

Educational
Support to
Children of
Underserved
Populations
(ESCUP)

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Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Culture Centers for School Directors and Core Group Members



ESCUP partners include:

American Institutes for Research (AIR)

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Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE)

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Guidelines for the Establishment and Use of Culture Centers

1. Introduction

The Culture Center creates an opportunity to provide a special place for activities related to local cultures and traditions, which is situated in the area where the school is located. The Culture Center is also expected to encourage increased community involvement in the school as they will be involved in preparations as well as in the use of the center. The center also enables the students to meet their peers in an open, informal space for study activities, presentations about cultures and traditions and other educational activities outside the classroom as well as leisure time during breaks.

2. Objective

To introduce students to the culture activities so that they gain understanding and awareness of different cultural values represented by ethnic minority groups, resulting in respect, conservation and embracing cultural diversity in school and the community. The Culture Center also helps to increase understanding on cross-cultural concepts among students and community members and increase community involvement which contributes to strengthening the school- community relationships.

The Culture Center is a place for:

- ▶ Student meetings for study, research, and presentation of different cultural topics which are interesting for groups or individuals.
- ▶ Collection and display of different local arts and crafts.
- ▶ Promotion and conservation of existing cultures of the different ethnic groups in the community.

3 Basic ideas for Culture Center construction

3.1. Site Selection for Culture Center

The location of the Culture Center is suggested to be in the school compound. The exact location should be discussed with the different stakeholders which results in a mutual agreement.

Criteria for selection of a suitable location for Culture Center include:

- ▶ Accessibility

The Center should be easy to access from all parts of school compound.

- ▶ Safety

The Center should be located in a secure place free from floods in the rainy season.

- ▶ Location

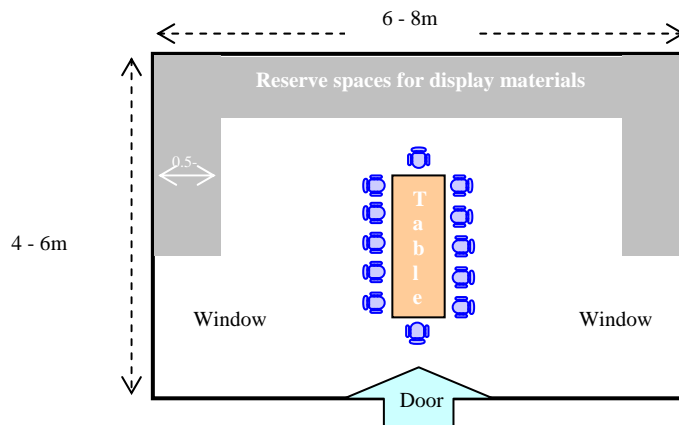
▶ Preferably in the school compound or in close proximity to the school. In certain areas, it can be considered to use existing facilities for the establishment of a culture center, if appropriate.

3.2. Size for Culture Center

The size of the Culture Center depends on the available space but should ideally be able to accommodate 10 -15 children at one time. It is suggested that the size should be around 4-6m x 6-8m but this depends on available space and recourses.

The minimum space requirements inside the Culture Center would be 0.5 -0.7m from the back wall and 2/3 from both side walls were reserved for putting table, shelves or platform where materials can be displayed. It is recommended to have a table and chairs in the Center to facilitate meetings for students (for example the Student Association) as well as Community Members.

The below drawing provides an example of a suitable design. However, the design is flexible and should be agreed upon by the School Management, Core Groups and School Support Committees.



Example of a inside design for the Culture Center

3.3 The design of Culture Center

It is encouraged to use local materials for the construction of the Center as this will represent the availability of local natural resources which is commonly used by local people in this area. Each school can choose their own design based on the traditional style of housing and according to their own preference but in agreement with the construction committee. The back wall and 2/3 from both side walls of culture center should close properly to protect from rain water blown in by the wind. The rest of the wall should have only lower part around 1.2 meters and upper part for the middle part should open completely or window. It would be good if some space is reserved for keeping more important materials by making a "wall" from bamboo which the displays materials in side that room can be seen from outside.

Nearby the Culture Center, if possible should have a garden and putting cement / wooden chairs for attracting student to come and use of the center.



4. What to display in the Culture Center?

After complete construction of the Culture Center, the school committee should have a meeting with community representative, especially elders from all ethnic groups living in the school catchment villages to discuss on *what they want to show about their culture* to children or other people. Make a list of all the subjects raised by community representatives.

Possible suggestions that could be discussed:

- Agriculture tools used by different ethnic groups
- Hunting tool used by different ethnic groups
- Fishing tools used by different ethnic groups
- Food processing used by different ethnic groups
- House or village arrangement of different ethnic groups
- Traditional clothes worn by different ethnic groups or at different occasions
- Handicrafts
- Folk tales, songs and/or poems
- Different ceremonies

The school director then asks the group: *Does the above mentioned subjects have the same style or structure in different ethnic groups or geographic locations?*

It is expected that there are differences. These differences are very importance as it contributes to the identity of each ethnic group/ geographic location or representatives of one's culture.

The school director then asks them to form a working group for each ethnic group or geographic location represented. The groups will be involved in providing necessary advice and guidance on their culture and also assist in finding materials for display in the Culture Center.

Other ideas for use of the Culture Center can come from the suggestions of volunteer students or Student Association members based on their interests in specific topics.

5. Decoration of Culture Center

Materials to display in the Culture Center can be the original tools or artificial copies of originals. It is also possible to present the tools by drawings/photographs. For learning purposes, materials are grouped according to subject that is introduced with a description label and possible explanation. For example, agriculture tools are displayed in one corner, while clothes are grouped on the other side of the wall. Light and small materials can be displayed on the wall by low-cost wooden display panels made from wood and mats or sacks (see photo below for example). Heavy materials can be displayed on the floor or tables/shelves.

Photo 1: Agriculture and food processing corner

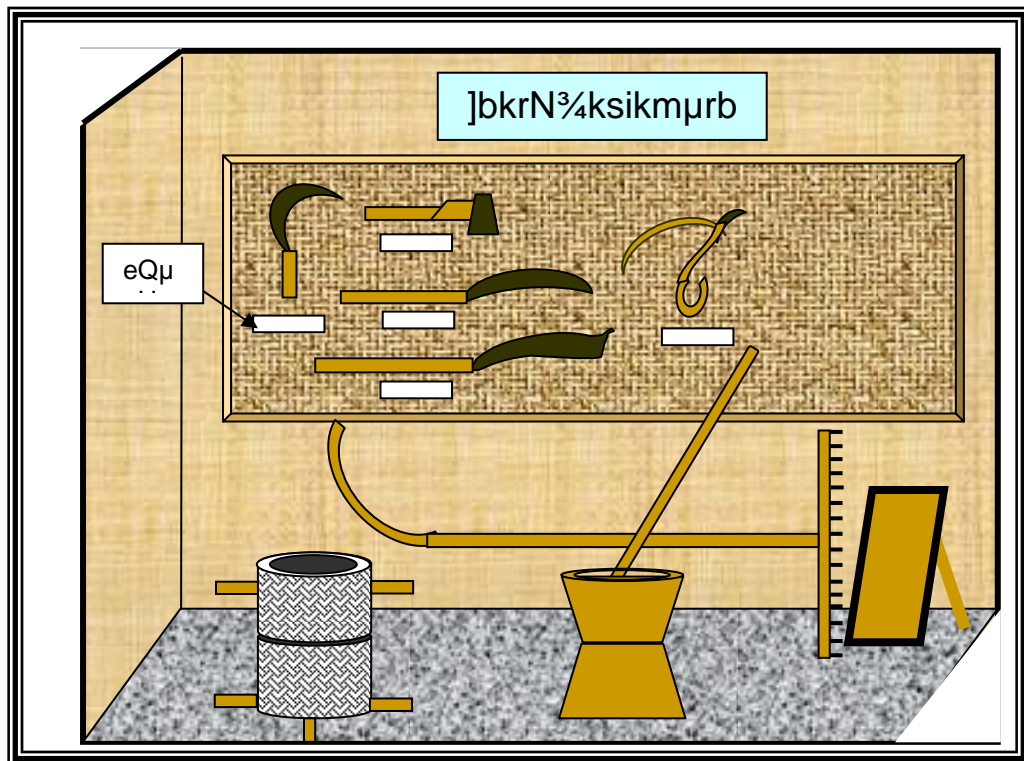
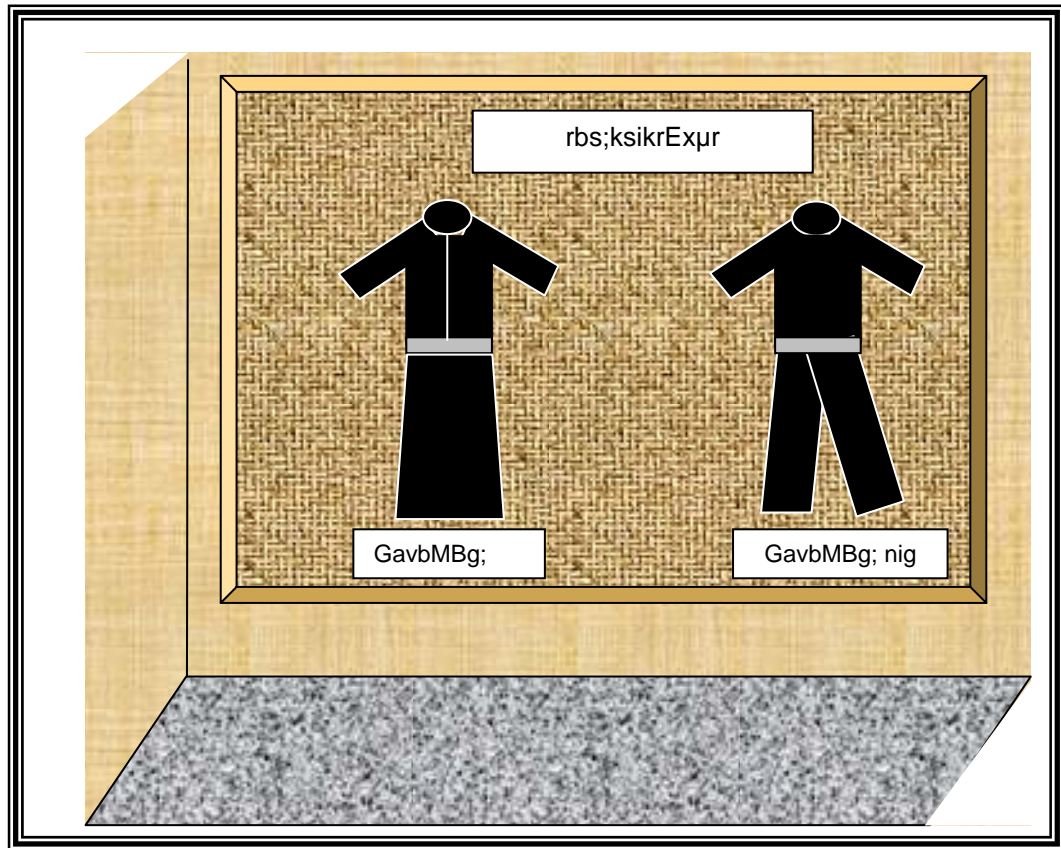


Photo 2: Clothing corner



6. How to manage the Culture Center

The Culture Center should be open during school hours and is for use of students and community members. It is important to make sure that the Center is easy to access and welcoming to visitors.

- The core group members and school director should take responsible for managing and organizing meetings with all stakeholders to make sure that the Culture Center is set up and functions well according to the expectations.
- The community representatives should have a role in setting up the Culture Center and also act as advisers to school director and students on cultural aspects to ensure that all the items in the Culture Center are correctly described.
- The Student Association members or volunteer students from Grade 5-6 should be trained to facilitate the Culture Center use and take turn in taking care of the Culture Center on a daily basis.

7. How to use the Culture Center

The culture center can be use for multi purposes and by different stakeholders as suggested below:

Teachers and student use culture center for:

- ◆ ***Learning more about culture***, Teachers can give assignment to student groups to visit the Culture Center and observe the materials displayed or reading some papers to answers question as following:
 - What kind of agriculture tools are used by Khmers farmers? Phnuong farmers?
 - What kind of hunting tools are used by Phnuong? How are they made?
 - What kind of fishing tools are used by Khmer farmer?
 - What do Cham people do when they greet?
 - What do Cham people wear for ceremonies?

Through visiting the Culture Center, students can learn more about their own culture as well as their friends' culture but it also gives an opportunity to study/conduct research about cultural diversity and prepare an exhibition in the Center to share the findings with other students.

- ◆ ***Presenting the outcomes of their work***:

Groups or individual students can use the Culture Center for a space to display the outcomes of their work. For example: students from the Culture Club of the Student Association have an interest in different kinds of hunting tools use by Kuy communities. The group starts to research by visiting Kuy villages and meet with elders to interview them and collect information and materials to exhibit during presentation day. They ask the school director or core group permission to use space for displaying their materials and invite other students for presentation session. Display can be for a short period of time (2-3 days) or a permanent exhibition.

- ◆ ***Games***

The information on display and the exhibitions provide opportunities for games to assess student's knowledge in a playful manner. The teachers can organize competition for students from different classes to test their knowledge about names and functions of materials displayed in the Culture Center.

Example:

10 -15 students stand in line in front of the questions posters which are prepared in advance by the facilitator in the Culture Center. Each student receives 10 small pieces of papers (for 10 questions -test). They read the answers and put a piece of paper inside the correct answer box. They can move to the next question only when they hear/see the signal from facilitator. The facilitator makes sure that every one has put one piece of paper in the answer box before giving the signal to move to the next question. At the end, the facilitator and students count the answers together.



A. for harvesting short rice
 B. for cutting grasses
 C. for harvesting long rice

A **B** **C**

◆ ***Student Association's meeting and working place:***

The Student Association can use the Culture Center for their meetings and they could also take responsibility for the care of the Center on a daily basis (cleaning, organizing, ensuring Center is open).

◆ ***Informal learning opportunities***

Instead of reading books during break time, children can practice their reading skills by reading the information on display in the Center. The Center can also be used as space for Child to Child activities to stimulate informal learning in a playful way.

◆ ***Use by Community Members***

The community members should be encouraged to use the Culture Center to learn about the student's work and provide input and feedback about local knowledge that children can learn from. They could also use the Culture Center for community meetings about school affairs as this is a more informal setting than the school office, which may increase participation of community members and provides opportunities to strengthen informal links between school and community.



Student Association meeting in the Culture Center



Member of the Student Association explains the outcomes of research activities on historical sites in their commune

