southeast Asia is often known as a region that consists of developing countries. Another reason is that these countries suffered from long-term colonization. In this report, I pick two Southeast Asian countries: Cambodia and Myanmar. Why these two countries? I chose Cambodia because, personally, Cambodia was symbolized as a country that has a poor education system while working as a fundraiser. At that time, the Rohingya genocide of Myanmar was on the news.

My goal is first to gain a better understanding of educational improvement in these two countries. First, I observe education systems in Cambodia and Myanmar. And then, I look for what are potential difficulties in the development in Cambodia and Myanmar. There are several similarities and differences between them. Analyzing data, I compare the quality of education in the two countries. I found no critical evidence that the rulers - Britain and France - made their education systems poor or rich.

However, I found that an important aspect that distinguishes development is international aid. Cambodia and Myanmar's international relations determine how much they are funded. I show the relationship between the quality of education and international aid. Educational

development is one of the UN goals, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which was declared in 2015. I question how international aid affects Southeast Asian countries to improve education and about the possibility of foreign aids for Southeast Asian countries to improve education and whether the increase of financial aid means the higher quality of education. It is important to understand the effect of international aid because Southeast Asian countries are poor and may cannot afford children as good qualities of education as the western does. The more education funded from developed countries, the more schools obtain a variety of educational materials. Donor countries may donate different amounts of money to different recipient countries. Consequently, children can get access to education. I hypothesize that the education level and the amount of receiving aids have variation not only among the countries but also between rural and urban regions.

Background

Southeast Asia consists of eleven countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thai, Timor, and Vietnam. There are tendencies or similarities among Southeast asia, including Myanmar and Cambodia:

- Agricultural country and rich in natural resources
- Difficult authoritarian path
- ODA recipients
- Colonialism
- Lagged on education measures

Geographical and Cultural Background

There are a lot of similarities between Cambodia and Myanmar. First, agricultural sectors seem to play an important role for a main economic activity in Southeast Asia. Both Cambodia and Myanmar, according to the World Factbook of CIA, are agricultural countries - mainly rice, fisheries, and forestry livestock . Although no country begins in a state of civilization but with cultivation, the majority of Southeast Asian countries are way behind the West in civilization. Second, because they are geographically close or neighboring countries, their climates are similar. Both countries have not only tropical seasons, which are relatively high temperatures and humidity, but also rainy seasons that help crops grow (CIA, 2009). Third, Cambodia and Myanmar are richly endowed with natural resources: petroleum, natural gas, tin, silver, gold, etc (CIA, 2009). Fourth, both countries have lower urbanization rates than the world average; that is, the urban cities are not likely densely populated (Dahiya, 2014). *The Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2014* (2015) shows in Cambodia, the majority of the population (80.5%) is living in rural areas; less than 20% of the people are in urban areas. Also, Buddhism is a dominant religion in both countries (World Factbook, 2009).

However, there are differences between Cambodia and Myanmar: ethnic composition. Cambodia has an ethnic homogeneity; 90% of the population is Khmer. As a result, the official language is Khmer as English is commonly spoken (CIA, 2009). On the other hand, Myanmar's ethnicity is diverse. More than half of the population (68%) are Burman. However, there are 135 minority ethnic groups, including Shan, Karen, Rakhine, Chinese, Indian, and Mon (Chaturvedi, 2012). Of course, each minority ethnic group has their own languages although Burmese is the official language (CIA, 2009). Due to the diversity, Myanmar faces the ethnic conflict. Minority groups are more likely to be forced to live in the border areas with the lowest living standards. In

2012, unprecedented communal riots occurred in Rakhine state, between the ethnic Rohingyas and Rakhinese Budhhists; as a result, more than 1,500 Rohingyas were displaced, and numbers of people, especially women and children escaped into the bordering territories in Bangladesh by crossing the Naf River in their rickety wooden borts (Chaturvedi, 2012). Today, the Rohingya refugee crisis is not resolved yet but is still underway and until 2012, when President Thein Sein proclaimed to reform the political structures, Myanmar was under sanctions.

Historical Context and Politics

Southeast Asian countries were the greatest victims of colonialism. Except for Thailand, former Siam, all Southeast Asian countries were ruled by various European countries - mainly Britain, France - between 16th and 20th century (Szczepanski, 2021). The French colonization in Cambodia started in 1863 (Dy, 2004). Some scholars state Cambodia was protected, distincting from colonialism, by France against both the Thai and the Vietnamese Colonialism. Thomas Clayton addresses (1995), "Cambodia's King Norodom agreed to French protection as a means of escaping a subordinate relationship with Thailand, but soon found himself struggling to limit French involvement in Cambodian affairs."

According to Sideth Dy, the French colonial government did not introduce a so-called 'modern' French schooling system until the early 1900s, aimed for limited groups or people, particularly Cambodian elite communities, to mobilize the colonial powers. Instead, the education system was significantly improved by King Sihanouk's ambitious plan to build many schools and universities, and 20% of the national budget was spent for education (Duggan, 1997). Also, his vision for education after gaining independence was to attain the goal of

compulsory primary education for all and to increase, at all levels of educational opportunities from primary to university institutions. As a result of Cambodia's independence from France, on November 9, 1953, educational opening was successfully implemented by building new schools including universities, in rural and remote areas (Dy, 2004).

However, these educational developments were destroyed by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), which took control of the country on April 17, 1975. Moreover, they caused one of the biggest tragedies happeened in Cambodia - the Cambodian genocide - that one and two million people had been killed between 1975-1979 (Chandler, 2011). Dy (2004) notes that "Cambodia also lost almost three-quarters of its educated population under the regime when teachers, students, professionals and intellectuals were killed or managed to escape into exile." On January 7, 1979, Heng Samrin defeated the Khmer Rouge and founded the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). He prioritized reinstalling educational institutions as well as rebuilding the country on behalf of UNICEF and the international Red Cross.

Cambodia is not free in terms of politics. Freedom House scores Cambodia is 5 out of 40 in political rights and 20 out of 60 in the civil liberties. The primary reason is that the elections were not free and fair at all. Political incumbents were not elected through the electoral process. The party currently restricts civil liberties in the name of managing the threat posed by the novel coronavirus: Constitutional monarchy (EIU, 2020). Even so, free and fair elections have taken place in Cambodia in the past. According to Open Development Cambodia (ODC), in 1993, first free national elections were held under the close supervision of the UN Traditional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Cambodia seems to learn about Democracy. Later on, four democratic elections were implemented: 1998, 2003, 2008, and 2013. According to EIU (2010), the

Cambodian People's Party (CPP) has been led by the prime minister Hun Sen since the general election took place in July 2008, becoming a de facto one-party state, with few checks on executive power (EIU, 2010). That is, the people are not given the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice. Freedom House indicates that the Hun Sen regime kept getting rid of key members of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) in 2019.

Burma, which was part of the British run-state in India, separated from India on April 1, 1937. Unlike French colonizers in Cambodia, during British colonialism, education was revolutionized due to adoption of educational policies, and Children of elites went to Missionary school and studied in English; Burmese was the second language. Lall et al. (2013) indicates "Britain established three types of schools of which the two upper tier types were used to train people to fill the lower and middle ranks of the colonial administration as they taught in English. Japanese Occupation between 1942 and 1945." Myanmar became independent from the British colonial rule on January 4, 1948.

Rangoon/Yangon University (RU), the oldest university in Myanmar's modern education system and the best-known university in Myanmar, was funded by British colonial authorities in 1920 (Seekins, 2017). Between 1948 and 1962, when the Communist Party of Burma was in power, university students were politically active and supported the party while respecting academic freedom and the autonomy of the university. Many students were globalized and educated at universities in the West and Japan; foreign scholars lectured at RU. Until 1965, most courses were taught in English. The 1962-1988 Burma Socialist Programme Party regime was committed to expanding education and promoting nationwide literacy to impose a homogeneous educational system in which there was no place for the cultivation of ethnic or religious minority

identities. New University education Law of the Revolutionary Council created a curriculum that predominated Burmese. And then, All schools were nationalized. Burmese was the primary medium rather than minority language or English. Consequently, the high quality of English language knowledge declined and was hampered. communication with the outside world. Missionary schools were shut down, and their foreign teachers were sent home. The education level has deteriorated. Middle and high school teachers were looking for side jobs at private schools to earn extra money. Government education expenditure was allocated for rising military funds. Compared to 1983 when the literacy rate was 82% of males and 71% of females, the Literacy rate has fallen to 55% of the population by 1995.

The countries that had been ruled by Democratic countries turned to authoritarian countries and lack freedom. The Freedom House scores Cambodia 43 out of 100 in internet freedom which is classified partially free. The primary reason, according to Freedom House, is the Law on Telecommunications, enacted in 2015, which aims at regulating the operations of telecommunications networks and services to "promote fair, efficient, and transparent competition." The implementation of the law enables the Cambodian government to censor the communications of their users and to access their information without consent of them. The law also made it available to censor media outlets and other websites in Cambodia, particularly those that are potentially threatening the CPP.

Like other authoritarian states, including China and North Korea, Internet users would be uncomfortable to post some contents and speak out their opinions about their government or politics at the risk of detention. Also, other groups of people who are affected by the restriction are journalists, activists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), whose jobs are to tell facts or truth. They need to exercise self-censorship with the fear that the government may repress their

opposed voices and focus on the spread of purportedly false news while increasing online surveillance and prosecutions linked to online speech.

Myanmar got a worse score than Cambodia is not free in terms of Internet freedom, scoring 31 out of 100. According to Freedom House, the government, specifically the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MoTC), escalated into technical censorship and legal control over internet infrastructure to restrict connectivity by blocking websites over the state-owned Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications (MPT). Moreover, the government has shut down mobile internet access in parts of Rakhine and Chin States since June 2019. Like in Cambodia, authorities ordered service providers to block independent and regionally based news outlets in March 2020. The fact that Social media companies started taking action for content removals, even the legitimate contents suggests a lack of diversity in the ownership and content of online media outlets. Freedom House illustrates that the government and military actively claim their ideologies online while rejecting much independent reporting as "fake news." Under the repressive Telecommunications Law, those who criticize the government online are at risk to be prosecuted and be in detention time. The military continues manipulating online content as exerted significant influence over politics. These low freedom scores may suggest that there is a deficit of necessary data in this essay, or it makes it difficult to find the same quantity of evidence in the process of collecting data. The countries may not allow foregin researchers or organizations to study or have access to sufficient data.

Design and Methods

Before I began to research this topic, I was skeptical about the international fund institution's effect and doubted whether education reform would fix poverty in developing

countries. Some scholarly work showed the problem resulted in the high-dropout rate. Poor parents are not willing to send their kids to schools; instead, they are more likely to use their children as a means of making money. Going to school for the families in developing countries is a high opportunity cost (Lall et al., 2013; Tan, 2003). Also, Marie Lall, a Professor of Education and South Asian Studies at the UCL, indicates (2008) that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank-sponsored structural reform programs in developing countries are likely to make education a substance to make money rather than poverty reduction and universal access. People in Southeast Asia, even those who gain college degrees, cannot earn a lot of money since there are few high wage jobs. I recall one of my friends from Vietnam told me not many people had college degrees but she was one of them. She gained a math degree from a university in Vietnam and started working full-time at a stock company. However, she could earn less salaries than she expected so she came up with an idea to move to Japan where has more opportunity to be wealthier. She worked part-time while going to a four-year private university that offered low tuition for international students. Surprisingly, she could earn more wages than her salary in Vietnam.

First, I analyze data published by the government and non-governmental institutions. However, there is not so much data existing for each country: Myanmar and Cambodia. I pursue a multi-methodological design, which includes quantitative data analysis and desk review, to observe the similarities and differences in terms of the two countries' education systems. First, I incorporate desk review. Desk review – including collecting, organizing, and synthesizing available information – is an important way not only to distinguish education systems between Myanmar and Cambodia but also to identify gaps between them. I read relevant aid organization

documents, and analyzed statistical data, including survey data. Second, I analyze data from the EIU, DHS, and UNICEF. I picked data that was collected in the last ten years.

The qualitative data analysis involved a consistent process. First, I developed a coding scheme inductively. Second, I collected online data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) into analytical categories. Since data was likely to be conducted by each country, I also observed data from EIU and UNICEF. Once the data were organized, the case comparison of the background became clear. Then, I looked for the statistics with the same criteria to find patterns. From the statistical data, I analyzed shifts across literacy rates and educational attainment.

To measure international aid, I relied on the website, Our World in Data. Our World in Data is an online database established by the University of Oxford. It relies on existing publicly available datasets to provide various data in broad areas, particularly global issues: poverty, disease, hunger, climate change, war, existential risks, and inequality. The original sources for the data are mostly governmental and international institutions such as the World Bank and United Nations. They suggest other data relating to my topic. I combined these data and generated one graph that visualizes similarities and differences.

Second, using various data from reliable institutions between 2014 and 2019, I compare education in Cambodia and Myanmar. To try and answer the question about whether foreign aid can improve education outcomes, I must first know if foreign aid is going where it is most needed. To measure need, in this study, I look at the gross enrollment ratio in primary education and primary completion rate, so-called Gross Intake Ratio to the last grade of primary education. Max Roser, the founder and director of Our World in Data, (2013) defines the gross enrollment ratio (GER) as "the ratio of enrolled children of all ages to the total number of children in the official school age group" and the primary completion rate as "the total number of new entrants

in the last grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as percentage of the total population of the theoretical entrance age to the last grade of primary." They note that the excess of GER (over 100%) happens "due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late school entrance and grade repetition."

The second question I must answer is whether foreign aid has an impact on education. I look at the pupil-teacher ratio for primary education over time as an indicator of whether foreign aid helped move the needle on education outcomes. Average number of pupils per teacher at a given level of education, based on headcounts of both pupils and teachers. Divide the total number of pupils enrolled at the specified level of education by the number of teachers at the same level. In computing and interpreting this indicator, one should take into account the existence of part-time teaching, school-shifts, multi-grade classes and other practices that may affect the precision and meaningfulness of pupil-teacher ratios. When feasible, the number of part-time teachers is converted to 'full-time equivalent' teachers; a double-shift teacher is counted twice, etc. Teachers are defined as persons whose professional activity involves the transmitting of knowledge, attitudes and skills that are stipulated in a formal curriculum programme to students enrolled in a formal educational institution.

The most difficulty I had in the process of collecting data was to find the data of both countries in the specific time frame. There was not enough data to compare those education systems. I could have looked at data before 2010, but during this period, a military regime controlled Myanmar. Under this regime, there was very limited foreign aid and it is possible the data collected during the military regime may not be of the same standard as data following the democratic opening in Myanmar. It might be a matter of time before those data are available. So,

I needed to look at data after 2013, when sanctions against Myanmar were eased and foreign aid largely returned.

Results and Analysis

Table 1. Education Measurements (UNESCO, 2014)

	Cambodia	Myanmar
Gross enrollment ratio in primary education	116.39%	99.66%
Primary completion rate	96.30%	85.07%

Table 1 shows that Cambodia got better outcomes in both GER in primary education and Primary Completion Rate in 2014, compared to those in Myanmar. Although Myanmar's GER was not so bad, the country was slightly behind Cambodia as of 2014. Primary completion rate in Myanmar is 10 points below Cambodia; that is, Myanmar had less students completing the primary school programs. This comparison suggests Myanmar was in greater need of foreign aid for education. This finding raises a few questions:

- Did this opening of Myanmar as a destination of foreign aid and the shift from Cambodia getting more to Myanmar getting more take funds away from Cambodia?
- What is the consequence of the shift?
- How much did opening in Myanmar cost Cambodia?

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Graph 1. Aid (ODA) disbursements to countries and regions (US Dollar, Millions)
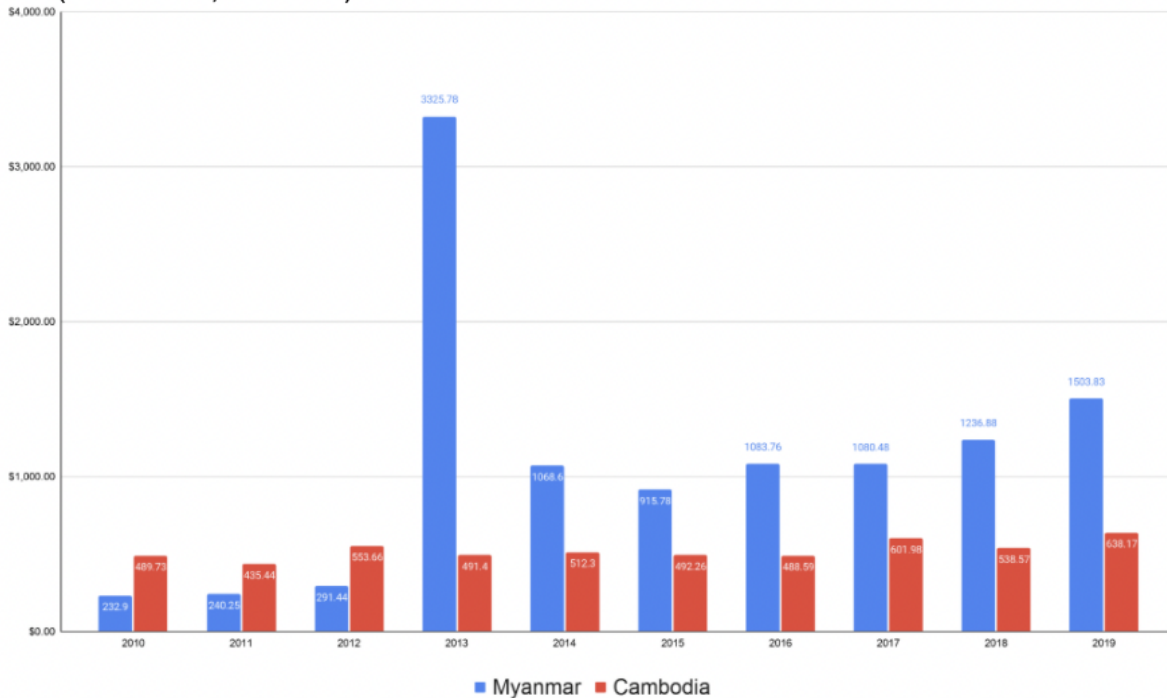
Graph 1 indicates that Myanmr has received more ODA than Cambodia since 2013. Whereas Cambodia has received a stable ODA amount for the last 10 years, from 2010 to 2019, Myanmar's ODA amount has gone up from 2013, although the amount for the first three years, from 2010 to 2013, was steady (less than $300 million), which were less than Cambodia received. However, in 2013, Myanmar got 11 times more aid than in 2012; and, Myanmar received 6.8 times more than Cambodia received. How did this happen?

First, Myanmar got more ODA in 2013 due to debt relief (OECD, 2016). President Thein Sein implemented political reforms, and the United States under former President Obama and the EU began to ease the sanctions on Myanmar after 2012 (Aye, 2019; BBC, 2013).

Table 3. Top three donors of gross ODA 2018-2019 (Unit: USD million)

	Cambodia	Myanmar
1	Japan 172.7	Japan 646.9
2	France 135.9	International Development Association 220.8
3	Asian Development Bank 133.4	United States 146.4

(Reference: OECD)

As can be seen in Table 3, Japan gave both Myanmar and Cambodia aid the most in 2018 to 2019. Even though Japan gives a lot of money to both of the countries, Myanmar gets almost three times more funding than Cambodia. Noting that, it could be considered that because Japan occupied Myanmar, between 1942 and 1945 during the Second World War, she is more generous to Myanmar. Also, As I noted early, Cambodia was a French protectorate country over 90 years, from 1863 to 1953. Even though France is the second biggest donor in Cambodia, "French colonial rule had not resulted in a vibrant education system" (Duggan, 1997). both the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will be reluctant to expedite the funding of technical assistance projects in higher education whilst so many international universities are 'investing' in potential university based projects in the region.

This is not a study of impact but based on the data available to me, I can say following the increase in foreign aid, education improved Myanmar. And, these are very important indicators. At the same time, Cambodia's student-teacher ratio is also a very important indicator that Cambodia actually got worse. As foreign donors have hundreds of dollars, getting more money to Myanmar may mean less money to get to Myanmar.

	Cambodia	Myanmar
Pupil-teacher ratio for primary education in **2014** (UNESCO)	31 students per teacher	28 students per teacher
Pupil-teacher ratio for primary education in **2018** (UNDP)	42 students per teacher (↑)	24 students per teacher (↓)
Mean years of schooling in 2019 (UNDP)	5.0 years	5.0 years

Table 4 is a comparison of Dependent Variables (DV). First, I compared the 2018 pupil-teacher ratio of Myanmar to that of Cambodia. That clearly indicates Myanmar had smaller class size (24 students per teacher) than Cambodia (42 students per teacher). Second, I looked at data 2014 and 2018 of each country. Compared to Myanmar's 2014 data, Myanmar's student-teacher ratio in 2018 got lower; that is, one classroom has less students per teacher in 2018 than 2014. On the other hand, the ratio of Cambodia in 2018 got worse than that in 2014.

To summarize, the data analysis shows the following:

- Myanmar lagged behind Cambodia in primary school completion in 2014.

- Myanmar experienced a shift in government in 2012 and 2013 that encouraged the return of foreign donors.

- We see a spike in foreign aid to Myanmar following the return of donors.

- Comparing Myanmar to Cambodia, we see more foreign aid for education in 2018.

- There are fewer students per teacher in 2018 in Myanmar compared to Cambodia in 2018 and also compared to Myanmar in 2014 (in Cambodia, unfortunately, the pupil-teacher ratio got worse).

Together, these findings show that foreign aid can be responsive to development needs. Furthermore, the findings suggest that foreign aid can have an immediate effect on reducing pupil-teacher ratios.

Conclusion

I hypothesised that foregin aid would go where it is needed. I would look at places that are similar in a lot of ways (e.g. political repression, ODA recipient, and colonialism). However, they are different in that one of them needs more foregin aid. Myanmar could get more foregin aid because their former colonizers are more generous because their colonizers are different. This research was aimed at gaining a better understanding of educational improvement in Southeast Asia, figuring out the relationship between the quality of education and international aid, and finding potential difficulties in the development in Cambodia and Myanmar. Understanding the effect of international aid is important because Southeast Asian countries are still categorized as developing countries and are financed by international donors directly and through international organizations such as ODA. I hypothesized the education level and the amount of receiving aids would vary. How do education systems in Southeast Asia differ from each other? Is education in Southeast Asian countries improving? How do international finances affect these countries?

In this report, applying Mill's method of difference to outputs (e.g. enrollment in primary school), I assess how educated people are in Myanmar compared to people in Cambodia. Mill's method of difference suggests that inputs - such as ethnic inequality and colonized history - are not a sufficient condition. I find that Cambodia is more successful than Myanmar at getting kids to finish primary school in 2014. I hence found that Myanmar needed more aid. With Myanmar's political opening in 2012, foreign aid to Myanmar dramatically increased in 2013. The number

of students per teacher in Myanmar in 2014 was much lower than in Cambodia. Furthermore, due to this influx of foreign aid by 2018, Myanmar has reduced its pupil-teacher ratio while the number of students per teacher in Cambodia has gone up in 2018. I could not prove that it was a result of aid. However, it is more important to know that when foreign aid comes in for Myanmar, things get better for students. At least, they were not as crowded in the classroom as in prior years. Finally, the expectation in the next study would see this influx of foreign aid lead to better outcomes.

Acknowledgment

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