

CAMBODIAN YOUTH'S

PERSPECTIVES AND REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATION



Edited by
Koemhong Sol
Kimkong Heng
Sopheap Kaing
Vutha Ros

CAMBODIAN
EDUCATION
FORUM

A forum for education

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វេទិកាអប់រំកម្ពុជា

Cambodian Education Forum

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Preface

This edited volume puts together articles written by the first batch of research interns at the Cambodian Education Forum (CEF). These interns are Cambodian youth who have volunteered to work with the CEF editorial team to write English articles for publication. They have joined the first round of a research internship program that lasted for almost six months, from November 2020 to April 2021. Participation in the internship program was voluntary, and interns were required to write and publish at least one article per month with CEF. Over the course of the program, these interns have each published between one to four articles, while a few of them have only completed the first draft and failed to bring their articles to an acceptable standard for publication by CEF. Overall, seven interns managed to write 18 articles that were compiled and republished in this volume.

We put together their articles to produce this volume because we wish to contribute to the promotion of reading, writing, research, and publication in Cambodia. We particularly aim to support youth to learn the skills of writing and publishing articles in English, as well as skills to reflect on contemporary educational issues. We believe that Cambodian youth and young Cambodian writers need mentoring support and opportunities to showcase their knowledge and skills, particularly critical thinking and writing skills. With sufficient support, they will be able to improve their analytical and critical thinking skills to write and publish short opinion or research-based articles in English.

While editing and producing this volume, we acknowledge limitations in our editing and copyediting skills. As editors, we have endeavored to edit and proofread this volume to make it as flawless as possible; however, we believe that this edited book is not free of errors. In this regard, we would welcome any constructive feedback or comments that can enhance the quality of this collaborative work and other works by CEF.

We strongly hope that our commitment to promoting a healthy culture of reading and writing in Cambodia will instill a positive attitude toward research and publication in young and emerging Cambodian writers, particularly youth who are the future of Cambodia. We are convinced that when more and more Cambodians write and publish their work, a vibrant research and publication culture will emerge and develop in Cambodia.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, we would like to thank all the research interns who have contributed to this volume as authors and our four guest editors, Bunhorn Doeur, Nicholas Hemingway, Makara Muong, and Samnang Yen, who have helped with the review and editorial process. Without the interns' and guest editors' contributions, this edited volume would not have been feasible.

Secondly, we wish to acknowledge the financial support of our scholarship providers who sponsor our PhD studies. Each of us, including Kimkong Heng, Sopheap Kaing, Vutha Ros, and Koemhong Sol, would like to respectively thank Australia Awards, Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships, HKU Postgraduate Scholarship, and Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship. Without these sponsors' generous support, we may not have had the opportunity to complete this edited volume.

Finally, we wish to express our sincere thanks to our respective families and friends for their love, support, understanding, and blessing. Without them, the completion of this book would have been both less likely and less meaningful.

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Kimkong Heng is currently an Australia Awards scholar pursuing a PhD in Education at the University of Queensland, Australia. He is a co-founder and lead editor of the Cambodian Education Forum and a visiting senior research fellow at the Cambodia Development Center. Prior to this, he was a visiting senior fellow at the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace and an English lecturer as well as an assistant dean of the School of Graduate Studies, the University of Cambodia. He has two master's degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from the Royal University of Phnom Penh (Cambodia) and the University of Canberra (Australia). He has published 16 journal articles and book reviews and more than 100 short articles in both local and international outlets.

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Vutha Ros has been a researcher in higher education since assuming a faculty position at the Department of English, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 2010. He is currently pursuing a PhD degree in Higher Education at the University of Hong Kong. His current PhD research focuses on the legacy-innovation tensions in post-colonial higher education. He has published on topics of academic profession in international journals such as *Higher Education Policy*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, and *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. He is a recipient of Asia Pacific Scholarship Consortium 2013, Civil Society Scholar Awards 2016, and HKU Postgraduate Scholarship 2018-2022.

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Makara Muong is a Vice Principal of the ASEAN International School in Phnom Penh. For more than a decade, he has been in charge of curriculum design and development, teacher professional development, human resources management, and training and development for managers at the ASEAN International School. He holds a bachelor's degree in Education in English (B.Ed. in TEFL) from the Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh, and a master's degree in Higher Education Management from the same university.

Samnang Yen is currently a Cambodian diplomat at the Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Brunei Darussalam. Prior to this, he has worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and has taught English for five years. He has a master's degree in International Relations from the University of Cambodia and two bachelor's degrees in Education in English and in International Relations (with honors) from Sachak Asia Development Institute and the Pāññāsāstra University of Cambodia, respectively. In 2018, he was awarded a scholarship to participate in a five-month training course on good governance in New Zealand.

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Notes on Cambodian Education Forum

The Cambodian Education Forum (CEF) was co-founded on 01 July 2020 by a group of three emerging Cambodian scholars (Kimkong Heng, Sopheap Kaing, and Vutha Ros) who aspire to promote education research and publication in Cambodia. The team was later joined by Koemhong Sol, also an emerging Cambodian scholar. The common vision is to provide platforms for Cambodian researchers, educators, teachers, students, and administrators, especially novice and emerging writers, to express their views and share their perspectives and understanding on topics relevant to education in Cambodia and beyond.

CEF strongly believes that Cambodian students, teachers, and researchers have a wealth of knowledge and perspectives to share in shaping understanding, beliefs, and attitudes regarding education-related issues confronting Cambodia and other countries in the region and the world.

Although the focus is on education in Cambodia, CEF welcomes and publishes unsolicited opinion pieces or research articles on educational issues facing countries in the region and beyond.

CEF's main aims are as follows:

1. To provide a publication platform for Cambodian researchers, educators, and students
2. To share knowledge and informed opinions about education in Cambodia
3. To support Cambodian novice writers to publish through peer review, mentorship, and editorial processes
4. To publish essays, opinion pieces, and research articles about education in Cambodia and beyond
5. To offer insights from education experts through interviews, discussion, and publication

6. To share education-related resources with students, teachers, academics, and researchers
7. To promote Cambodian image in the regional and international arena

CEF is still under development, but the vision behind this initiative is ambitious and inclusive. We seek to promote research and publication in Cambodia, particularly those conducted by Cambodians.

We are currently seeking funding, sponsors, donors, and volunteers to maintain and sustain this platform to offer common benefits to diverse users such as learners, teachers, educators, and researchers.

We start as a small team, aim high, and aspire to make a positive impact on the education sector and the research and publication culture in Cambodia.

We believe each Cambodian has a vital role to play to shape and improve Cambodian society and raise its image on the global stage.

We start small, aim big, and aspire to create a real impact.

1. Introduction: Engaging and Supporting Cambodian Youth to Write for Publication in English

Kimkong Heng

The University of Queensland

Koemhong Sol

International Christian University

Sopheap Kaing

University of Fribourg

Vutha Ros

The University of Hong Kong

Introduction

Research has shown that the research capacity of Cambodian universities and their academic staff remains underdeveloped. Although the Cambodian government, through the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), has introduced a few key initiatives such as Higher Education Quality and Capacity Improvement Project (HEQCIP) and Higher Education Improvement Project (HEIP) to stimulate research activities in higher education, Cambodia's research performance lags behind that of many countries in the region (Heng et al., 2020). A bibliometric analysis by Heng (2021), for example, shows that Cambodia ranked 8th in ASEAN, producing only 3,521 documents over the last ten years, which are indexed in the Scopus database, one of the world's largest abstract and citation databases.

Considering Cambodia's past tragedy under the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979) in which educated Cambodians were targeted for execution, Cambodia emerged as a country with “a missing generation of intellectuals” after the

collapse of the genocidal regime (Kwok et al., 2010, p. 10). The development of higher education began only recently, particularly after the country began the national building process following the United Nations-sponsored national elections in 1993. Cambodian higher education began to experience marked growth after 1997 when the government allowed the establishment of private universities and the introduction of fee-based models in public universities (Un et al., 2017).

At present, there are 125 higher education institutions, 77 of which are privately owned (MoEYS, 2019). To promote higher education research in Cambodia, MoEYS has introduced and implemented several policies, including Policy on Research Development in the Education Sector, Master Plan for Research Development in the Education Sector, and Policy on Higher Education 2030. With support from the World Bank, MoEYS implemented a US\$23 million HEQCIP project. One of the components of this project was the introduction of Development and Innovation Grants that funded almost 50 research projects across the public and private HEIs in the country. Recently, MoEYS has introduced another World Bank-funded project (HEIP) worth US\$92.5 million to support teaching and research activities in the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and agriculture (See Heng, 2020a).

The implementation of a newly established nationwide research grant scheme called the Research Creativity and Innovation Fund and the announcement on the implementation of academic titles have given hope to the development of a research culture in Cambodia (Heng, 2020a). All of these recent initiatives are Cambodia's humble attempts to respond to globalization and the global trend toward the internationalization of higher education and a knowledge-based economy. In addition, as Cambodia aspires to transform itself into a knowledge-based society and become an upper-middle-income country by 2030, greater attention has been paid to research and innovation. In the Education Strategic Plan 2019–2023, for instance, MoEYS aims to increase full-time academic staff with PhD degrees to 5 percent and establish at least three centers of excellence at HEIs by 2023 (MoEYS, 2019). It also sets out to improve the overall capacity of teaching, learning, and research in higher education by upgrading curricula, faculty qualifications, and graduate programs.

The Need to Support Youth to Write for Publication in English

To promote a healthy research culture in Cambodia, active collaboration and involvement from all stakeholders are needed. As Heng (2020b) stated, “all stakeholders across the three different levels – macro, meso and micro – have pivotal roles to play. They share interrelated roles and have power and agency to effect change and make a difference to a research culture in Cambodia”. However, there are many barriers to the development of a vibrant research culture in Cambodia. Key challenges range from low academic salaries to limited academic freedom to a lack of an effective incentive and award system for research. Other barriers include poor research infrastructure, heavy teaching loads, and limited research skills on the part of academics themselves (see CICP, 2016; Heng, 2020b; Kwok et al., 2010).

Moreover, there seems to be an absence of a community of research practice within most Cambodian HEIs. Except for a few well-established public universities such as the Royal University of Phnom Penh, most HEIs do not have the capacity for research. It is rare to see these HEIs conduct research seminars and produce research outputs in the form of academic journals or scientific magazines. Overall, there is a lack of a conducive environment for research in most universities (Kwok et al., 2010). As Eam’s (2015) survey of 444 Cambodian lecturers across ten universities showed, almost 65% of these lecturers were not involved in any research activities at all. When there were research activities, most were commissioned research.

Despite this, there seems to be a growing interest in research among Cambodian youth, who make up almost two-thirds of Cambodia’s 16 million population. Although there has not been any substantial research into this matter, anecdotal evidence suggests that many young Cambodians aspire to be writers or researchers. The publication of this volume is a telling example as all short chapters are contributed by Cambodian youth, all of whom are university students or recent university graduates. They are young, capable, and inspired. They only need support and mentorship to develop into more experienced writers or young researchers.

Against this backdrop, as co-editors of the Cambodian Education Forum (CEF), we are obliged to offer free mentoring support to aspiring Cambodian youth

who wish to write and publish articles in English. We are convinced that with proper and sufficient support, young Cambodian writers will be able to unlock their potential and do what they are often reluctant to do, that is, to write and publish articles in English. Therefore, given our strong interest and commitment to contribute to building research in Cambodia, we initiated an internship program to offer youth the opportunity to work under our coordination and mentorship. They were required to write at least one education-related article per month to meet the internship requirements. Their articles would later be reviewed and edited for publication on CEF's website.

We recruited ten interns for the program, which lasted almost six months from November 2020 to April 2021. Throughout the internship program, we offered support to the interns by answering any questions they had while writing and training them on how to use citations and develop reference lists in their articles. We paired them up and asked them to review one another's articles before we reviewed them again. After a few revisions, their articles were edited for publication. In the event that the articles were not up to the standard, we required them to revise them again until they reached a standard suitable for publication.

Over the course of about six months, seven interns were able to write 18 short articles which were published on CEF's website and republished in this volume. Unfortunately, three interns were not able to bring their articles to an acceptable standard, so their articles were not included in this edited volume. We hope they would take the time to revise their articles, and once they are ready, we will publish them on our website.

In the future, we will continue to support Cambodian youth to write and publish their work, including short and medium-length articles. We are committed to this cause and believe that there is a need to support youth to write for publication in English. We will launch the second round of our internship program in the middle of this year so that aspiring Cambodian youth will have a chance to work with us to cultivate their writing skills and help contribute to building a research and publication culture in Cambodia.

Organization of this Edited Volume

This edited volume is composed of a collection of short articles (also called chapters in this book) written by young writers who have participated in CEF's first internship program. There are 18 short articles in total that are grouped into two parts. Some articles are primarily based on opinions, while others are research-based articles. The volume begins with an introductory chapter, followed by Part I consisting of 13 articles/chapters that reflect on various contemporary educational issues and Part II containing five chapters that present Cambodian youth's perspectives on the role of education in Cambodian society. The volume ends with a concluding chapter that offers our reflections on CEF's internship program and how the wider community can contribute to promoting research and publication in Cambodia.

Part I: Youth's Reflections on Contemporary Educational Issues

In Chapter 1, Phearun Chhoeurm highlights some critical challenges and opportunities of online learning in Cambodia amid the COVID-19 pandemic and suggests that digitalization in learning and teaching should be sustained post-COVID-19. In Chapter 2, Rathana Phin examines the possibility of whether e-learning will replace traditional classroom-based learning. This chapter discusses the benefits and challenges of e-learning and concludes that both learning modes should be blended, given the pros and cons of both. Socheata Ly, in Chapter 3, looks at the benefits of Facebook as an educational tool. This chapter suggests that, if used properly, Facebook can be a useful educational tool for both formal and informal learning.

Chapter 4 by Phearun Chhoeurm discusses a growing concern about cyberbullying in higher education in the digital age and its consequences. The author concludes the chapter by offering several suggestions to address the issue of cyberbullying. Chapter 5 by Kanika Nhil explores the challenges facing Cambodia's working industry within the context of the fourth industrial revolution, also known as Industry 4.0. The author points out the skills needed in Industry 4.0 and suggests that all stakeholders work together to develop a highly-skilled workforce that Cambodia needs to strive for in Industry 4.0. In Chapter 6, Rathana Phin explains the benefits of bilingual education and urges Cambodia to embrace and invest more in this type of education. In Chapter 7,

Socheata Ly discusses key factors that students should consider when choosing their university majors. They include interest, ability, career and employability prospects, and future income potential. Sokvy Rim, in Chapter 8, encourages students to pursue an international relations major. The author argues that studying international relations equips students with critical thinking and analytical skills to understand and solve contemporary issues involving politics and economics.

In Chapter 9, Mealeatey Meak discusses why failing to prepare means preparing to fail. Drawing on Benjamin Franklin's famous quote, "by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail," the author goes on to explain why preparation is the key to success. Chapter 10 by Socheata Ly addresses a popular study strategy that many university students resort to after they have put off work until the last minute, that is, the one-night policy. The author offers six concrete reasons why university students should not practice this policy. In Chapter 11, Mealeatey Meak, drawing mainly on existing research, explains the significance of mental health and offers several useful tips to improve it.

Chapter 12 by Sothavotey Nhim looks at tips to improve English speaking skills. The author first explains why it is essential to improve speaking skills before outlining several useful tips for enhancing this essential communication skill. Chapter 13 concludes this part. It is another contribution by Socheata Ly, who offers five practical tips to achieve exam success.

Part II: Youth's Perspectives on the Role of Education

This part consists of five chapters that deal with different types of education. Chapter 14 by Kanika Nhil discusses why early childhood education (ECE) is vital for Cambodia. The author explains the need to focus on ECE and why it can serve as a solid foundation for children's education in the later stage of their lives. In Chapter 15, Sokvy Rim turns attention to the essential role of Buddhist pagodas in supporting modern education in Cambodian society, although the role of Buddhism in education seems to have diminished. Chapter 16 focuses on sex education. In this chapter, Mealeatey Meak discusses what sex education is, how limited sex education affects Cambodian society, and why it is crucial to expand the provision of sex education in schools.

In Chapter 17, Phearun Chhoeurm examines the significance of higher education and the challenges to higher education enrollment in Cambodia. The author argues that a university education is essential as it provides students with enormous opportunities and the ability to enhance their lives and contribute to the development of their country. In the final chapter in this part, Sokvy Rim, arguing that education is the key to Cambodia's future, calls for greater attention and investment in education. No doubt, as Cambodia envisages becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050, it needs a robust education system to produce a skilled and knowledgeable workforce that can stimulate economic growth and promote inclusive and sustainable development.

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PART I:

**YOUTH'S REFLECTIONS
ON CONTEMPORARY
EDUCATIONAL ISSUES**

2. Challenges and Opportunities of Online Learning in Cambodia during COVID-19

Phearun Chhoeurm

Cambodian Education Forum

Introduction

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak was declared a global pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organization. In the middle of March 2020, educational institutions worldwide moved to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Cambodia, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) suddenly announced the closures of all schools and universities to prevent any potential widespread community transmission of the virus (Ouch, 2020). Although MoEYS later announced the reopening of all schools and universities across the country, every educational institution must practice blended learning (Heng & Hang, 2017), maintain sanitation, and follow health guidelines for COVID-19.

The COVID-19 crisis has provided both challenges and opportunities for Cambodian education, particularly regarding the transformation of education from face-to-face classrooms to online learning (see Heng et al., 2020). Because of COVID-19, educational institutions have shifted to online classes, posing enormous difficulties for teachers and students. Despite the many challenges, COVID-19 is seen as an opportunity for educational reforms and the digital transformation of education (Heng, 2020b). His Excellency Hang Chuon Naron, the Minister of Education, said that the challenges caused by the global pandemic could be turned into an opportunity by implementing digital education and improving the equality of accessibility and broadband internet connection (Sao, 2020b).

Challenges of Online Learning amid the COVID-19 Crisis

The emergency school closure and the immediate transformation to online classes have affected millions of students nationwide. It has been reported that over 1.4 million Cambodian students are unable to access e-learning platforms during COVID-19 (Sao, 2020b). Chan (2020) said that having low digital competency and limited online learning-related experience and training, teachers and students, especially those living in remote areas, have struggled with virtual education, causing unprecedented burdens and anxieties, stress, and other psychological problems. Lack of knowledge of how to use sophisticated online learning and communication platforms, such as Google Classroom and Zoom, together with the lack of digital literacy skills, has increased difficulties for educators and learners (see Heng & Sol, 2020).

While accommodating the contemporary changes in technology-based teaching and learning, teachers and students have encountered another significant obstacle regarding limited affordability (Sao, 2020b). Some provincial students, especially those who are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, are the most vulnerable to falling behind since they do not have adequate technological devices, such as smartphones, computers, and tablets, to access their online learning, resulting in insufficient bandwidth and significantly less active performance. Although some students living in the city can afford their e-learning materials, high-cost internet services are still the inevitable issues. They also face other challenges, including noise distraction and limited digital literacy skills.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2020), during the school closures, even though MoEYS, in collaboration with related partners, immediately launched new online learning initiatives for students from grades 1 through 12 to promote distance learning and enhance optimal utilization of the information and communication technology (ICT), there are still a great number of challenges in terms of accessibility and connectivity. Students at all levels of education tended to share similar problems, particularly unstable internet connections.

Consequently, children in some far-flung areas of Cambodia dropped out of school, while some university students decided to temporarily suspend their studies, awaiting schools to reopen (Voun, 2020). Thus, the gap in the socioeconomic status of students and their low digital competency have caused online learning to exacerbate the educational inequality confronting Cambodia (Som, 2020).

Opportunities of Online Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Despite facing considerable challenges, Cambodia has made an effective emergency response to avoid community transmission, resulting in great COVID-19 success. According to Heng (2020a, para. 1), “Cambodia’s COVID-19 victory needs to be acknowledged and applauded.” However, social distancing and sanitation practices are still undeniable responsibilities of every individual regardless of the reopening of schools and universities or the continuation of online classes and blended learning.

Interestingly, having been through virtual learning and teaching for over eight months, some teachers and students may have viewed this challenge as an opportunity to advance digital competence, change traditional pedagogical approaches, and accelerate the digital transformation of education.

From another perspective, off-campus learning is seen as a blessing as it enables students to improve their independent and self-paced learning through a wide variety of digital platforms. Students are able to choose their optimal study environment and suitable study time. UNESCO (2020) stated that over 200 video lessons are available on MoEYS’ official Facebook page, YouTube channel, and other e-learning platforms, including its related partners such as “Kru Cambodia” and “Komar Rien Koma Cheh.” Therefore, students can access online learning anytime they want.

At the same time, digital education has generated highly beneficial outcomes for educators in terms of the implementation of competency-based teaching approaches in instructional delivery. According to UNESCO (2020, para. 5), “A teacher delivering video lessons noted that she received high-quality support, including new teaching approaches, learning activities, and hygienic supplies, to ensure continuous education for learners.”

Additionally, home-based learning allows parents and students to strengthen strong bonds during this stressful time. Parents can also have the opportunity to provide care and support to help children continue with their academic endeavors (Sao, 2020). For teachers and students in the city, they could save time and travel expenses when studying online.

The Way Forward Post-COVID-19

Considering all of the issues in the pandemic, Cambodia must consider and promote the continuity of online education since it plays pivotal roles in bringing about positive change, potentially moving Cambodia toward a technology-based society. The phenomenal rise of distance learning worldwide during the COVID-19 outbreak is a crucial indicator showing that online learning would be as valuable as traditional face-to-face education if practiced in the right way.

In light of the significant challenges facing the country's education sector from pre-primary to higher education levels, Cambodia must continue to integrate ICT into education by using a range of collaboration tools and engagement methods that promote blended learning, e-learning, and especially long-life learning.

MoEYS, in collaboration with various partners, must continue to bolster the capabilities of teachers and students and equip them with distance-learning knowledge, technological literacy skills, and 21st-century skills.

Reflecting on the current situation, Cambodia must maintain robust socioeconomic development to ensure that there is no significant gap between privileged and disadvantaged students in education while providing financial resources to support ICT integration to improve technological accessibility, availability of e-learning resources, and reliable internet connectivity.

Moving forward, educational research should be prioritized as it would determine the future of Cambodia, transforming the kingdom into a knowledge-based society. Heng (2020c, p. 2) argues that "Education and research are vital for Cambodia as it seeks to increase its relevance and

competitiveness in the region.” Thus, having optimistic perspectives about the considerable benefits of research, the Minister of Education has been putting high efforts to promote vibrant research culture and expand the research capacities of Cambodian higher education institutions, lecturers, and students through various training research workshops and research competitions. MoEYS and the Rector Council of Cambodia have, for example, organized the “Annual Student Research Competition” and “Samdech Techo Hun Sen’s Research Prize,” aimed at empowering Cambodian students to build their research capacity.

Overall, in the context of Industry 4.0, migration to online classes could be a catalyst for establishing new initiatives and methods to support student education at all levels. Quality education and research will lead Cambodia toward prosperity and development.

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3. Will E-Learning Replace Face-to-Face Learning?

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced physical classrooms worldwide to close; as a result, educational institutions across the world have had to adapt to e-learning (electronic learning) as an alternative to staying on track with their planned academic curriculum.

The closure of educational institutions as part of measures to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus has affected over 1.3 billion learners in nearly 185 countries (UNESCO, 2020). With the cancellation of traditional classrooms, remote or online learning via digital platforms supported by e-learning and videoconferencing software and applications has begun to increase significantly (Li & Lalani, 2020). The rise of online learning has led to a debate about the possibility of replacing traditional classroom-based learning with online or e-learning (Lee, 2020).

Benefits of E-learning

E-learning or online learning is a new mode of learning enabled by digital devices such as laptops, tablets, or smartphones connected to the internet. In e-learning, students can study virtually from anywhere. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online classes conducted remotely are the only alternative available to continue education. In several ways, e-learning brings numerous benefits to both students and instructors.

Firstly, e-learning makes it easy to access resources as educators can upload study materials such as video lectures, slide presentations, textbooks, assignment instructions, and relevant course materials to their online classroom system. This can provide students with the opportunity to browse through the

course content and study it at their own pace, anytime and anywhere, provided that there is an internet connection.

Secondly, online learning allows for greater flexibility through asynchronous learning. For example, courses on Coursera and edX do not require students to join lectures at the exact time set by their instructor or institution; they can, therefore, study whenever they have time. Thus, students will not miss the lessons even when they are busy with other tasks and commitments.

Thirdly, students and instructors can avoid a lengthy commute. Students do not have to go to their school or university anymore. They can stay at home and study without spending a cent on transportation, and they can be safe from the virus or other unpredictable incidents on the road.

Fourthly, students have the opportunity to ensure that they understand the lessons. In physical classrooms, especially in large classes, students who sit at the back or who take a nap during the class session might miss the important points in the lecture; however, in online classes, students can watch the recorded video lecture as many times as they wish until they can fully understand it.

Challenges of Online Learning

Online classrooms became the only option when schools were closed because of the pandemic. Online or e-learning via digital platforms came into existence and became a billion-dollar industry even before the pandemic. In 2015, as reported by Forbes, the e-learning industry made up US\$107 billion, and it was estimated that this business would triple to US\$325 billion by 2025 (McCue, 2018).

The advancement of technology is, however, not flawless. As it advances, it creates its own challenges. As the pandemic has forced students to study virtually, the issue of learning inefficiency (Nidheesh, 2020) and students' dissatisfaction have arisen (Binkley, 2020). In what follows, I argue that e-learning will not replace the face-to-face classroom due to several reasons.

Online Classes Do Not Develop Social Skills

In online classes, students seem to engage less during lectures (Meyer, 2014). They are in front of their screens, talking to their devices, not to their friends nor their teacher as they do in physical classrooms. Besides, the quality of teaching in face-to-face classrooms is arguably higher as the environment allows students and students or students and the instructor to interact with each other better, allowing them to work together to achieve the teaching and learning objective (see Kristiansen et al., 2019).

Without socialization, students may not develop interpersonal skills. In traditional classrooms, students can do presentations or exchange ideas without any communication barriers. The learning experience in physical classrooms is unique and will never be replaced by other teaching styles. In face-to-face classes, teachers can use body language such as gestures to explain, facial expressions to express emotions or actions to demonstrate. Doing all of these in physical classrooms can attract students' attention easily.

Ineffective Class Monitoring

In traditional classrooms, the instructor can easily keep students on their toes. For example, some students might look outside through the window, sleep or chat with their friends when they get bored or distracted. However, it will not take long for the instructor to draw students' attention to reconcentrate on the lesson in physical classes. Unfortunately, in online classes, this might be harder.

In e-learning classes, students sit in front of their screens. However, not all students might focus on the lesson at hand. As research has shown, students were more likely to do multi-tasks such as being on social media, browsing the internet, and listening to music while learning online than when they study in in-person classes (Lepp et al., 2019). When there is no inspection from the instructor, students can do anything else besides focusing on the lecture in online classes. Unlike in traditional classrooms, I believe students can easily fall asleep, lose focus, zone out, or even leave the online classroom.

A study by Columbia University's Community College Research Center found that the hurdle that online students face is the lack of individual personal

engagement with their instructor (The New York Times Editorial, 2013). When lecturing in physical classrooms, teachers can directly give feedback to students, and students can ask their instructors questions straight away for clarification when they need. However, in online classrooms, it is different. Students may have to contact their instructor via message, email, or chat first. This means of communication might discourage them from asking questions.

There are other issues, including lack of engagement and interaction as well as the feeling of estrangement. For example, it was found that students were more likely to fail or withdraw from the course than when they studied in face-to-face classes (The New York Times Editorial, 2013). A study by Martin and Bolliger (2018) showed that most college students believed that online courses were less effective than traditional classrooms. They also found that physical classes could increase student engagement, student satisfaction, and student motivation as well as reduce a sense of isolation among students.

Lack of Access to Digital Devices and Internet Connection

Even though students commit to participating in online classes by trying to listen or take notes, they are still facing some problems stemming from the lack of digital devices or internet connection. I believe some devices, such as old phones, might be impractical as they can become hot and switch off by themselves while in the middle of the learning session. Students may face problems with their computers running on outdated operating systems that do not function effectively.

As reported in the Irish Times, when Irish students were asked about the reality of their virtual learning, poor internet connection was among other distracting factors during online classes (The Irish Times, 2020). This could deteriorate the quality of teaching and learning. No doubt, this kind of issue is more prevalent in developing countries in Asia and Africa that have low internet connections (Euro News, 2020).

In Southeast Asia, the term 'digital divide' has been used to illustrate the inequality of internet access in the region (ASEANPlus News, 2020). For example, there are only three countries such as Singapore, Brunei, and Malaysia that have internet penetration of up to 80 percent of the population while other

countries in the region have the internet penetration of around 60 percent or less (Jalli, 2020).

Poor Course Design and Instructors' Digital Literacy

There are problems related to course design and teachers' digital literacy skills as well. For example, older teachers might find it hard to design a course that can be effectively delivered online. They may also find it challenging to engage students in online classes. No doubt, the success of online learning depends on a well-designed course, active discussion, and interaction between students and instructors (Swan et al., 2000). Thus, poor preparation or organization of how the course can be conducted will affect the quality of teaching.

Online Class Could Cause Health Problems

With e-learning, students need to stay in front of the screen for long hours. According to Hand (2018), online learning can cause isolation, leading to anxiety and depression, while overusing computers can lead to negative physical effects such as muscle and joint injuries, the increased mortality rate associated with excessive sitting, and eyestrain from computer use.

Conclusion

Online learning is a new adventure in education for students and instructors across the globe. It has many benefits as we are living in this digital age. However, since the success of students' learning depends on a well-designed course, accessibility, preparedness, and the instructors' ability to engage students in their learning, the possibility of adapting fully to virtual classrooms becomes successful only when these conditions are met. Despite the rise of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is evidence of students' dissatisfaction and learning ineffectiveness (see Dziuban et al., 2015).

In sum, although traditional face-to-face classes are not possible during the pandemic and online teaching is the only option, both types of learning have their pros and cons. Thus, the way forward should be the combination of both, that is, a hybrid learning mode, a new type of teaching-learning method that will compensate for the weakness of traditional classrooms and online learning

for a better learning experience. Personally, I believe online or e-learning will not take over the physical classroom anytime soon.

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4. Facebook: A Useful Educational Tool

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Technological advancements have immensely transformed our lives, including how we communicate with one another. Social media has become a life-changing technological phenomenon, making interactions and information sharing much more convenient. Facebook, as a form of social media, is known to be a rich source of entertainment and a useful platform for people to meet and keep in touch virtually. Besides fun and interactions, people have also started using Facebook for educational purposes, especially those in the education industry such as educators and students; they have turned this social media into a platform to share and expand their knowledge in many ways (Mazman & Usluel, 2010). This article will explore why Facebook can be an educational tool.

First, Facebook can be used to facilitate communication and information sharing between instructors and students (Shaw, 2017). According to Shaw, any means that allows better and more frequent communication between instructors and students could benefit the educational experience. A survey by Roblyer et al. (2010) showed that students used Facebook as often as email to communicate, while instructors were unlikely to depend solely on email for communication. The survey also discovered that students were more willing to ask their questions online through Facebook or email more than in face-to-face classes. Additionally, instructors could even boost their own credibility and connection with students through Facebook (Shaw, 2017). Muñoz and Towner (2011) explained that Facebook profiles could enhance users' social presence and encourage more personalized interactions, allowing instructors to be more approachable and relatable. Furthermore, Mazer et al. (2007) suggested that instructors' Facebook profiles with high self-disclosure could potentially improve students' motivation and effective learning since they could positively influence students' perceptions towards instructors and develop an environment that promotes students' participation inside and outside of the classroom.

Second, Facebook can promote learning and collaboration among peers (Irwin et al., 2012) and develop a sense of community (Shaw, 2017). Students have adopted the use of Facebook to communicate and discuss with one another when they cannot do so in class. They can also create group chats when they work in teams in order to share their own ideas and come up with new ideas for their assignments and other group works (Irwin et al., 2012). It is especially helpful when they cannot meet face to face. Shaw (2017) noted that Facebook could also establish a sense of community between users, possibly enabling more collaboration and sharing of ideas, which fosters learning. Muñoz and Towner (2011) put social constructivist learning theory into use, explaining that more opportunities for dialogue and sharing of ideas resulted in more learning, through both formal learning with fixed curricular structure and informal learning with fewer or no instructions. Correspondingly, Ractham and Firpo (2011) argued that Facebook could be used to support a community of practice, which is useful for creating situations, activities, and contexts to share implicit knowledge. Communities of practice are groups of people with common concerns or passions who aim to improve their learning by interacting with one another. These communities allow learners to share their previous experiences and learn from the experiences of others, which can help encourage a culture of learning.

Lastly, Facebook has the potential to help students develop essential skills, including computer literacy, writing, and communication skills (Shaw, 2017). According to Muñoz and Towner (2011), literacy practices are progressing beyond the printed medium to welcome the digital realm, with new terms arising such as “new media literacy,” “digital literacy,” and “twenty-first century literacy.” These skills can be achieved when Facebook is integrated into the educational framework. Apart from computer literacy skills, Facebook can be used to help students improve their writing and communication skills (Shaw, 2017). Based on a study by Greenhow and Robelia (2009), students who use social networking sites like Facebook are innovative in their self-expression and adapt their communication choices depending on the audience. Kabilan et al. (2010) found in their survey study that Facebook could be a platform for unfiltered communication, especially for English learners. Users would be able to concentrate on purposeful communication, not on the formal mechanism of language learning. In addition, informal writing on Facebook inspires creativity and expression without much pressure for perfection.

In conclusion, Facebook can be utilized as an educational tool for both formal and informal learning. In the context of Cambodia, for formal learning, Facebook can be a platform for instructors and students to communicate and share important updates and study materials, especially through Facebook Messenger and Facebook Groups. For informal learning, Facebook can be easily accessed to keep up with educational updates such as news from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Many study resources could also be found from a number of trusted sources and educators. According to www.education.fb.com, Facebook has provided proper resources through their “Educator Hub” for educators to enhance their teaching experience and learning communities for learners with various opportunities to expand their knowledge. If incorporated properly into educational guidelines, Facebook can contribute to enhancing the quality of education in Cambodia by providing an online learning community where teachers and students can communicate and share teaching and learning resources.

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5. Cyberbullying in Higher Education in the Digital Age

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Introduction

Bullying is defined as an offensive action or hostile behavior done by an individual or a group with the intention to harm another person (Gladden, 2014; Olweus, 1994). In the Web 2.0 era, networking technology has moved to the internet and integrated into education, posing a new challenge known as cyberbullying (Sellers et al., 2009). Since then, traditional bullying has gradually transformed into online bullying. In recent years, cyberbullying has become a modern form of harassment (Watts et al., 2017). According to Smith et al. (2008), cyberbullying is the act of using electronic communication devices such as computers, smartphones, and the internet to humiliate weaker individuals. Similarly, this term is defined as an intentional action that inflicts harm on someone on the internet by using mobile phones and other digital devices to send instant messages or threats (National Crime Prevention Council, 2010).

In today's world, information and communication technology (ICT) has been increasingly integrated into higher education for the sake of educational acceleration (Faucher et al., 2014). Teachers and students have started to use a wide range of technological tools as platforms for teaching, learning, social networking, accessing email, sharing information, and texting. Sticca and Perren (2013) argued that internet utilization in education would accelerate educational activities and provide convenient platforms for educators and learners; however, the rapid transformation of face-to-face to cyberbullying poses significant threats to internet users. Cyber victims are not only students from pre-primary but also higher education levels (Smith et al., 2014). A study by Slonje and Smith (2008) found that the phenomenon of cyberbullying among university students has become a complicated issue.

Cyberbullying Among Students in Higher Education

The widespread use of ICT and the rapid adoption of social media have put students at high risk of cyberbullying. Zalaquett and Chatters (2014) showed that over 80% of 613 college students used the internet, while 95% of them used social media, including Facebook and so forth. The study results indicated that approximately 19% of those students were victims of different forms of cyberbullying, such as sexual and gender harassment, racism, and classism (class discrimination). In addition, Dilmac (2009) surveyed 666 college students in Turkey and found that 22% of them experienced cyberbullying. The reason behind this issue is that students lacked digital competency and those who found it hard to adapt to technology-based education settings were the most vulnerable to cyberbullying (Didden et al., 2009).

In Cambodia, among the 16 million Cambodians, 11 million of them use the internet and 7 million use social media (VOA, 2017). A survey on one million youth across 160 countries, including Cambodia, by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2019) showed that 85.7% of young Cambodians between the ages of 15 and 25 years were digitally bullied and harassed. The rapid growth of social media use among Cambodian students has created another burden on the government in maintaining cybersecurity and accelerating digital education nationwide. Unfortunately, not many studies have been conducted on cyberbullying facing Cambodian university students; therefore, it is hard to find data and concrete evidence to address such an issue.

Apart from Cambodia, researchers worldwide have conducted studies on cyberbullying among college students, focusing on gender-based differences. One study found that females were significantly more likely to be cyberbullied than males (Wang et al., 2009). However, Akbulut and Eristi (2011) found that males were more likely to be cyberbullies and cyber victims than females. Despite conflicting results, a recent study by Faucher et al. (2014) shows that cyberbullying vulnerability is still greater for females than males.

Globally, a vast majority of cyber victims share similar problems, although they are threatened by different forms of online bullying. According to Sellers et al. (2009), some individuals humiliate another person on the internet through

emailing, social networking, messaging, sending lies, or posting inappropriate photos. For example, a study by Faucher et al. (2014) about victims experiencing cyberbullying on Facebook showed that 34% of 1391 students (Facebook users) from Canadian universities unfriended their boyfriend or girlfriend after a breakup and 12% of them said they were harassed or bullied online.

Consequently, cyberbullying has caused anxiety, depression, stress, low self-esteem, and other psychological problems, resulting in a loss of students' motivation and decline in academic performance (Bond et al., 2001). Zalaquett and Chatters (2014) surveyed 613 college students and showed that 32% of the victims developed more stress due to digital abuse, while 9% experienced a loss of productivity. Also, serious cyberbullying behavior can encourage victims to develop suicidal thoughts or even commit suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Recently, the increase of cyberbullying in higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic is another emerging issue facing education sectors worldwide. Physical classes have been temporarily shifted online, posing unprecedented burdens, anxieties, and stress on students. Simultaneously, college students have been bullied on social media, especially regarding racism. According to Florida Atlantic University (2020), racism on the internet and in-person has risen among students during the virus outbreak. In two weeks during the global pandemic, over 1,100 reports were received. Most of these statements were from ASEAN college students, who have been discriminated against and bullied physically and virtually (Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council & Chinese for Affirmative Action, 2020).

Suggestions and Concluding Remarks

Several studies suggest insightful and critical solutions to address cyberbullying and provide guidelines for further studies on this issue. A study of 1704 primary and secondary students by Giménez-Gualdo et al. (2018) found that only 0.03% of cyberbullied students reported to the counselors at their schools. Thus, educational institutions at all levels should strongly encourage victims of cyberbullying to bravely report incidents to the counselors of their schools or universities.

In Cambodia, cyberbullying is a growing concern in higher education, especially during a global pandemic since teachers and students lack digital competency and technology-based skills. Digital security and safety should be strengthened to prevent Cambodian educators and learners from cyberbullying (Rath, 2020, p. 92). Thus, educational institutions should establish relevant policy initiatives and strengthen existing anti-cyberbullying strategies while providing counseling services and sustained support for victims of cyberbullying.

Education on cyberbullying should be integrated with academic programs to equip students with an in-depth awareness of this issue. At the same time, cyberbullying-related laws and policies should be taught effectively and highly promoted. Moreover, both teachers and students should be provided with additional training on cyberbullying prevention and digital literacy skills (Faucher et al., 2014).

In the Industry 4.0 era, heavy internet use among adolescents has remarkably increased, leading to the growth of cyberbullying-related behavior (Walrave & Heirman, 2011). However, cyberbullying is also a key concern for people of all ages (Akbulut & Eristi, 2011). Olweus (2012) stated that not many research studies on cyberbullying had been conducted. In the case of Cambodia, research on cyberbullying, particularly in higher education, seems to be very limited. For this reason, the government and educational institutions should support and encourage researchers to conduct in-depth research on cyberbullying to understand this phenomenon and find ways to transform Cambodia into a safe kingdom in the digital age.

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6. Skills Needed for Cambodia to Thrive in Industry 4.0

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Introduction

In the age of digitalization, all countries in the globe, especially developing countries, have made tremendous efforts to keep up with technological advancements. The fast pace of technological changes in the midst of the fourth industrial revolution, known as Industry 4.0, transforms the way people live, work, and connect to one another (Gray, 2016). The existence of Industry 4.0, through technological integration, plays a central role in industrial and economic development for both developed and developing countries.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2020), Industry 4.0 can broadly be defined as the adoption and integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in industrial manufacturing. The two components that constitute Industry 4.0 are the digital application derived from the cyber-physical system and the connectivity in the manufacturing industry (UNDP, 2020). The cyber-physical system is the system used to connect the physical world to the cyber world. That includes the internet of things (IoT), big data, machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), 3D printing, hybrid production systems, and cloud computing. The connectivity is more about networking, sensing between the cyber and physical world, and sharing data analysis.

The transition from relying on typical manufacturing to automated manufacturing facilitated by high technology has made progress in eliminating some of the jobs by replacing them with AI and machine learning (Gray, 2016). In this regard, the future of the workforce will need many preparations in terms of specialized skills to keep its own pace with the radical change in the sphere of increasing development. Moreover, the result of Industry 4.0 does not only drive the cutting-edge technology but also requires the country to further invest

and strengthen the human resources development (Maisiri et al., 2019). In Cambodia, because there is a lack of professional and skilled labor in the country, the need to address the skill gap required for Industry 4.0 should receive a more in-depth discussion.

Challenges Facing the Working Industry in Cambodia

The emergence of Industry 4.0 has shaped human development in ways that are utterly different from how the first, second, and third industrial revolution changed society. The role of Industry 4.0 in a developing country like Cambodia is considered a double-edged sword. From a positive point of view, it provides a wide range of opportunities for both human resources development and economic acceleration. However, on the negative side, it creates a huge barrier for people who lack technological and computing skills to survive in the new job markets that are all connected with digitalization.

With regard to the challenges of the country to adapt to the new revolution, Cambodia's readiness for the future of production was ranked 81st for the structure of production and 91st for the driver of production among 100 countries, according to the World Economic Forum (2018). The assessment clearly shows how Cambodia is still lagging behind in advancing itself in terms of the future of production with technological integration and connectivity. Moreover, the barriers that the country has recently encountered in adapting itself to the new digital economy are the lack of infrastructure, skill mismatch, ineffective regulatory framework, financial limitations, and insufficient skills in integrating the technology into the working industry (UNDP, 2020).

As technology acts as an enabler in shaping the economy in this new revolution of Industry 4.0, some of the jobs in Cambodia such as those in the garment industry, agricultural sector, and machinery industry will soon be replaced by automated machines (Chhem et al., 2019). The replacement of human workers with automation reflected that new knowledge and skills, particularly 21st-century skills, are essential in the new era of development. Given the threat of unemployment due to Industry 4.0, more skilled workers are required to help the country to catch up with the new trend of the digital economy and labor market transformation.

Skills Needed in Industry 4.0

Despite the fact that there is a controversial debate regarding how the presence of Industry 4.0 will soon affect the current job market leading to many job losses, the technology will, in turn, give rise to many new job opportunities and strengthen the remaining jobs to fit in the new industry and make it more productive (Chhem et al., 2019). As Cambodia aspires to transform its status from a lower-middle-income country to an upper-middle income country by 2030, the need to introduce and sharpen the new skills required to adapt to the rapid changes in the labor market should be paid greater attention. The requirements of new skills in Industry 4.0, according to the “Future of Jobs” survey conducted by the World Economic Forum (2016), are related to system skills, content skills, cognitive abilities, and social skills.

With regard to the system or digital skills such as data analysis and data-based decision, most of the businesses and manufacturing industries shift its system from manual work to the more sophisticated use of IoT and big data. The skills correlated with data analysis are one of the most important and solid skills in driving most of the major working forces as it serves as a tool to store and generate useful digital information (World Economic Forum, 2016). So, when talking about data, it always comes with the understanding of AI and machine learning associated with the integration of ICT. ICT literacy learning as a part of content skills has been placed in high demand as a skill to be equipped. In the business industry, data analytics and employees’ basic knowledge of ICT not only help to retain the information of production but also improve the products and boost more innovative creations to meet customers’ demands (Geissbauer et al., 2016).

Of all the necessary skills, cognitive abilities, including creativity, logical reasoning, mathematical reasoning and visualization, and the process skills, also known as critical thinking, play a pivotal role for workers to adapt to the new labor force. Creativity is also one of the most obvious skills for people to improve in order to compete with the rise of robots and machine learning occupied with some of the jobs in the industry (Gray, 2016). As Cotet et al. (2017) point out, in the technological era, the three most important skills that facilitate the employees’ job are creativity, emotional intelligence, and proactive thinking. As the new technology will act as a tool to improve job productivity

and some of the existing jobs will soon be replaced with automated machines, the need to be more innovative in creating new skill sets is vital (Maisiri et al., 2019).

Although the requirements of new skills in the context of Industry 4.0 seem to be connected with technological and computing skills, social and soft skills still play a significant role in helping workers to be more flexible for the job transformation. Emotional intelligence skills such as communication, collaboration, and teamwork play a major role in interacting with AI and automated machines. Although robotic machines have taken most of the manual work, the need for human intervention is still significant. The increasing use of AI in the working industry to enhance productivity requires human-machine interaction involving social skills (Maisiri et al., 2019). This implies that without humans operating the machine and establishing more simplified creations in assisting the industry, automated machines and AI are nothing in producing the end products.

Conclusion

To conclude, Industry 4.0 is regarded as the most crucial aspect of Cambodia's manufacturing industry and economy. However, it can be a two-edged sword. While it creates a new opportunity for Cambodia to catch up with other countries and boost its economic growth through the integration of technology and cyber-physical systems into the workforce, it also poses threats to people in the country in terms of job losses due to the replacement of manual work with AI. Therefore, the need for the country to invest more in strengthening workers' skills to match the requirements of the future jobs in Industry 4.0 should be taken into serious consideration. To do so, there should be joint efforts from all relevant stakeholders such as the government, universities, non-governmental organizations, and development partners. To ensure Cambodians are ready for the future job market, the government needs to put in extra efforts to promote innovative research, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, creativity, and critical thinking skills by integrating them into students' learning programs and providing workers with more opportunities to be trained on skills needed for Industry 4.0.

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7. Cambodia Needs to Embrace and Invest in Bilingual Education

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Introduction

Possessing the ability to speak multiple languages will make you stand out amongst those who are only monolingual. In the century of globalization, there is an increase in international mobility, cross-cultural communications, and digitalization. The power of speaking two languages will be necessary to understand the unrelenting change in the world.

English is recognized as a global language and is used nearly everywhere around the globe. As a developing nation, Cambodia benefits from English since the language can be used as a bridge. English helps to connect the Kingdom to the latest developments of the world in various fields from social sciences to science and technology.

No doubt, Cambodia would benefit from more exposure to English. With more people speaking English, it is likely that Cambodia will become more similar to other developed nations in terms of technology transfer, trade, and development. Each Cambodian should therefore attempt to learn the language to help the entire Kingdom move forward.

Cambodia would gain immensely if there were greater improvements in the comprehension of English and technology. These two subjects would launch the nation into more connection with the world. A foreign language like English exposes anyone to new matters which are updated on the internet each day. We may use this language to learn about what happens in our country or the world, to develop our skills, to expand networking, and/or to explore something new.

Moreover, as research has shown, a person who speaks more than one language, particularly from early childhood, not only has better concentration

ability but also suffers less from brain-related diseases such as dementia and cognitive decline as they age (Perry, 2018). It was found that a bilingual brain would make one smarter (Muñoz, 2014).

Normally, bilingual people have a better chance of getting a job because they are better equipped than their monolingual counterparts in terms of the ability to communicate across languages. These bilingual people are strong communicators and tend to be good at multitasking and have an excellent memory as well as cross-cultural and social understanding.

Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Bilingualism refers to a person's skills to use two languages effectively and multilingualism is when someone can use more than two languages (Nordquist, 2020). Bilingual education refers to "education in more than one language, often encompassing more than two languages" (Negadi, 2015, p. 497). Knowing a foreign language means someone can function in the four macro skills such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

It has been found that to become completely fluent as a native speaker, one should learn a foreign language before the age of 10, and the older a person is, the more difficult it is to learn a language (Smith, 2018). However, even if one starts to learn a language at the age of 17 or 18, they are still able to understand grammar in the new language properly (Smith, 2018).

In European countries, those who speak a foreign language are the majority. According to Eurostat (2018), 65% of working-age adults in the European Union know at least one foreign language. People with the ability to communicate in multiple tongues are particularly high (more than 90%) in Sweden, Latvia, Denmark, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Finland, Malta, and Estonia (Eurostat, 2018).

The multilingual traits of the European Union promote learning and linguistic diversity across Europe. Some Europeans believe that language will unite people, rendering other cultures and countries accessible and thereby reinforcing intercultural understanding. Additionally, according to the

European Commission (n.d.), multilingualism plays a pivotal role in boosting people's employment and mobility.

With the emergence of robust Asian economic growth, the role of English is more necessary than ever for Asian nations (Goidtsnoven, 2019). The rise in the use of English might be a preparation for the future prospect of Industry 4.0. English is at the vanguard of competitive and effective business strategies (Goidtsnoven, 2019). While English is considered a global or common language, no one can deny that it can be a bridge to propel growth faster, especially in science and technology, a sector that Cambodia lags behind developed nations or other neighboring countries.

Bilingual Education in Cambodia

In 2002, UNESCO, in partnership with CARE Cambodia, initiated a bilingual education program specifically for the remote tribes in the north-eastern provinces of Cambodia which lacked access to schools (Middleborg, 2005). The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) introduced bilingual education by cooperating with NGOs to expand the implementation in the next several years. Until 2013, the government of Cambodia enacted a law to allow the use of indigenous languages in formal schooling (Dickinson, 2019). What is more important is the introduction of English into the school curriculum, starting from Grade 4 (Zein, 2017).

Bilingual education is a powerful reformation for Cambodia's education sector. Although it brings numerous benefits, it requires more effort and resources. There must be collaboration from the public to support this new system. At present, many bilingual classes only exist in affluent urban locations and are limited to other rural areas where resources are scarce.

In fact, all students should begin to learn English from primary school, preferably from Grade 1, so their skills will develop with them until the completion of high school. In this case, there must be quality teaching, so students can reach upper-intermediate levels before entering college; consequently, there is a need for more qualified English teachers, effective learning programs, adequate timetable for English classes, and learning

resources such as books and electronic devices including computers, speakers, and others relevant materials.

For rural students who have limited opportunities, unlike the students in the city, they might not be able to afford a standard private school to learn English. There should be mechanisms to support these students. There should also be qualified teachers to help rural students to achieve the same level of proficiency in English as their city-dwelling peers.

The Way Forward

Bilingual education requires many resources; however, the first way forward is to provide them with English classes beginning at primary school with quality teaching and learning. Secondly, it is important to supply more books in both Khmer and English regarding math and science, literature, ethics, history, and other relevant books. Third, increasing the library time for them is vital as it helps to develop their independent learning skills and the love of reading. Fourth, it is crucial to increase the sense of competitiveness among students, creating more programs or events in school, including reading or mathematical competitions similar to sports.

These changes would improve students' knowledge along with English skills. Therefore, when they become older or enter college, they might have enough capability to use English to help themselves to seek national or international scholarships as well as internships that require high English proficiency. They can join international programs such as conferences or competitions. They can also learn new skills in online classes on Coursera or edX.

Imagine 80 percent of Cambodian youths or students with advanced English skills by 2025 or 2030. There would be a spike in innovation, competition, betterment, and prosperity in diverse sectors of the country. This will be vital for Cambodia to achieve its ambition to become an upper-middle-income country by the next decade.

Conclusion

Bilingualism provides advantages that are far-reaching. Bilingual students can acquire cognitive, economic, and social benefits. Bilingual people are local but able to understand global issues. Bilingual classes are an impressive transformation for the Cambodian education sector, which is in need of resources and efforts to achieve a higher level of quality. I believe Cambodia cannot adopt changes to bilingual education equally and efficiently overnight, but providing English classes with quality teaching and learning for students would be the first step in the right direction.

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8. Factors to Consider When Choosing University Majors

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Entering university is considered to be one of the most important periods of our formal education journey; it can determine and shape our future during our time in university and after graduation. Therefore, choosing university majors requires careful and sufficient consideration to ensure that our time spent in university is worthwhile for our future. While some students are already certain about choosing their university majors, others still cannot decide on what majors to study in university after finishing high school. This article discusses several factors that can guide students in choosing their university majors.

First of all, our interests play a crucial role in determining what majors we want to pursue (McCammon, 2017). To put it simply, most of us would go for majors based on what we love and are interested in. For example, students that are interested in technology and computers would be likely to choose majors related to fields such as Computer Science and IT Engineering. When we choose to pursue what we are passionate about, studying would be more exciting and interesting, although it could be difficult at times (Paul, 2013). According to Harackiewicz et al. (2016), our interest is a powerful motivational tool that encourages learning and guides academic and career paths, leading to academic success. In addition, students can better prepare themselves for a rewarding career when they recognize their academic interests in high school and university.

Second, it is important to understand our abilities and look for majors that could fit those abilities (McCammon, 2017). Based on a study by Bartolj and Polanec (2012), the ability is divided into two: general ability, calculated by high school Grade Point Average (GPA) and major-specific ability, calculated by grades obtained in major-specific courses. The study indicated that higher general ability tended to lead students to choose majors related to economics,

while students with higher specific abilities were more likely to enroll in one of those majors that they were good at. For example, I did relatively well in English compared to other subjects in high school, so I decided to choose International Relations, a subject relying heavily on students' English proficiency, as my major.

Third, we should choose majors that are related to our specific career interests (McCammon, 2017). Particular majors include courses and activities that are required for a number of specific career goals. For instance, we need an engineering degree if we want to become an engineer. If we want to be a lawyer or a judge, we need to attend law school and get a law degree. Having particular career interests and studying for those interests would help us avoid skills mismatch. According to the International Labor Organization (2020), skills mismatch simply refers to a mismatch between skills and jobs. Based on models by Sattinger (1993), a worker who works in a mismatched job would not be able to maximize the use of their potential skills. As a result, with the same major, workers who work in a career that matches their major or skills tend to earn more than those working in a career that is different from their major.

Fourth, future employability is also a key factor to ponder when choosing majors (McCammon, 2017). While selecting majors in university, we tend to think about the possibility of getting a good job with those majors. Jackson and Wilton (2016) found that students' perception toward their chances of achieving employment definitely affected their satisfaction and certainty with career choices. Their study showed that greater career choice satisfaction was experienced by students whose personal qualities and skills were desired in the job market. Peou (2017) used the terms practicality, desirability and convenience to explain how Cambodian students chose university majors. Practicality is when students believe that one major "is more likely to lead to a job compared to other majors" (p. 32). Desirability is when students choose a major because they believe that it will lead them to a "dream job or appealing profession" (p. 32). Convenience is when students do not have clear career expectations and choose a major at random or based on the resources available to them.

Last but not least, the future income potential is a practical factor that should be taken into consideration, especially in terms of our salary expectations

(McCammon, 2017). Of course, this point has not been backed up by science and many people would think that we should not choose university majors just for the sake of money. Still, it is important to choose majors that could help us get high-paying jobs if our main goal is to earn a lot of money (McCammon, 2017). For instance, majors such as computer science and engineering are likely to provide us with more opportunities for landing high-paying professions like software engineering, mobile application development and database management (Half, 2020).

To conclude, students, including Cambodian students, can decide on what majors they want to choose based on the factors mentioned above. Still, there are some other factors that can influence students' decisions on choosing university majors, such as affordability, location, and reputation of the universities (Peou, 2017). It is highly recommended that students look into as many universities and majors as possible in order to have sufficient information that can help them select the most suitable majors and universities as well as avoid making wrong decisions that could waste their time and money. If students are still unable to make a clear decision even after considering all these factors, they may seek professional consultation for more information and guidance in choosing university majors.

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9. Why Should Students Study an International Relations Major?

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Introduction

In the contemporary world, modern technology and globalization have become the forces that make the world more connected and interdependent. They have shaped the cultural, political, and socio-economic aspects of society around the globe and have made the world become more convenient in terms of trade, communication, human-to-human connections, and cultural exchanges. However, they have also brought about unintentional consequences such as global warming, terrorism, poverty, rising sea levels, transnational crimes, and cyber security (Aslam et al., 2018). Addressing these problems requires attention from not only the government but also non-governmental organizations and individual citizens. Whether the global situation is getting better or worse, it is vital to acknowledge that the world is interdependent, which means that it may not be possible to understand the world's pressing problems through the regional or national lens. The rapid development of modern technology, science, and international trade, coupled with resource depletion and transnational crimes, is having a profound, sometimes unknown, impact on society, economy, and politics in manners that may not be easy to envisage (Gavin, 2018).

In the past, governments used to be autonomous agents who made decisions about military and economic issues and provided security to citizens in their respective sovereign territories. However, the emergence of the above-mentioned concerns coupled with the rise of new actors such as intergovernmental organizations (IOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and multi-national corporations (MNCs) has made state monopoly virtually obsolete (GetSmarter, 2019). As some problems require the understanding of international politics, the study of international relations (IR) has become more important because it helps equip students and new

generations with knowledge and skills to address problems in the present and future. This article seeks to explain why an IR major is of importance to students (GetSmarter, 2019).

What Is International Relations?

International Relations or IR have been defined as an interdisciplinary subject that concerns the relations and interactions between states, including their foreign policy, cooperation, peace, war, as well as the interactions between non-states actors such as IOs, NGOs, MNCs, and terrorist organizations (University Updates, n.d.). In addition, it also includes various aspects of the state such as economy, politics, society, military, sovereignty, and how they influence and shape each other (Pettinger, 2019). For example, there have been many discussions on how Cambodia should navigate its foreign policy in the world that has been influenced by the strategic rivalry between the United States and China (Leng, 2020). The discipline of IR covers a vast array of subjects as it is expected to equip students with critical thinking, analytical, and problem-solving skills that enable them to understand contemporary problems and be able to solve them.

The Relevance of International Relations to the Contemporary World

In ancient society, particularly in ancient Roman and Chinese empires, the study of politics and military science was the privilege of the patricians and the nobility (Esri, n.d.), with the belief that knowledge gives them the power of control. However, in the present time, the study of politics and the military is open to all since every citizen has a role to play in society. It is in this instance that the study of IR has gained its momentum and become an important college major that students should consider studying (DW, n.d.).

In the twenty-first century, the scope for participation in politics has grown and it has become easier to make one's voice heard. When we understand politics, we can observe and understand why governments do the things they do. For example, if we study IR, we may be able to understand why the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, is trying to develop nuclear weapons rather than let his people live prosperously with economic development and freedom. With knowledge of politics and IR, we may understand why the Cambodian

government appears not to practice strict measures vis-à-vis Chinese migrants in Cambodia even though many of them have committed crimes and been accused of money laundering (DW, n.d.).

In addition, as a citizen of our own country, whether we know it or not, we engage in politics every day. Aristotle said more than two thousand years ago that “Man is by nature a political animal.” According to this dictum, only gods and animals can survive without the confines of political influence. Aristotle stated that as we live in a society and interact with other people, our lives are interdependent. We pay taxes to the government, and in exchange, the government provides us with security and makes decisions on our behalf. Sometimes, we might not be content with a particular decision as it may not represent our interests because we are not involved in the decision-making process. This is just an example of the many aspects of politics in society (OLL, n.d.).

Why Study International Relations?

Studying IR provides students with many opportunities to join and participate in volunteer work and movements that aim to solve social issues, such as gender inequality, social injustice, climate change, and human rights violations since IR students tend to be better informed about these issues. As they gain knowledge about international relations and diplomacy, they can work for the government and represent the country on the international stage (Aslam et al., 2018). So, studying IR could give us opportunities to climb the ladder of power and shape the country’s policy. Even if we are not interested in working for the government, there are also many jobs that IR graduates can do, such as teachers, writers, analysts, advisors, and researchers.

Moreover, studying IR can help students to understand the politics and economy of society as a whole. They can gain a deeper understanding of peace and war as they would study history, political theories, economics, international organizations, and other aspects of international politics. IR students are often required to do research that involves a lot of reading and analysis, so it is necessary that they should keep themselves informed about the world around them and make rational and wise decisions. Besides mastering these transferable knowledge and skills, IR students also can improve other

skills, such as research, communication, and interpersonal skills (Aslam et al., 2018).

Conclusion

Studying an international relations major would give students the opportunity to work in various sectors such as research institutions, media outlets, government ministries, and NGOs. However, in order to grasp those opportunities, students need to equip themselves with other technical knowledge and skills such as computing, public speaking, and language skills, as well as soft skills such as communication and interpersonal skills.

However, there remain challenges when it comes to studying IR in some countries, particularly in developing countries where freedom of speech and expression is limited. Moreover, the study of IR is based on Western ideologies and concepts. For instance, political theories, such as liberalism, realism, and constructivism and the concept of state are very Western because they were developed in Western countries and have ignored the historical and political concepts in other regions such as Asia. Another problem is the lack of literature in languages other than English. So, if we want to get access to a vast array of documents, we need to master the English language first (Acharya, 2017).

In conclusion, if we are passionate about political science and want to work as a political researcher, an ambassador, or a diplomat, studying IR is the right choice. However, while studying, we should try to engage ourselves in volunteer work and internships at different NGOs, companies, and government departments. Such engagement could help us to improve our technical knowledge and skills. It is also crucial to read and write often because they can help us to improve our analytical skills and our understanding of international politics.

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10. Why Failing to Prepare Means Preparing to Fail

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Introduction

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the word “prepare” means making or getting something or someone ready for something that will happen in the future or expecting something will occur and be equipped for it. People who fail to develop goals quickly generally lose their way. Since they do not establish their goals, they give up when facing life challenges (MBA Rendezvous, 2019). All successful people know the importance of preparation; athletes, musicians, and businesspeople all know the significance of sufficient planning.

According to Benjamin Franklin, “by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail” (MBA Rendezvous, 2019). This is true because when goals are not set in life, the prospect for success tends to be slim.

“Fail to prepare, prepare to fail” is a remarkable quote to help reiterate what is necessary to achieve any goal. Also, anyone can use this saying to stay attentive and to avoid being easily distracted.

The quote is particularly useful in a situation where we are faced with an uncertain future. To be successful, we need to prepare; this might involve learning, practicing, making, or planning something (Welch, 2020). If we do not complete the preparation adequately, we may not succeed; hence, we are preparing to fail. What it means is “by failing to prepare, you are setting yourself up to fail” or “by failing to prepare, you are creating a situation in which you’re likely to fail.” (Welch, 2020).

Why Preparation Matters?

Things happen, sometimes we expect it, and sometimes we do not (Philosiblog, 2013). Success only comes to those with determination and concrete goals. However, successful people may have short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals (MBA Rendezvous, 2019). The difference between these types of goals is our level of preparedness. If we are prepared, we can make things work out for the best. If we are not ready, our odds of success or even of surviving the situation are considerably diminished (Philosiblog, 2013).

Bobby Unser once said, "Success is where preparation and opportunity meet," and Alexander Graham Bell thought something similar. As Bell believed, "before anything else, preparation is the key to success" (Barnard, n.d.). Both men agree that success is an outcome of sufficient preparation.

It is essential that no matter how skilled, talented, or knowledgeable we are in our respective fields, we must spend time preparing (Mayberry, 2016). We need to prepare for the next step, the next goal, or the next big moment when it arises because who knows when it will come (Mayberry, 2016). The biggest regrets are mostly from individuals who failed to grasp a window of opportunity because they were not prepared for the exact moment, be it a job interview or an exam. Nothing is worse than feeling your dreams close enough to touch, yet they slip through your fingers and never return.

People frequently mention their wishes for riches, owning a business, driving an expensive car, or living in a large estate. The list of desires goes on and on. Those who have these dreams may fail to reach their goals if they do not prepare to succeed. They do not want to put in the time and effort. Everyone is looking to get rich quickly, but those opportunities do not exist. Even when people win the lottery, they can become broke because they did not prepare to handle that quantity of money. Those people, somehow, do not know how to manage their fortune, and they cannot invest and save. So, a massive prospect like that can fade away into nothing. Deep down, we all know there is no quick way to become wealthy instantly. It takes time and good preparation to accumulate a vast sum of riches.

Furthermore, success takes time, discipline, thought, efforts, research, organization, and even meditation. Preparedness is an investment in yourself, your product, and your business, and those who are adequately prepared are usually noticed by others. If you want to create possibilities, prime yourself for success and capitalize on each opportunity. It would be best if you began to prepare as if every day presented unique chances but maintained a preparedness lifestyle (Mayberry, 2016).

The quote by Benjamin Franklin above means that if we do not prepare, then we are setting ourselves up for failure. Conversely, if we do prepare, then we are setting ourselves up for success. So, do not take away your chance before it is given by forgetting to prepare for reasonable circumstances.

When I was in the first year of my bachelor's degree, I applied to volunteer for the first time. I passed the initial round and then moved to the interview round. Honestly, things were simple for me, and I did not prepare much for the interview because I did not know how to prepare. Moreover, I felt that the interview was not difficult because they would ask general questions. I was not well prepared. When the final day came, I went to the interview without any preparation. I was puzzled by almost every question. The reason for this was because I had many ideas bouncing in my head, but I could not find the right words. My thoughts did not flow well because I did not prepare. As a result, I failed the interview. I was not setting myself up for success.

As a result of this failure, I realized that I would have a better outcome if I had prepared before the interview. I believe If we know about a particular event ahead of time and choose not to prepare for it, our chances of succeeding are very slim. We should not cheat ourselves by being lazy. If we have an interview, we should always be preparing for one of two things: preparing for the interview or preparing to fail by failing to prepare.

Conclusion

To sum up, preparation is crucial, and we should always prepare for events in life, be it an exam, a sporting event, or a business venture, to set ourselves up for success. It is, no doubt, true that if we do not prepare, then we are preparing to fail. Thus, the quote "fail to prepare, prepare to fail" helps remind us how

valuable it is to prepare thoroughly for our goals. This quote should be a part of our daily routine.

I believe that preparation is integral to success in any field or any situation. We need a plan to accomplish our goals, and if we are hardworking and prepared in advance, we will succeed in our ventures. Preparation is the key to success. Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.

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11. Why University Students Should Not Rely on One-Night Policy

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Procrastination has become a typical phenomenon among many students around the world. To put it simply, students tend to put off their work until the last minute of the deadline. Procrastination occurs due to various reasons, including laziness, poor time management, and personal issues. This can lead students to pull all-nighters, or in other words, to resort to a one-night policy. Going for the one-night policy seems to be the only way out for those who have very little time left to finish their tasks on time. Typically, it is okay to stay up all night once in a while to complete our unfinished work, but if we continue to rely on this policy, it will definitely take a toll on our physical and mental health as well as our academic performance. This short article argues why university students should not rely on the one-night policy.

First, pulling all-nighters could worsen our health and physical condition. Staying up all night makes us sleep-deprived. It can pose serious threats to our physical wellbeing. We would most likely feel exhausted and have very little energy to go through our day. As a result, we are vulnerable to sickness and diseases more often than usual. According to Kimberly Fenn, Associate Professor of Psychology at Michigan State University, sleep deprivation could heavily affect people's eating behavior and glucose metabolism. Levels of ghrelin, a hormone signaling hunger to our body, rise, whereas levels of leptin, a hormone signaling fullness, decrease. As a result, we are likely to feel hungry more easily, potentially making us crave for more food intake to feel full. Our body tends to metabolize glucose less effectively as well (Petty, 2019).

Second, apart from what happens inside our body, our outer appearance is also significantly affected by sleep deprivation. According to a study reported in www.huffpost.com, for people suffering from sleep deprivation, their faces are in more weary conditions and tend to have redder and more swollen eyes, darkness under eye circles, more wrinkles, and droopier eyelids than normal

faces of people receiving sufficient sleep (HuffPost, 2013). Additionally, our skin could age more quickly, and its ability to revitalize itself from sun exposure is weakened (Estée Lauder Companies, 2013). Not being able to sleep the entire night can also increase pain sensitivity, which could induce acute pain or exacerbate chronic pain (Sun, 2020).

Third, according to Sun (2020), resorting to the one-night policy most of the time could negatively impact our mentality as much as our physical wellbeing. When we are sleep-deprived, many types of thinking and brain functions are adversely impacted. This is not to mention that our attention span and concentration are also compromised. Sleep deprivation hinders emotional intelligence along with how we comprehend and react to our surroundings. Furthermore, it impairs mental place keeping, the ability to adhere to a sequence of instructions or tasks, as well as limits innovative thinking and inventive problem-solving.

Fourth, spending a night with no sleep harms our memory. Sun (2020) further adds that sleep deprivation reduces the momentary memory bank known as working memory, which is required for our temporary needs. A research study by National Center for Biotechnology Information, reported in Sun's (2020) article, found that sleep-deprived people experienced a greater risk of producing faulty memories, which undermined their longer-term recall of valuable information even after they got back to the normal sleeping habit. In addition, Sun notes that sleep deprivation could ruin our mood and behavior. When we are unable to get an adequate amount of sleep, our mood drastically changes for the worse. For instance, we would quickly become angry, irritated, and depressed, which could dramatically alter our behavior. We would also act less rationally as we lose the ability to think and reflect properly. Having sleepless nights, moreover, contributes to an increase in the level of the hormone cortisol, a type of hormone that is related to stress. Lack of sleep is also tied to anxiety, which could negatively influence both mood and behavior (Sun, 2020).

Fifth, adopting a one-night policy as a way to complete our tasks is likely to jeopardize our academic performance, thus resulting in a decline in grades. In my opinion, when we are in a rush and put everything together all at once without checking and organizing them properly, the quality of our work may

not be good enough to receive high grades. Obviously, leaving our tasks to the last minute is not really a good idea (Need Assignment Help, 2016). We are prone to make many mistakes while completing our tasks in a hurry, such as using false information as well as failing to check for errors and misspellings. Spending more time to work on our tasks through careful research and proper preparation is essential to obtain high academic performance.

Sixth, sleep deprivation affects our brain functions, making us lose the ability to think and focus (Petty, 2019). Therefore, we may not be able to absorb as much knowledge as we normally do, which may significantly and negatively affect our grades. On some occasions, we may even miss out on essential lectures by dozing off in class because of the lack of sleep. Thatcher's (2007, cited in Hitti, 2007) survey of 120 college students found that students who stayed up all night to study were more likely to get lower grade point averages (GPAs) than those who slept adequately. Based on the survey, 60% of the students claimed that they relied on the one-night policy at least once while studying in college; they were also reported to receive lower GPAs than their well-rested fellow students.

Overall, the one-night policy seems to do more harm than good, so university students, including Cambodian university students, should try to avoid it. They should not depend on this policy as a habit. To stay away from the one-night policy, there are several methods we can put into use. We can use self-motivation strategies by rewarding ourselves when we complete our tasks early. We can also adopt a self-reminder approach by constantly reminding ourselves about the consequences we would face when using the one-night policy. We should try to explore and use any other method that is more suitable and beneficial for ourselves. Refraining ourselves from pulling all-nighters and starting to complete our work as early as possible will help us develop good studying habits, which is vital for achieving better academic grades and performance.

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12. Mental Health: Why Does It Matter?

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Introduction

Nowadays, there have been many discussions revolving around the issues of how important mental health is. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), many people are experiencing mental health problems; approximately 800,000 people commit suicide every year – around 36 people a day (WHO, 2019).

Cambodia is also a country where many people are known to have mental health problems, according to many sources. It can be observed that there were many cases of suicide in recent years, especially among young people. TPO Cambodia (n.d.) stated that Cambodia is a country where the population is at a high risk of poor mental health. It added:

It is estimated that about 40% of Cambodians suffer from mental health and psychological problems. Numerous studies document high levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Cambodia, and the suicide rate has also been proven to be much higher than the worldwide average. (para. 1)

Mental health is defined as a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. In other words, mental health refers to cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being (Felmen, 2020). It is all about how people think, feel, and behave. People sometimes use the term “mental health” to mean the absence of a mental disorder (Felmen, 2020).

Our mental health problems can be a sign of mental illness. Mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety disorders, have a significant effect on our thought and behavior and may also affect our ability to interact with others (Mayo Clinic, n.d.). Fortunately, mental ailments can ordinarily be treated or managed.

No doubt, we all have our ups and downs; if we feel we are not adapting, the first thing we will be able to do is to open up our problems to others and ask for help.

The Importance of Mental Health

Mental Health Affects Physical Health

Mental illness is the silent killer, and it can take one's life just like any other diseases. The mind and the body are associated. Numerous mental afflictions cause stress, which brings down the immune system (American Psychological Association [APA], 2006). This implies more frequent ailments. For instance, depression can lead to suicidal thoughts if it is not timely treated. Our health will not be balanced if we only focus on physical health (APA, 2006).

Stress and anxiety can gradually damage our physical health. According to Bhandari (2020), worry causes the body to release stress hormones that speed up our heart rate and breathing, raise our blood sugar, and send more blood to our arms and legs. Over time, this can affect our heart, blood vessels, muscles, and other systems. Thus, it is vital to understand mental illness and treat it as soon as possible.

Mental Health Affects Daily Lives

Clearly, as our mental health improves, so do our daily lives. Whether our mental well-being is bad or good, it is still a vital part of our daily lives. Therefore, a mental health problem can cause us to feel hopeless, sad, and worthless. Our relationships may suffer. Our performance in any situation such as school, work, or other social activities may be bound to decline.

We may also lose interest in things we once enjoyed. Task completion and time management may fall apart. It may also become difficult for us to concentrate. If we have a mental illness, our daily work will be affected. For example, when experiencing severe anxiety or stress, we might find it difficult to sleep, focus on work, and even do simple things (Shah, 2018).

Mental Health Creates Psychosomatic Symptoms

Sometimes, we felt extreme pain in any part of our body but could not find any of the actual physical symptoms. While such pain may not necessarily have any physical reason, it may be caused by our emotional or stress-related issues called “psychosomatic illness” (Ferguson, 2020).

As can be expected, having good mental health is of vital importance for everyone because it helps us to get through the day easily so that we can form healthy relationships with others and enjoy the life we need (Xiong, 2018).

Tips to Improve Mental Health

It is easy to feel overwhelmed in terms of anxiety, stress, and other psychological problems in light of an uncertain situation. We can improve our psychological strengths by cantering on the side of things we can control. Mental health is also critical for each person, so here are some tips to take care of our mental well-being to prevent mental sickness.

1) Open up our feeling

We all have times when we feel down, stressed, or anxious. However, most of these feelings will pass us by, but sometimes they can also develop into a serious state of mind. We should always open up about how we feel inside when things do not go our way and find someone we can trust to listen to our problems. Say it out if it can help us to feel better.

2) Keep in touch

Strong family ties and supportive friends can help us deal with the stresses of life. Undoubtedly, friends and family can make us feel less lonely because they can offer different perspectives from things inside our head, plus they will surely be our supporters to keep us strong (Mental Health Foundation, n.d.).

3) Go to bed on time

We should attempt to go to bed at a regular time each day because if we do not have enough sleep, it will affect our mood. As Harteneck (2015)

pointed out, sleep deprivation has a critically negative effect on our mood. So, we should have a specific bedtime.

4) Exercise

Exercise has many benefits, not only for our physical health but also for our mental health. It improves our mental health by reducing anxiety, depression, and negative mood and improving our self-esteem and cognitive function (Health Direct, 2019).

5) Meditation

Meditation makes us feel calmer, less thinking about negative things; it will improve our mental health. So, we should do it regularly, at least once a week (Medline Plus, n.d.).

6) Staying positive

It is essential to have a positive outlook. Staying positive does not mean that we never feel negative; we just do not want those emotions to take over us. We should take a break from negative information, go out, and have fun with friends, use social media to reach out for support, and feel connected to others (Medline Plus, n.d.).

7) Be yourself

Some people do not think about what they love or want. Instead, they aim to do things just to please people around them. It would be a mistake to think that this way makes us happy. Conversely, it only proves that our happiness depends on what others think or say. This way of thinking will easily affect our mental health. So please focus more on your feelings, love yourself more, and stop caring too much about what others think of you.

Conclusion

Mental health is essential at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Over the course of our life, if we experience mental health problems, our thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected.

Mental illness is common to all people, whether severe or mild, depending on each person. If our minds are healthy and strong, the problem can be solved quickly. For some people, it comes and goes. For others, it may stay on longer.

That is why we all need to take care of our mental health to avoid any serious mental illnesses. When we have good mental well-being, we can make the most out of our potential, cope with life, and play a full part in our family, friends, workplace, and beyond.

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13. Tips to Improve English Speaking Skills

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Introduction

Using a universal language, English, as a means of communication between one another, is common nowadays. According to Encyclopedia (2020), the world's most spoken language is English; it is spoken by approximately 500 million to 1.8 billion people worldwide. Around 300 to 400 million people speak English as a first language, and the rest speak English as a second or foreign language. This is one of the reasons that the number of foreigners learning English keeps increasing. Regarding its wide range of use in many fields such as science, technology, education, business, finance and banking, tourism, and medicine, among others, English is being used in many more fields. Moreover, English can be the mode of communication officially used in business meetings and other international forums (Rao, 2019).

Consequently, many people study English as their second or foreign language because of the need for communication and other purposes. Therefore, improving our English speaking is something that we should endeavor to do. This article first addresses the need to improve our English speaking and then discusses some key strategies to improve it.

Why Should We Improve Our English Speaking?

Firstly, English is needed for communication either with native English speakers or with those who speak English as their second or foreign language. Students or workers who go overseas even need English more than ever to be able to communicate with other people. English allows us to communicate across borders, cultures, and languages. It is a global lingua franca; therefore, the ability to speak English is vital.

Secondly, through English speaking, we can express ourselves and share our opinions and ideas for different purposes. Good English-speaking skills increase the chance for job opportunities. As Leong and Ahmadi (2017) pointed out:

The significance of speaking is indicated with the integration of the other language skills. Speaking helps learners develop their vocabulary and grammar skills and then better their writing skill. Students can express their emotions, ideas; say stories; request; talk, discuss, and show the various functions of language. Speaking is of vital importance outside the classroom. Therefore, language speakers have more opportunities to find jobs in different organizations and companies. (p. 35)

Thirdly, speaking is linked with fluency. To have a nice flow of conversation with people who do not speak our first language or mother tongue, our English speaking needs to be fluent. Who wants to hesitate and frequently pause while talking to someone. It is embarrassing, and the person on the other side might lose interest in continuing the conversation. A forceful ending might occur. Therefore, it is crucial to improve our English-speaking skills.

Tips for Improving English Speaking Skills

Speaking is never an easy thing to deal with. It requires constant practice. Below are some of the useful tips for improving English speaking skills.

Talk

Starting to talk is the first crucial step to improve speaking skills. If none of the words is coming out, how do we know precisely what to improve? It is never too late to start; the first few words might sound small, but they are necessary for something bigger. So, try to talk as much as possible.

Take It Easy and Be Confident

“I feel stressed when someone in my class speaks English fluently,” said a respondent in a research study by Suchona and Sadia (2019). If we are under pressure when speaking English, we should remember to have faithful trust in ourselves and take a deep breath, and the pressure will be lessened. Once we speak with confidence, our speech turns out to be unique and interesting. The

relaxation can be shown on our face, which affects the audiences' moods and concentrations.

Learn from Our Mistakes

The despondency and sense of failure are caused by extreme anxiety growing from personality constructs such as anxiety, inhibition, and risk taking (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). People make mistakes, and no one is perfect. We are human; there is no one to blame for the mistakes we create unintentionally. It is important to make changes by learning from mistakes, find the leading causes, and try not to repeat the same mistakes.

Listen to Native Speakers, Watch English Movies, or Sing English Songs

Aside from entertainment, watching English movies is one of the effective strategies for improving accent and intonation as we have the chance to listen to native speakers. While watching our favorite series, we can imitate the actors' speech, focusing on their expressions, pronunciation, stress, pitch, and tone. Likewise, while music can lift our mood up and down, we can take advantage of it to improve our speaking. The technique is to enjoy the music and sing along with it. It helps us to pick up the correct pronunciation as we replay our favorite songs from time to time.

Overcome the Fear

The humiliation of being among the weak group inside the classroom often leads students to become silent during class activities (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). It is about overcoming the fear by using self-encouragement to remind and comfort ourselves that it is never wrong to share opinions. Be brave and try to reduce the negativity from thinking that others are better. Do not be afraid of showing our own ability. Rise up above our fear.

Record Our Voice

Sometimes when we speak, we tend to neglect our own voice. To have a good accent like a native speaker, recording our voice helps identify what needs to be changed and improved.

Conclusion

English is widely spoken around the globe, prompting people to learn it as a second or foreign language to meet the need for communication and other purposes. Improving our English-speaking ability requires perseverance and consistent practice. The aforementioned tips may be helpful for enhancing this important skill. However, as people have their own preferences, it is a matter of what suits them best. There are plenty of other tips out there on the internet. We need to find what works best and then try to use it to our own advantage. Any tip works depending on how frequently the user applies it, and the effectiveness of the tip differs from one person to another.

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14. Five Useful Tips for Exam Success

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As students, we are regularly tested for our knowledge. We are required to take many exams, from the minor ones such as quizzes and midterm exams to those major ones that determine our fate, such as entrance exams and final exams. Failing exams is never a pleasant thing to experience, and we all want to avoid that. However, not everyone knows how to better prepare themselves for exams. This article suggests some essential tips that students can use to successfully get through exams.

First, to sufficiently prepare ourselves for upcoming exams, it is important to start the revision process as early as possible. We should note down how many exams we will have and what lessons we need to revise, and then we can start organizing our study schedule (Humanitas University, 2017). Early revision is very beneficial for effective exam preparation. We would have enough time to go through notes and other crucial study materials diligently without having to feel rushed, helping to reduce the amount of stress we face (Rogers, 2020). Leaving everything until the last minute is never a promising approach for exam preparation as it would do more harm than good and make things even messier to manage (Humanitas University, 2017).

Second, setting a clear study routine for ourselves as well as organizing our study space can enhance our comprehension and absorption of knowledge needed for exams (Humanitas University, 2017). It would be great to keep our study space tidy and spacious and stay away from anything that can distract or sidetrack our focus, such as phones and loud music (Busch, 2016). Making ourselves comfortable in our study space can also help us concentrate better on revision (Humanitas University, 2017). Moreover, being able to manage our study schedule well can contribute to productive study outcomes as well. According to Kearns and Gardiner (2007), successful study habits and strategies are attributed to good time management. From my personal experience, sticking to scheduled study patterns with specific goals for each review session,

plus keeping myself motivated during the revision, could help me learn more effectively.

Third, taking a regular break during revision could help our brain to maintain the ability to focus (Humanitas University, 2017). Studying for long hours without a break is not the way to go since our memory would deteriorate from trying to memorize and understand too much information at once. A study by Ariga and Lleras (2011) showed that short breaks from a task could drastically increase one's ability to concentrate on that task for much longer. In the study, the participants were asked to perform a 50-minute task. As a result, for many of those who worked on the task nonstop, their performance dramatically dropped over time. On the other hand, there was no decline in the performance of those who were allowed to have two short breaks from the task.

Fourth, organizing study groups can be useful in helping us to prepare for exams (Humanitas University, 2017). Group studies are great for exchanging knowledge and helping each other learn. Chiriac's (2014) study of 210 university students found that 97% of them acknowledged that working in groups promoted learning, either in collaborative abilities, academic knowledge, or both. They also stated that they could learn many things when working in groups rather than working individually. Similarly, Petress (2004) claimed that group study could enhance students' intellectual abilities when conducted efficiently as it could inspire interest and raise confidence. For me, studying in groups was beneficial when I was preparing for exams in high school and at university. One of the benefits was that I could ask someone to explain the points I did not understand and share what I understood with others, which helped me remember better.

Lastly, it is a good idea to find and practice past exams if possible (Humanitas University, 2017). This method has been used by many Cambodian teachers to prepare their students for major exams, especially for Grade 9 and 12 national examinations. Students are given exams from previous years to practice, which could help them understand the general format of the exams and figure out what to focus on during the revision. From my own experience, this method did help me in several ways. For example, I was able to familiarize myself with the exam format and learn how to divide time for each section based on the level of difficulty and scores given. Jain (2013) explained that many examiners

do not usually come up with different question types every year, so once we have practiced several past exams, there are good possibilities that we would be familiar with some questions in the exam papers.

To sum up, the tips mentioned above could turn out to be useful for those who are preparing for any upcoming exams. Nonetheless, it would be even better to figure out what methods and study patterns work best for us. Preparing for exams can be a time-consuming and exhausting process, but if we try our best to study with proper and effective methods, the outcome will be worth every effort. It is also necessary to take care of our health to ensure that it is in good condition so that we can perform to the fullest of our potential and abilities during exams.

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PART II:

**YOUTH'S PERSPECTIVES ON
THE ROLE OF EDUCATION**

15. Why is Early Childhood Education Important for Cambodia?

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Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in contributing to the development of any country by strengthening the quality of human resources. In Cambodia, the education system has seen a steady improvement in terms of quality. The formulation of the Education Strategic Plan in 2014, focusing on emphasizing equitable access to education, strengthening curriculum quality, and stimulating educators' interest in high-quality education, has made a significant impact on education as a whole (McCartney, 2017). The transformation has captured the attention of concerned stakeholders, including students, teachers, and educational institutions. Despite the recent improvement, Cambodia's education system is still lagging behind in many areas compared to the education system in other countries in the region (see Heng, 2020). The lack of support in learning, low quality in teaching and learning environment, less investment in improving educational curriculum, and inequitable access to schooling are some of the major concerns confronting Cambodia's education system, causing many dropouts (UNICEF Cambodia, 2018).

The Need to Focus on Early Childhood Education

To meet the target of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), namely quality education by 2030, a joint effort from all stakeholders is required to substantially improve education at all levels. Greater attention needs to be paid to each stage of education to discover the root cause of the many problems facing the educational system in Cambodia. Despite the fact that around 43% of children aged from three to five were enrolled in preschool between 2017 and 2018, 55% of adolescent students remained out of school (UNICEF Cambodia, 2018). Many students still lag behind in terms of learning as almost 27% of

grade 3 students were not able to produce any words during a dictation test (UNICEF Cambodia, 2018). According to PISA-D national report, only 10% of students at the age of 15 performed well in reading, mathematics, and science while their counterparts could not reach the baseline level of proficiency in all the three domains, reflecting the limited quality of learning and teaching the early years of schooling (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport [MoEYS], 2018). The surface of the issue can be traced back to the early stage of education that does not concentrate much on the significance of learning basic literacy and numeracy. Hence, the role of early childhood education as the foundation of lifelong learning should be given more attention in the Cambodian education context.

What is Early Childhood Education?

The principal function of early childhood education (ECE) is to build a strong foundation to bridge children's lifelong learning journey. This indicates a need to be explicit about what is exactly meant by early childhood education. According to a definition provided by Kim and Umayahara (2010), ECE at the global level is the overarching observation and attention given to the kids from birth to the age of eight. The term ECE is used by Rao and Pearson (2009) to refer to the early stage of brain development that brings high prospects for learning enhancement. This definition highlights the importance that children can purely understand things even from the early stage of life.

The suggested definition, however, varies from one country to another. In Cambodia, the services of ECE provided to all children to get access to education equally start from birth up to six years of age. The prioritization is on home-based care programs and community preschools (MoEYS, 2010). The objectives of ECE in the recent Education Strategic Planning 2019-2023 are to expand equitable and inclusive ECE for all, intensify the quality of ECE standards, and consolidate ECE management (MoEYS, 2019). Despite an array of definitions, ECE is required to be progressive. More attention needs to be paid to pave the way for education in the later stages.

The Significant Role of Early Childhood Education

To achieve the expected outcomes of advancing the quality education system in Cambodia, all stages of schooling should be sharpened, especially the early childhood education. As ECE performs a vital role in education at the early stage, it is contemplated as a fundamental instrument of learning. ECE builds a concrete foundation for children to gain an understanding of the basic knowledge of literacy and numeracy for future learning. ECE allows children to interact with other kids to enhance communication and cooperation, play to maintain physical health, and create something through imagination to develop their growth. The early childhood services, moreover, encourage children to explore the world around them and enable them to possess the experience of autonomous learning (European Commission, 2019). Taking all of these into account, ECE is understood as the most significant period for children to absorb basic skills and knowledge.

At their early phase of development, children like a blank paper can learn anything easily and quickly. As the brain of younger ages develops rapidly, inputs in early years and adequate support in nurturing their learning will be a great asset to prepare them for the next levels of education. Early learning also fosters children to be more ready and familiar with the school environment and enhances their cognitive development (Aboud, 2006). Likewise, as Fleming (2019) points out, children's growth in terms of physicality, mentality, and social well-being can shape how they will turn into adults. Thus, children who acquire ECE in the preschool or home-based program are more likely to be more familiar with basic academic learning. In contrast, children who do not receive ECE seem to be slow to catch up with their peers (Fleming, 2019). This indicates how ECE contributes to the future learning of children by serving as a cornerstone for acquiring basic knowledge and skills.

Another important role of ECE is that it serves as a tool to enhance access to education. Inclusive ECE is crucial to ensure that children have a sense of belonging in the society by engaging and learning with their peers (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017). However, in Cambodia, the limitation of transmitting knowledge to students derives from the inequitable education access for children. Despite the fact that some privileged children have more opportunities to receive more care in terms of

early childhood services either at kindergarten or childcare centers, the vulnerable majority, including those from rural areas and low socio-economic families, are still encountering the challenges to acquiring the ECE services simply due to poverty and difficulty in attending schools. Due to this, it is hard for disadvantaged children to catch up with their peers, and they may feel less confident or insecure in the later stages of education. Therefore, efforts should be made to narrow the educational inequality and the widening income gap.

A number of research studies have indicated that early childhood development shapes students' attitudes toward studying and fosters success in future learning (see Reynolds et al., 2018). In addition, children who receive quality ECE tend to be more familiar with the society due to the opportunity to receive early socialization with other children, teachers, and the learning environment around them. This significant aspect of early learning helps students to be more courageous, confident, and enthusiastic at school. Cunha and Heckman (2010) demonstrated that ECE not only boosts children's academic performance but also strengthens their behavioral development. Moreover, children who receive the ECE services at preschool or home-based programs are likely to be more ready to progress in their studies and enter the next phase of learning than their peers.

Conclusion

As the world is moving forward fast, Cambodia needs to catch up in terms of education quality. Among the different stages of educational development, early childhood education lays a solid foundation and serves as the most prominent element in facilitating the learning process of children. Thus, given the significant benefits of ECE, more investment should be increased and directed to this early phase of education in order to ensure that all children are provided with quality and inclusive education. To make sure that no child is left behind, disadvantaged children from poor families must be supported to receive an equitable education. Joint efforts and firm commitment by all relevant stakeholders to improve access to ECE are vital as they will contribute to facilitating and enhancing the quality of education in Cambodia.

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16. The Role of Buddhist Pagodas in Supporting Education in Cambodian Society

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Cambodian Education Forum

Since ancient times, Buddhism has played a vital role in education in Cambodian society. Even after the arrival of the French educational system, the role of Buddhist pagodas in supporting education in Cambodia has remained crucial. After the first modern school, called the French Language School of the Protectorate, was built in 1873 (Glass, 1995), more schools have been developed in Cambodia. According to the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS), there are 12,889 public schools, including primary, secondary, and high schools, that have been built in the Kingdom (MoEYS, 2017). Despite these growing numbers of institutions using modern education systems, the importance of Buddhist monasteries in Cambodian education remains.

As Buddhism has been integrated into Khmer culture and society, Buddhist monks have played an integral part in society, particularly in education. In each festival and ceremony, Buddhist monks are ritually invited to preach the Dharma to gatherings of 20 to 30 people or more (Ross, 1987). The teaching is in the form of advising and involves morality, social values, culture, and religious beliefs. Though the learning is not like any formal education with a clear timeline and curriculum, it is conducive for laypeople to absorb knowledge (Soung, 2018). They always pay attention to and respect the Buddhist monks' highly cherished lessons. If the onlookers pay enough attention, it will help liberate them from ignorance and worldly desire, ultimately helping them to become enlightened. The teachings can help mostly older people to absorb knowledge about religions, cultures, and history. More importantly, it is easily accessible to all citizens, and it has contributed knowledge regarding religion, culture, and moral values to older generations of Cambodian people who, in their youthhood, were troubled by prolonged civil war and not fortunate enough to receive a formal education. Though the

education provided by Buddhist monks may not contribute much to the development of human resources needed for the Cambodian labor market, particularly in terms of addressing the skills gap and lack of skilled workers, the teachings have raised social value and morality in the Kingdom (Chan, 2010).

In the past, most Cambodian scholars and leaders were trained and educated in pagodas. Buddhist pagodas have supported the poor and unprivileged Cambodians to pursue education, especially higher education (Im, 2012). Currently, monasteries give accommodation, food, support, and education to nearly 60,000 monks in 5,000 pagodas around Cambodia. Samdech Chuon Nath, Prime Minister Hun Sen, and even King Norodom Sihanouk were ordained and lived in Buddhist monasteries (Mydans, 1998). At present, pagodas still play an essential role in providing education to those who cannot afford private education. Many Cambodians from less privileged backgrounds have chosen to become Buddhist monks or pagoda boys to seek shelter, food, and education. Though not all people from low socioeconomic backgrounds choose to become a monk, the Buddhist temples have helped enhance Cambodia's education in many ways (Martin, 2015).

As there are around 565 Buddhist schools with approximately 17,000 students, pagoda-based education plays a supplementary role in enhancing education in Cambodia (Adams, 2012). Additionally, Buddhist schools offer scholarships to outstanding students to encourage hard work. For instance, 600 students participated in an exam for a scholarship to study at Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University in 2018 (Fresh News, 2018). Education offered in Buddhist schools does not differ much from that offered in public schools or universities as it includes common subjects such as engineering, science, medicine, and health, among others (see uniRank, n.d.).

The Buddhist temples are not only for monks, so ordinary people can also come to live in the pagoda and pursue education. Particularly in Phnom Penh, as accommodation and living expenditure are expensive, poor people often rely on pagodas to study in Phnom Penh (Im, 2012). According to Chea Ly, Secretary-General of Khmeng Wat Association, there are currently around 4,000 students living in the pagodas in Phnom Penh (May, 2008). The number, excluding monks who enroll in public schools, is equal to 2% of Cambodian

university students studying in 2009-2013 (MoEYS, n.d.). The figure indicates that Buddhist pagodas still play a vital role in Cambodian public education, especially for people with low socioeconomic status.

Buddhist temples are not the only shelter for monks and *kmeng wat* (i.e., pagoda boys or men), but they are also an important source of knowledge and architectural styles necessary for research and innovation (Sassoon, 2017). For instance, some of the temples in Phnom Penh, such as Wat Ounalom and Wat Langka, were constructed in 1443 and 1442, respectively, long before French colonialism. Despite their old age, some of their paintings, sculptures, and decorative arts remain intact (Wilson, 2016).

The Buddhist temples are vaults for knowledge, including history, ancient social and legal systems, and traditions across generations. The information was inscribed in *sleuk rith* (palm-leaf manuscripts), considered valuable documents. Leng Kok An, the director of Sleuk Rith Institute, said that most of the palm-leaf manuscripts are over 100 years old and hold knowledge of Khmer history, culture, and social interaction from before French colonialism (Taing, 2019). Moreover, most of the palm-leaf manuscripts have been stockpiled and are held at Sleuk Rith Institute in Wat Ounalom. According to Chen Chanratana, an archaeologist and historian, the technique of inscribing texts on the *sleuk rith* was an indispensable part of Cambodia's traditional education, allowing people to transfer skills and information regarding the social and legal systems for generations. He said that "in the past, young Cambodian people went to the pagoda to study, that's why these manuscripts were made and kept at the pagoda all over the countries" (Taing, 2019, para. 10).

Overall, even though there are discussions of the decline of Buddhism and the growing importance of modern education in Cambodia (Black, 2017), it is still noteworthy to acknowledge that Buddhist temples play a complementary role in enhancing Cambodian education. During the Sangkom Reastr Niyum (People's Socialist Community), the Buddhist education provided by pagodas was well-nourished and flourished. Even during the Khmer Rouge regime, when temples were destroyed and monks were forced to leave monkhood, the pagoda-based education had resurrected and survived when people were liberated from the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime. This reflects that the educations provided by Buddhist pagodas in Cambodia are beyond physical

appearance, such as buildings, but it is something at the heart and soul of Khmer culture. For centuries, pagodas have been the sole place of education and training in moral values (Filippi, 2011). In the current context, the role of Buddhist pagodas in supporting education in Cambodia remains pivotal. Perhaps as Nicholas Hemingway, a guest editor of the Cambodian Education Forum, puts it, “the teachings of Buddhist monks are immortal and will remain an essential part of Cambodian culture. The temple and those living in them will remain a relevant part of the Kingdom forever since the values held at these institutions cannot be tarnished by time.”

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17. The Importance of Sex Education for Cambodian Students

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Introduction

Some people believe that sex education encourages youth to have sex. Many parents are afraid that talking about sex with their teenagers may make them want to have sex. Nothing could be further from the truth. Youth want to have sex due to their hormone change (Newport Academy, 2012). We probably know that if teens want to have sex, they may probably do it even if we try to stop them.

According to Buckmelter (2020), sexual health is very crucial and everyone, especially growing teens, should know about it. As they become mature, young adults face important decisions regarding relationship, sexuality, and sexual behavior (Bridges & Hauser, 2014). Their decisions can impact their health and well-being for the rest of their lives. Thus, sex education should not be barred, but it ought to be openly taught, discussed, and possibly trained so that young people are better at making decisions when they engage in a sexual relationship.

What is Sex Education?

Sex education is not about learning how to have sex as most people may think. In fact, it is about helping people to understand human physical development, skills, and motivation to make healthy decisions about sex-related matters (Planned Parenthood, n.d.). It allows them to understand the right to protect themselves from sexual violation and abuse. Moreover, sex knowledge will help people of all genders to better control their sexual feelings, rather than provoking rapes or sexual activities without the proper consent of their partners.

However, sex education is not only for adults but also for people of all ages and genders, especially high school students and women, to acquire because they are generally considered the most vulnerable groups.

The Impact of Limited Sex Education

Nowadays, sex education in Cambodia is still limited (Khmer Times, 2015). Even though it is included in the school curriculum, some teachers do not teach it in detail due to fear of embarrassment or the belief that it is not appropriate to discuss sex in class.

A survey of 5,000 Cambodian students aged 15 by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) found that around 35 percent of the students reported their health to be poor or fair (Khan & Hean, 2020). The survey also showed that girls had higher levels of health issues than boys. Moreover, it was found that around 5 to 7 percent of the sample had experienced sexual harassment from either their peers, teachers, or school staff. The report attributed this problem to narrow or perceived definitions of sexual harassment.

Sex is still regarded as a taboo subject and many teachers are uncomfortable talking about it. As a result, many problems such as sexual harassment, rapes, whistling or catcalling, staring in an offensive way (i.e., staring at a woman's breasts or a man's buttocks) have happened, affecting Khmer culture and society. One of the key reasons is the lack of sufficient sex education both inside and outside the school settings (www.prake.org).

According to a new report on the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents and Youth in Cambodia by the Ministry of Planning (UNFPA Cambodia, 2016), more young Cambodians aged between 15-24 years old were sexually active before marriage. Sex before marriage is, however, considered a taboo in Cambodia. According to the study, the rate of youth who had premarital sex increased from 0.2% in 2000 to 1.1% in 2014 (UNFPA Cambodia, 2016).

It was also found that women tended to face more social pressures than men if they had premarital sex. In addition, there were growing concerns over their

behavior toward safe sex practices and contraceptive use (UNFPA Cambodia, 2016).

No doubt, when children do not learn about reproductive health, they may be at greater risk for teen pregnancy (Hensley, 2019). Moreover, research has found that countries with comprehensive sex-education programs have lower teen pregnancy rates (Hensley, 2019).

The Importance of Sex Education

A study by UNESCO (2015) showed that comprehensive sex education led teens to have informed decisions in their sex lives. This showed that sex education and discussion not only helped to prevent teens from having sex at a young age but also provided them with health safety when they chose to have sex. As Sellgren (2017) argued, "High-quality education on sex and relationships is a vital part of preparing young people for success in adult life."

Generally, students who received formal sex education in schools were more capable of demonstrating a range of healthier behaviors at first intercourse than those who did not have sex education (Wind, 2012). Students who were sex-educated were more likely to use condoms or other contraceptives at first sex; they also had healthier partners (Wind, 2012).

It has been proven again and again that sex education does not encourage teenagers to have sex, yet it does quite the opposite. Thus, it is really important to teach it in school (Gabe, 2018). A carefully planned sex education curriculum can help young people respond to thorny questions with confidence (Kim, 2018). Besides, if schools teach students about sex, they can prevent unwanted pregnancy. They know that saying no is okay because it is a personal choice. Indeed, it is necessary to understand the consequences of unsafe or early sexual intercourse. Moreover, as students need to have a better understanding of their physical health, safe sex practices can help them to avoid infecting AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases.

Initiatives by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

Obviously, Cambodians do not like talking about sex openly. That is why

NGOs sometimes find it hard to teach sexual and reproductive health to young people because of cultural taboos and gender barriers (Barron, 2013). However, the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has decided to allow students aged 13 or older to receive sex education from 2020 on (Blomberg, 2019).

Furthermore, the Education Ministry will roll out a more holistic health education curriculum for students starting in 2022 to provide up-to-date scientific information about health, including mental and sexual health issues. Therefore, the new curriculum will be taught at school once a week for an hour with a focus on physical and mental health issues relevant to students' age groups. This will ensure that students have a better understanding of these issues and help them avert potential health risks while tackling issues such as consent and sexual harassment (Khan & Hean, 2020).

Conclusion

Young people have the right to live a healthy life. As they grow mature, they will take more and more control of their lives. Thus, they need to have the necessary knowledge about things that matter to them, including knowledge about sex, so that they can make important life decisions on their own.

Sex education should therefore be offered to all grades with information appropriate to students' development and cultural background. It should include information about puberty, reproduction, contraception and condom use, relationship, sexual violence prevention, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, it should be taught by trained teachers supported by informed evidence of what works best to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. To respect young people's rights, it is vital to teach them only accurate and honest information about sex.

Given the significance of sex education, the government and educational institutions should seriously consider expanding sex education to all Cambodian students, especially those in high school. Meanwhile, parents should not be the only ones held responsible or blamed when their children or teenagers become sexually active before they complete high school or before marriage. Naturally, sex cannot be stopped, but we can make more efforts to

minimize the rate of sexual intercourse at a young age as well as to ensure the high possibility of health safety and low risk for young people engaging in sexual activity. One way to achieve these goals is through the provision of adequate and effective sex education.

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18. The Significance of Higher Education for Cambodian Students

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Introduction

Graduating from high school is a major milestone in life for many students after having been through a 12-year journey that is full of tears and sweat. However, this ending is also the perfect time to start a new academic chapter which is to pursue higher education that opens many doors of opportunities and success. In contemporary society, high school graduates do not have as many opportunities as in previous decades. Immerwalr's (2002) report shows that 87% of 1015 American adults agreed that having a college degree is more important than a high school diploma. Therefore, most students have set their plans in advance to pursue post-secondary education, believing that it can offer a significant benefit for their future and their nations (Colver, 2018). This article explains the significance of higher education, discusses some challenges facing higher education enrolment in Cambodia, and encourages Cambodian students to pursue higher education after graduating from high school.

The Significance of Higher Education

Immerwalr's (2002) report shows that 84% of 1015 American adults agreed that higher education is essential to get ahead in life. Undoubtedly, university education plays a vital role in helping students to achieve their academic success. A university offers many exciting and advantageous courses that enable students to build a more robust intellectual capacity. The purpose of studying at a university is not only to obtain a degree but also to foster high academic performance. Students with good academic achievement, for example, will have more job opportunities than those with no academic success, and higher academic performers are more likely to be offered good jobs with decent wages (UKessays, 2018).

Excellent academic performance is an additional component to build a successful career. Students' knowledge and skills during their time at college are the main requirements for jobs. Immerwalr (2002) found that 60% of 1015 American adults believed that higher education provides specific skills and knowledge for their future careers. The employment opportunity for college graduates is enhanced as the world is now strongly influenced by globalization. Universities around the world are increasingly required to produce highly skilled graduates who are able to respond to the ever-changing and complex needs of the contemporary workplace (Possa, 2006). Thus, university education can provide students with specific expertise and knowledge that could increase their performance at an occupational level.

Besides having extraordinary academic and career success, higher education is also a key to self-development. University can expose students to various cultures and real-life experiences; simultaneously, students can build unlimited networks. The same report by Immerwalr (2002) revealed that 68% of 1015 American adults said that higher education is necessary to communicate and interact well with people from distinctive backgrounds. Another study on college students experiencing diversity at the University of Michigan by Laird (2005) found that with an increase in diversity, particularly in various courses and ongoing interactions with their classmates, students are more likely to perform well in academic self-confidence, social activities, and critical thinking skills. In short, post-secondary education brings students a life-changing experience and an improvement for their future. As Chickering (1994, p. 53) noted, "Career success and a good life depend on continuous learning and self-development. Leading a rich and full life depends on our capacity to put ourselves in challenging situations and to learn from them." Students' challenges could allow them to think out of the box and discover hidden talents and creative ideas.

The Challenges to Higher Education Enrolment in Cambodia

According to the World Bank (2017), higher education, especially in developing countries, has become a significant factor in producing resourceful people in the economic sector and strengthening national competitiveness. In the last few decades, higher education development in Cambodia has improved because more and more universities have been built, and educational systems have been

reformed. According to Open Development Cambodia (ODC, 2018), the enrolment rates in primary school increased to 93.5% in 2017, 55.7% for secondary school, and 25.1% at high school. However, school dropout among primary and high school students is still a concerning issue in the country. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) statistics show that dropout rates in the lower secondary level are on average 20% compared with an average dropout rate of 9% in the primary and 12% in the upper secondary level (USAID, 2013). The dropout rates are one of the reasons for a lower number of enrolments in higher education.

There are many other factors leading to low enrolment in higher education. Many Cambodian high school graduates, especially those in the countryside, have encountered many challenges such as financial problems, language barriers, and lifestyle changes (Lay et al., 2017). They may not have the ability to pursue higher education after graduating from high school. Moreover, some students who failed high school exams have never been to university due to poverty. Instead, they tend to find unskilled work in their communities or migrate to other countries to earn money to support their family. Meanwhile, illiterate adults, predominantly female, usually work in factories and the hospitality sector. The need to work is a key reason forcing students to drop out of schools and universities. Research has shown that Cambodian youth faced challenges in seeking jobs as many of those jobs required high-level skills (Khidir, 2018). As a result, those who had not gone on to college ended up working in low-paid jobs which did not offer them desirable opportunities.

To address these issues, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) has introduced many projects, one of which is the implementation of the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2014-2018 (MoEYS, 2014) to expand access to quality of education at all levels. The policy for child development to reduce dropout rates was also introduced in 2016 by Cambodia National Council for Children (ODC, 2018). Another program is the School Dropout Prevention Pilot (SDPP) Program, a five-year program funded by USAID, aimed at reducing school dropout among primary and secondary school students (USAID, 2013). In addition, MoEYS with the support of the World Bank implemented the Higher Education Quality and Capacity Improvement Project aimed at providing academic support to disadvantaged students and improving the quality of university staff in terms of scholarships and training (World Bank,

n.d.). As a result of this project, 1000 Cambodian students were granted scholarships to pursue tertiary education. Despite these efforts, a recent study found that dropout among Cambodian students remains an issue (Pov et al., 2020).

Conclusion

As the number of high school graduates has continued to increase every year, the government should make further efforts to urge students to pursue higher education and offer more scholarships, especially for students from low socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the government should collaborate actively with non-governmental organizations to support students in rural areas from low-income families and ensure equal access to quality education. As Cambodia expects to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030 (World Bank, 2020), more talented and skillful young people with university degrees are needed to work in the private and public sectors.

No doubt, studying at university is a roller-coaster journey that is full of challenges. Still, these will unlock students' potential, offer a lot of real-life experiences, and master specific skills. In the industrialized society, university education opens up enormous opportunities for students to live a comfortable lifestyle and obtain well-paid jobs. In Cambodia, going to university is essential for students, and it is also a new hope for the nation. The increase in higher education enrollment will help uplift the country's human resources, which will support Cambodia's aspiration to become a knowledge-based society and high-income economy in the future. Considering these advantages, Cambodian students should not pass up higher education if they want to live a better life and play a part in the development and prosperity of their country.

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19. Why is Education the Key to Cambodia's Future?

Sokvy Rim

Cambodian Education Forum

Introduction

Cambodia came across the darkest period in its modern history during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979). The period was known as “Year Zero” because Cambodia’s civilization, socioeconomic development, and thriving culture were eliminated to pave the way for a new revolution aiming to turn the country into an agrarian utopia. Since the Khmer Rouge took control of the capital city in 1975, the country’s education system suffered a fatal blow in terms of both hard and soft educational infrastructure (BBC News, 2018). Most educational infrastructure, such as school buildings, was destroyed, and some schools were converted into prisons and killing fields where many innocent people were tortured and prosecuted to death. The country’s human capital, including professors, intellectuals, teachers, and educated Cambodians, was virtually eliminated. Those who were thought to be intellectual or knowledgeable were treated as criminals and subjected to execution. Wearing glasses, speaking foreign languages, working as teachers, or holding high-ranking positions in the previous government were regarded as a crime (BBC News, 2018). Even though the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime was gone for over forty years, it still has a lasting negative impact on contemporary Cambodian society. To escape from the past’s shadow and to improve socioeconomic development as well as to further alleviate poverty, greater attention should be paid to education that is the only way for Cambodia to move forward.

Education and Economic Development

In a developing country like Cambodia, education plays a critical role in advancing the economy. Currently, the Cambodian government has been working hard to attract foreign investment by making the business

environment more conducive to investors. For example, the government has maintained political stability, improved logistics and infrastructure, and introduced reforms that facilitate investment. However, Cambodia still faces a shortage of skilled labor. To address this and boost economic development, the government needs to prioritize education.

According to Lucas (1988, cited in Otieno, 2016), economic growth has a strong correlation with education; it helps expand trained human capital that is needed for diverse job markets. Solow (1956, cited in Millick et al., 2016) argued that education is an ingredient of development along with labor, capital, and technology. The growth of the Human Development Index (HDI) would help to increase the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For instance, from 1990 to 2017, Cambodia had a speedy growth of HDI which was ranked 8th globally and 2nd in the Asia Pacific (The Phnom Penh Post, 2018). This speedy growth of human resources has helped Cambodia to increase its Gross National Income per capita by 265.8 percent, which improved the lives of many Cambodians. The human resource accumulation made Cambodia the third-fastest economy in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2020 and as predicted by the International Monetary Fund, Cambodia will be one of the fastest economies in ASEAN by 2025. This good performance of economic growth is, to a large extent, attributed to the increase of human capital (Sorn, 2019).

Education is, no doubt, the key to Cambodia's future as it facilitates poverty reduction, social stability, and economic growth. The Rectangular Strategy Phase III demonstrates the effort of the Royal Government of Cambodia to improve the educational system, which is parallel to the Cambodia Industrial Development Policy 2015–2025. The Industrial Development Policy was adopted in 2015 to promote industrial development that will help to maintain sustainable and inclusive high economic growth in the country. Consequently, it could provide more job opportunities for the Cambodian people and increase exports (Council for the Development of Cambodia, 2015). However, the lack of skilled human resources has been the major obstacle for Cambodia to improve the industrial sector (Kotoski, 2017). In this sense, more efforts and resources should be allocated to developing the educational sector in areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). At present, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has paid greater attention to STEM

education; however, involvement from all stakeholders and greater investment are needed. With quality education and sustained economic growth, Cambodia will be able to materialize its vision to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050 (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2018).

Education will help to sustain economic development in Cambodia. Currently, many infrastructure and development projects within the country are perceived as unsustainable and environment-unfriendly. For instance, the construction of the Lower Sesan II (LS2) dam in Stung Treng province is expected to supply 400,000 kilowatts of electricity which is equal to 20 percent of Cambodia's overall capacity generation (Horn, 2020). However, the environmental impact is undeniable and cannot be underestimated. A study conducted by Ziv et al. (2012) showed that the LS2 dam would lower the fish stocks in the Lower Mekong Basin by 9.3 percent and could make over 50 percent of marine species in the Mekong river become extinct. Experts warned that the LS2 could change the water pattern that flows between the Tonle Sap Lake and the Mekong River, leading to ecological changes that negatively impact the agricultural sector in Cambodia (Earthrights International, n.d.). Therefore, it is imperative to have more skilled human resources that can help the government to find alternative options that are more sustainable and environment-friendly. As Newman et al. (2020) note, there is a strong correlation between quality education and the development of innovation and creativity. Thus, quality education is needed to strengthen innovative research that will, in turn, enable the government to evaluate the cost and effect of each development project effectively.

Educational Reforms

Education is a catalyst for Cambodia to escape the poverty trap and realize its dream of becoming an industrial country. Currently, more efforts are being made by the government to enhance the education quality. For example, teachers' salaries have been increased from between 500,000–1,200,000 riels (about US\$120–US\$300) in 2015 to between 1,200,000–2,100,000 riels (about US\$300–US\$525) in 2020 (The Phnom Penh Post, 2020). Moreover, a series of educational reforms have been introduced. Notably, the Teacher Policy Action Plan has been implemented to improve the efficiency and quality of teachers.

There are also reforms to the development of textbooks and curricula to equip students with knowledge and skills essential for the future market. Reforms to the Grade 12 national examination were introduced in 2014, which has provided hope for improving the quality of general education across the country. Recently, more funds have been invested in upgrading the quality of teaching and research in STEM fields as they form an integral part of the industrial development that the government has aimed for (The Phnom Penh Post, 2020).

The educational reforms will help enhance the quality of education in Cambodia in the long run; however, a lot needs to be done. In 2018, 2.2 percent of Cambodia's GDP was allocated to the education sector, which is relatively low compared to neighboring countries such as Thailand and Vietnam which spent around 4 percent of GDP annually (Knoema, n.d.; Statista, 2019). The limited funds and budgets for education have affected the quality provided by educational institutions as some teachers would find ways to earn extra income through private tutoring and other part-time jobs. Other talented people would look for opportunities in other areas that can provide them with more income to support their families. However, an increase in the national budget for education is expected as Prime Minister Hun Sen made an impression in late 2020 that the revenue generated from oil extraction will be allocated to education and health care (Sao, 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, education is the most important sector that can ensure other sectors such as industrial development and economic growth go smoothly. Despite educational reforms, several educational issues continue to pose challenges for Cambodia to move forward. Thus, it is crucial to address key challenges such as poor educational infrastructure in rural areas, lack of qualified teachers, low teaching salaries, limited research activities among academic staff, and other issues. In order to move forward and realize its vision of becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050, Cambodia has to put more resources and efforts into education so that it can produce a skilled labor force that can help the country increase its GDP and ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

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20. Conclusion: The Role of Mentorship Programs in Supporting Young Writers

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Introduction

This edited volume is a product of Cambodian Education Forum (CEF)'s first internship program, which is grounded in the belief that Cambodian youth are capable of doing great things, including writing and publishing articles in English. The program involved ten interns who volunteered to write short opinion or research-based articles for publication with CEF. As noted in the introductory chapter, out of the ten interns, seven were able to write 18 short articles included in this volume. We will continue to offer internship programs to support motivated young Cambodian writers to write and publish their articles because we strongly believe that mentoring support plays a critical role in helping young writers to hone their confidence and writing skills.

Reflections on CEF's Internship Program

Reflecting on our internship program, we see both challenges and opportunities. The challenges mainly lie in the interns' limited knowledge and writing skills. They took a considerable amount of time to produce the first draft of their articles. Each article generally went through at least a few rounds of the review and editorial process. This editorial process was fortunately supported

by four guest editors who were willing to give up their valuable time to support our vision and internship program.

The interns and the editorial team faced considerable time constraints. For the interns, many of them were university students who had to manage their course assignments in addition to writing articles to meet our internship requirements. As for us who are editors, we were all swamped in our own ways. However, through our strong commitment and shared vision, we were able to overcome our time constraints and other challenges to contribute to promoting research and publication in Cambodia.

Going the extra mile to take up this editorial work voluntarily to support young Cambodian writers has been both challenging and rewarding. Although we spent a large amount of our time managing the internship program, which meant less time for our PhD research, we felt satisfied with the outcomes and impact of our work. More people begin to know what we do and express their support for our vision. The involvement of the four guest editors is an excellent example of such support. They helped us review and edit articles written by the interns, which has clearly helped to relieve our editing workload.

We have asked the interns to reflect on the internship program, particularly with regard to what they have learned from it. The following are responses from six interns, with our minor edits for clarity and accuracy.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, CEF brought me through a worthwhile internship journey by offering incredible support and a rewarding experience that goes beyond my expectations. Not only did this program open up opportunities for me to broaden my academic knowledge, gain new research techniques, and sharpen my digital literacy skills, but it also enhanced my critical thinking and analytical skills. Simultaneously, it enabled me to build connections with enthusiastic youth who are willing to share and promote the educational sector in Cambodia. (Phearun Chhoeurm, senior student, Professional Communication and Hospitality & Tourism Management)

During my time being an intern at CEF, I was able to professionally and casually meet and interact with fellow interns and editors of the Forum. I have come to take more interest in writing and become more determined to be a better writer. As I continued to write more articles for publication, I have

learned how to write my articles with better structures and wordings thanks to the constructive feedback from the editors. Not only that, my creativity and time management for writing articles have significantly increased since I had to come up with interesting topics and effectively arrange my schedule to meet the deadline of the program. With the skills I have gained from CEF, I believe I have reached a step closer to becoming a knowledgeable and competent writer of short articles. (Socheata Ly, fresh graduate, International Relations)

For me, during the internship with Cambodia Education Forum (CEF), I have learnt a lot about research. Knowing how to write good research articles is a valuable skill that I believe will benefit my future career. The internship helps to improve my writing skills, and I have the opportunity to publish my short articles. (Mealeatey Meak, senior student, Development Economics)

The journey of my internship with CEF is such a life-changing experience. Not only did I learn to improve my academic writing skills, but I also had the opportunity to get feedback from professionals. This worthwhile experience has made me realize that my input in my writing is valued and reaches out to readers. (Kanika Nhil, senior student, Teaching English as a Foreign Language)

Doing the internship with CEF is a rewarding experience for me as I learn to improve my academic writing skills. There is so much to learn here with helpful and professional support from editors. I encourage those who would like to make their writing impactful to consider joining CEF in the future. (Rathana Phin, junior student, Political Science and International Relations)

My internship with CEF is a great experience for me. I have learned that writing is not just an art but a war; that is, one should not only design beautiful sentences to attract the audience's attention but also have strong arguments to defend their ideas and beliefs. (Sokvy Rim, fresh graduate, International Relations)

Based on their testimonials, it is clear that the internship program has improved their knowledge and writing skills. They become more confident writers, know how to cite sources, develop reference lists properly, provide counterarguments, and understand the review and editorial process. The knowledge and skills they gained are, no doubt, useful for their future studies and careers.

The Way Forward

Given the usefulness of the mentoring support and how the internship program helped to improve the interns' knowledge and skills, we are willing to continue to offer the mentorship support through our internship program to young Cambodian writers so that they can develop their confidence, knowledge, and skills in writing and publishing short and medium-length articles in English. We believe that the internship program and the publications resulting from it will contribute to stimulating reading, writing, and research activities in Cambodia, particularly among young Cambodians.

It is our belief and hope that the effort we have put in will pay off, and we will be able to make positive contributions to Cambodian society. Nurturing a strong research and publication culture takes time, commitment, and vision. It is a big task to achieve considering Cambodia's resources and priorities; however, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Thus, it is imperative to start somewhere to effect change and build positive momentum. It also requires a collective effort and active collaboration and involvement from all concerned stakeholders. As Heng (2020) argues,

When actors at all levels come together and work to achieve a common goal (i.e., cultivating a vibrant research culture), Cambodia will, sooner or later, see a flourishing research culture that gives hope to the country's aspiration to become a knowledge-based society and a high-income country in the next few decades. (p. 4)

Going forward, there is a need for involvement and support from a wider community to nurture and promote research in Cambodia. At the Cambodian Education Forum, we are doing our part to make a positive change by establishing a publication platform for Cambodian writers and researchers, particularly novice ones. We are also endeavoring to offer writing and mentoring support to anyone interested in writing and publishing their work in English. We hope that when more and more Cambodians write and publish, a strong research and publication culture will emerge and grow.

Conclusion

In conclusion, to foster the development of a vibrant research culture in Cambodia, all stakeholders, including the government, the private sector, higher education institutions, academics, students, and the wider community, need to actively take part in creating a conducive environment for research. One possible strategy is to nurture a home-grown research culture by expanding local publication outlets, including academic and non-academic outlets (see Heng & Rautakivi, 2020). The work that the Cambodian Education Forum has done is based on this line of thinking. We believe that it is crucial to have local publication outlets to offer young and novice Cambodian writers the opportunity to publish to develop the skills, confidence, and publication experience needed to publish internationally.

In addition to establishing local publication outlets, there is a need to provide mentoring support to young writers through training or internship programs. Many aspiring young writers are keen on writing in English, but they tend to lack the confidence to start for fear of making mistakes or being judged. However, with adequate writing support, including editorial support, they would be able to write and publish their work in English with strong self-confidence and enthusiasm.

Our experience working with the first batch of CEF interns shows us that Cambodian youth are capable. They have the potential to develop into independent writers and researchers. All they need is support and encouragement, as well as the opportunity to showcase their skills and talents. It is, therefore, absolutely vital that we set up enabling conditions to allow them to learn and grow. As they are the future and the hope for a strong research culture in Cambodia, they deserve the opportunity to contribute to building such a desirable culture.

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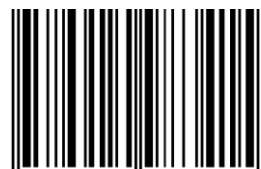
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