

**Gender and Persistence in School:
First results of a longitudinal
study of 6th grade
Cambodian students**

James Williams
Visiting Professor, CICE, Hiroshima
University

jhw@gwu.edu, jim@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

Larger project – Retention study

- Title

Staying in School: A Longitudinal Mixed Methods Study of Transition, Drop out, and Retention—From Primary to Secondary School in Cambodia

- For many individuals and for the nation, challenge of:

Persistence through lower secondary to upper secondary school

- Home

Royal University of Phnom Penh

- Support

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

- Supported by researchers from

*Sophia University (Tokyo), George Washington University (US),
University of Kassel (Germany)*

Overall plan

- Longitudinal
 - From last term of 6th grade (end of primary) to beginning of grade 10 (entrance to upper secondary) school, if on time
 - Once to twice/year
- Surveys of
 - Students & parents
 - Dropouts
 - Teachers
 - School directors
- Narrative interviews with students & parents
- Test
- Student attendance and grades
- Analysis of EMIS
- 4 IRBS! Researchers in 4 countries!!

Implementation

- 10 schools in one province, 2-3 hours from Phnom Penh
- Purposively sampled:
 - 3 “urban”
 - 4 rural
 - 3 remote

Within each category, we sought a mix of high and low dropout schools
- All available, assenting/consenting 6th graders and their parents, teachers, school directors at each school
 - 1 narrative interview parent-child pair per school
- Final sample
 - 219 students (+ 219 parents) for surveys – all oral
 - 10 students + 10 parents for narrative interviews – oral
 - 10 teachers – written
 - 10 school directors – written

Status of research

- 1st data collection
 - June 2011
 - End of primary school
 - Baseline
- Follow up
 - December 2011, June 2012
 - Persistence decision: Enrolled in school? Repeating? Dropout?
- First results
 - Exploratory
- Caveats
 - An early piece
 - Mistakes are mine, not co-researchers'
- Complete follow-up in December 2012

Extensive baseline surveys

Students

1. Educational History
2. School supplies
3. Private Tutoring
4. Private School Experience
5. External Support
6. Activities Outside School
7. Child Resources
8. Social Capital
9. Educational Aspirations
10. Perception of School Quality

Student baseline surveys (cont)

Perception of Transition Process

12. Career Aspirations
13. Current Work Life
14. Self-evaluation
15. Characterization of Current Education

Baseline surveys

Parents

1. Background information on student's family
2. Additional support for student's education
3. Parent expectation re change in living standard
4. Family wealth (including housing and books in home)
5. Parent's activities with student
6. Parental involvement in school
7. Parent's social capital

Parents' baseline

Community security

9. Student's health
10. Parent perception of student's attitude toward school
11. Parent perception of financial burden
12. School cost
13. Level of education required for parent's job
14. Parent's educational aspirations for student
15. Parent's perception of school quality
16. Parent's stance of transition decision
17. Parent's perception of and information on LSS choice

More parents' baseline

- 18. Parent's perception of student probability of success in LSS
- 19. Reasons for stopping child's education

Teacher & Director Baseline

Teacher

1. Student grade average
2. Student absences
3. Teacher expectation of student's education potential

Director

4. Basic information on school
5. Director's perception of student dropout
6. School resources
7. Student tracking
8. School climate I
9. School climate II
10. Director perception of parental participation
11. Director background information

Today, two short stories

- Overall persistence and drop out
- Gender

- Caveat: Somewhat descriptive yet

Hopes and reality

- In June '11, most primary students said they wanted to continue their schooling:
 - Yes 96%
 - Unsure 3%
 - No 1%
- Most students wanted to finish at least upper secondary school. % desiring to finish:
 - Lower secondary school 14
 - Upper secondary school 43
 - University 43
- But by Jun '12, 27% had dropped out

Overall dropout rates and education of parents

	Overall % of Students	% among students whose parents had no education	% among students whose parents had completed lower secondary certificate or more
Dropped out between Jun 11 and Dec 11	4	7	0
Dropped out between Dec 11 and Jun 12	23	26	30
Still Enrolled in School	73	67	70
Total	100	100	100

Promotion status by primary school of origin

Primary School of Origin: School No.	% Who Dropped Out before LSS (Jun-Dec 11)	% Who Dropped Out in 7 th grade (Dec 11-Jun12)	% Who are Still in School	TOTAL
1	0	11	89	100
2	3	23	73	100
3	0	30	70	100
4	7	21	71	100
5	0	13	88	100
6	7	27	67	100
7	0	25	75	100
8	0	0	100	100
9	0	40	60	100
10	21	26	53	100
11	0	34	66	100

Promotion status by lower secondary school

Destination Secondary School : School Number	% Dropped Out in 7th Grade (Dec 11 – Jun 12)	% Still in School	TOTAL
2	0	100	100 2.5
1	11	89	100 4.0
6	16	84	100 2.1
10	10	80	100 2.2
4	21	79	100 2.2
7	23	77	100 2.1
9	25	75	100 2.5
3	34	66	100 2.0
5	40	60	100 1.8
8	40	60	100 3.8

Grades and attendance are associated with persistence

	Students Who Dropped Out before LSS (Jun-Dec 11)	Students Who Dropped Out in 7th grade (Dec 11-Jun12)	Students Who are Enrolled in LSS School	TOTAL
Grades 1st term , Gr6 (hi=good)	6.4	6.5	7.1	6.9**
Grades 2nd term	6.6	6.2	7.0	6.8**
Absences 1st term , Gr 6 (lo=good)	1.0	1.2	0.8	0.9*
Absences 2nd term	2.2	2.5	0.9	1.3***
Final class rank, Gr6 (lo=good)	15.9	19.2	14.9	15.9~

Family SES is (sometimes) associated with persistence

	Students Who Dropped Out before LSS (Jun-Dec 11)	Students Who Dropped Out in 7th grade (Dec 11-Jun12)	Students Who are Enrolled in LSS School	TOTAL
Average number of bathrooms	0.13	0.09	0.27	0.22~
Average number of bicycles	1.13	1.11	1.48	1.39*
% without television	38	46	35	37
% without motorbike	63	47	48	48

Students' intentions seem to make a difference

Continue with next grade (end Gr 6)	Students Who Dropped Out before LSS (Jun-Dec 11)	Students Who Dropped Out in 7th grade (Dec 11-Jun12)	Students Who are Enrolled in LSS School	TOTAL
Will not continue	0	50	50	100
Don't know	33	17	50	100
Will continue	3	23	75	100
TOTAL	4	23	74	100

Parents' career aspirations for kids appear important

How much need to do job want kid to do at 30? (asked parents)	Students Who Dropped Out before LSS (Jun-Dec 11)	Students Who Dropped Out in 7 th grade (Dec 11-Jun12)	Students Who are Enrolled in LSS School	TOTAL**
Don't know	4	21	75	100
Lower secondary	5	43	52	100
Upper secondary or more	3	19	78	100

Expectations of significant others seem to make a difference

What ed expectations of family advisor?	Students Who Dropped Out before LSS (Jun-Dec 11)	Students Who Dropped Out in 7 th grade (Dec 11-Jun12)	Students Who are Enrolled in LSS School	TOTAL**
Don't know	5	19	76	100
Lower secondary	8	46	46	100
Upper secondary or more	3	18	79	100

Parents know where children will end up, but desire more

Level of education (1-4, 4 university)	Students Who Dropped Out before LSS (Jun-Dec 11)	Students Who Dropped Out in 7th grade (Dec 11-Jun12)	Students Who are Enrolled in LSS School	TOTAL
Parent's desire for child	3.62	3.42	3.48	3.48
Parent expects child to achieve	2.14	2.75	2.94	2.87**

Many things surprisingly seem not to affect persistence

- Frequency of parents' conversations with teachers
- Frequency of parents' assistance with homework
- Whether study receives private tutoring or not
- Whether student has someone to help them
- Time spent on chores, tv, homework, with friends
- Students who persist are more critical of their teachers and schools
- etc

Patterns

- Dropout is worse in LSS 1st yr than between primary & LSS
- Extremely wide variation across schools in dropout/persistence of students. Why?
- Parents' education does not differ significantly across primary schools but it does across LSSs
- Students' aspirations and parents' expectations appear important in predicting persistence
- What's difference between students who drop out before starting LSS and those who drop out during LSS?
- Little variation in parent desires
- Parents know where kids will end up
- Policy implications...?

Gender & Persistence

- 1 initial slice, of many possible
- Allows portrayal of data
- Explores differences by gender
- Researchers can then see if these differences change over time
- Descriptive
- Four types of things to notice
 - Subtle differences that may, or may not, grow
 - No differences where one might expect them
 - Overall levels
 - Then, how things change

Gender differences

- Generally modest at this point
- Little statistical significance to differences
- There are patterns...
- But
 - Chance?
 - Too small a sample to pick up differences?
 - Too soon for differences to appear?
 - Gender differences are not salient in Cambodia
 - Something else, perhaps or not, in combination with gender, e.g., SES
 - Reading tea leaves?

Promotion status by gender

Dropped out	Male	Female	Overall
Between June 2011 and December 2011	1.2	6.0	4.0
Between December 2011 and June 2012	24.1	22.4	23.1
Still in school in June 2012	74.7	71.6	72.9
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

STUDENTS' SURVEY

Gender differences? (student survey)

● School history

- No statistical differences or discernible patterns in:
Attendance at preschool; Age of primary entry,
Repetition
- Girls are less likely boys to have missed school for
2+ months (58% girls, never; 42% boys)

● School supplies:

- Girls are more likely than boys to:
 - Almost always bring pencil, notebook, text to class (58% vs 42%)
 - Come to class with homework done (63% vs 37%)
 - Come to class with food & drink or money (55% vs 45%)
- But none of these results are statistically significant

Gender & after school

- After school tutoring
 - Essentially same (39% girls take classes, 41% boys)
 - Hours (7.2 for girls, 7.9 for boys)
- Similar % enroll in other schools (16% vs 14%)
- Use of after-school time

	Girls	Boys
Games	55	49 (minutes/day)
Friends	45	45
Chores	142	134
Homework	73	61

Gender & child resources

	Girls	Boys	Overall
% Like to read very much (+ refers to more desirable value)	46+	39	43
% having a place to study in home (highlighted are statistically significant)	39	53+	45
% having light	70	74+	72
% having books	23	24	23
% having computer	2	1	2
% having someone to turn to for help	65	61	63

Gender & social capital

	Girls	Boys	Overall
% whose father thinks continuing school is most important after primary school	99+	95	97
% mother	95	98+	96
% grandparent	90+	86	88
% teacher	89	94+	92
% who have a few or no friends who have dropped out	85+	79	82
% who will look for job immediately after primary	47+	53	51

Gender & educational aspirations

	Girls	Boys	Overall
% who feel aspire only to complete primary education	0+	0+	0+
% Lower secondary	16+	11+	14
% Upper secondary	43	44	43
% ... University	41	45	43

Gender & perception of school quality

	Girls	Boys	Overall
% strongly agree “Teachers are competent”	55+	53	54
% “Happy with teaching at my school”	47+	40	44
% “Satisfied with the discipline”	47+	44	46
% “Happy with other students”	35	34	35
% “Feel safe at school”	47	53+	50

Gender & self-concept, attitudes to school

	Girls	Boys	Overall
Like to learn in school: % who completely or somewhat agree	87.2	92.7+	89.5
Students in class help each other: % who completely or somewhat agree	75.4	80.7+	77.6
% of students who agree teachers are generally friendly	85.8	81.0	83.7
% of students who feel school is cheerful most of the time	47.2	29.0	39.6

PARENTS SURVEY

Gender & parental involvement

	Girls	Boys	Overall
% every day or almost: Parent talks to student about school	21	37+	27
% Parent helps student with study:	14	20+	16
% Parent talks to student about future or job	19	28+	23
% Parent volunteers physical	9+	6	8
% Parent offers training	8+	1	5
% ... Parent meets teacher	9	16+	12

Gender & Parental perceptions of children and school

	Girls	Boys	Overall
% Yes, very much to: Child likes going to school	73+	59	67
% Yes, very much to: Child works hard	72	67	70
% Yes, very much to: Child likes learning	88	88	88

Gender & financial burden

	Girls	Boys	Overall
% parents who say 6 th grader's school is great financial burden	27	26	27
% 7-9 th graders' schooling is/will be great financial burden	46	45	46
Daily pocket money (riels)	980	1,375+	1,087
School fees for 2010/11 school year	430+	310	375

Gender & school costs (weird numbers)

	Girls	Boys	Overall
Amount spent on tutoring since beginning of year	198	190	195
.... Lessons at other schools	2,677	5,494	3,915
.... For transport	6,882	6,977	6,923
.... Textbooks and supplies	70,436	43,140	58,461
.... Uniforms	230,204	66,352	159,268
.... Remedial support	6,140	2,442	4,430
.... Gifts for teachers, director, to school	17,297	3,914	11,545

Gender & parental aspirations

	Girls	Boys	Overall
Ed desired for child	3.49 (between upper secondary and university)	3.59	3.53
Ed expect for child	2.99 (upper secondary=3.0)	2.99	2.99
Minimum ed for job your child should have at 30	3.41	3.47	3.44
% very bothered if child achieves less than parent	27.0	36.6+	31.0

Gender & Parental expectations

	Girls	Boys	Overall
% of parents who say there are no job opportunities (or don't know) in their communities re their children / % some opportunities	76.0	79.1	77.3
Few opportunities	18.2	12.8	15.0
Many or some opportunities	5.8	8.1	6.8

Gender & Parental decision-making

	Girls	Boys	Overall
% who say family decides if child continues schooling	37+	27	33
% who say school decides if child continues schooling	63	73+	67
% who say they are aware of costs of continuing child's ed	53	67+	59
% who feel their child is likely or very likely to complete grade 9	83.2	90.7+	86.4

So far...

- Given a purposive rather than random sample...
- Relatively few gender differences were identified.
- Why?
 - There are few/none?
 - There are few yet?
 - We are looking in the wrong place?
- However, there were patterns, which we hypothesize will deepen over time, as children age, as opportunity and direct costs increase, and as schooling becomes more difficult
- Will be important to watch if and how these factors and perceptions change...

Patterns

- 1: Overall, surprisingly few differences, consistently few
- 2: On average, boys claim a greater share of resources (i.e., get more stuff) than girls
- 3: Girls seem to have an easier time in school and to like it better
4. Still expectations are higher for boys' educational futures
5. Girls do drop out more frequently than boys, and their odds of dropping out are considerably higher
6. Children whose parents have not completed primary school are at greatest risk

End of the beginning



- Questions, Comments, Suggestions, Discussion?