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The Cambodian Education Forum at two years old: Keeping the momentum going

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Welcome to the second volume of the Cambodian Journal of Educational Research (CJER). In this editorial, we look back at the historical development and achievements of the Cambodian Education Forum (CEF), which turned two years old in July 2022. We then provide brief information on CEF's new initiative, called "CEF Research Seminar Series." This editorial ends with an overview of articles in this issue: Volume 2, Issue 1.

History and achievements

The Cambodian Education Forum is now two years old. Co-founded in July 2020 by a team of emerging Cambodian scholars, CEF aspires to contribute to promoting research and publication culture in Cambodia. With this aspiration, CEF offers a platform for Cambodian academics, researchers, students, and beyond to publish their scholarly work concerning Cambodian education and other educational issues through a rigorous peer review and publication process (CEF, 2021).

With an ambitious and inclusive vision, CEF aims to:

- Provide a publication platform for Cambodian researchers, educators, and students
- Share knowledge, research findings, and informed opinions about education in Cambodia

- Support Cambodian novice writers to publish through quality peer review, mentorship, and editorial processes
- Publish essays, opinion pieces, and research articles about education in Cambodia and beyond
- Offer insights from education experts through interviews, discussion, and publication
- Share education-related resources to students, teachers, academics, and researchers
- Promote Cambodia's image in the regional and international arena (CEF, 2021, para. 4)

The work of CEF has been made possible by a dynamic editorial team with diverse educational and professional backgrounds. Since its establishment in July 2020, the CEF editorial team has expanded significantly. As of July 2022, the CEF editorial team comprises 62 members, including two editors-in-chief, one managing editor, four editors, nine associate editors, seven guest editors, 25 registered reviewers, seven anonymous reviewers, and seven junior reviewers.

CEF has, to date, published 63 articles, four edited books, and two issues of CJER, CEF's earnest initiative launched in September 2021 to promote a research and publication culture in Cambodia. The launching of Cambodian-based academic journals in recent years like CJER has been noted as "an important milestone for research development in Cambodia" (Heng & Sol, 2021, p. 11).

More than just a typical publication platform, CEF has provided training and mentorship on academic writing to Cambodian novice and aspiring writers, particularly university students and recent graduates, through its regular six-month-long internship program (Heng, 2021). The primary purpose of this internship program is to help the internship participants improve their academic writing skills and enable them to publish, in most cases, their first short or medium-length research articles and/or book chapters in English (Heng, 2021). Thus far, CEF has offered three cohorts of its internship program. The first and second cohorts were completed, with 30 interns participating in the program. Most of them were able to write and publish their articles and book chapters with CEF. Few were exceptional and went beyond CEF to

publish their pieces with local and international outlets. The third cohort comprising 20 interns is well underway, and they are working with the CEF team toward improving and finalizing their book chapters for an upcoming edited book planned to be published by CEF in late 2022.

Recently, CEF has called for donations to support its operation and website maintenance. Thanks to those who support our vision and activities to promote the research and publication culture in Cambodia, we have received generous donations from almost 50 people as of July 2022. We have also received financial support for printing this issue and the previous issue (Volume 1, Number 2) of CJER from the Asia Foundation's Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia program. With these contributions and support from our like-minded supporters and our enthusiastic editorial board members, CEF is now in a better position to continue to make impacts on Cambodia's research and publication landscape for years to come.

Overall, within these two years, CEF has diligently worked to realize its vision and made some significant achievements, as mentioned earlier. However, these achievements of which we are all at CEF proud have not been attained without challenges. As concluded in our first edited book, entitled "*English language teaching, education, and online learning in Cambodia during COVID-19: Perspectives from practitioners and researchers*," our work has been limited by time constraints and enormous administrative and editorial workloads (Heng et al., 2020). However, the CEF team remains committed to making a positive impact on the research and publication culture in Cambodia.

New initiatives

CEF continues to take up more challenges to foster a conducive environment for stimulating research and publication interest in Cambodia. It has recently launched another initiative, termed "CEF Research Seminar Series." This initiative aims to provide an open platform for Cambodian academics, researchers, university students, and recent graduates to share their research findings or present their research work. Simultaneously, interested individuals can attend this Research Seminar Series, interact with presenters, learn about how research is conducted, and gain knowledge about specific academic areas.

The first CEF Research Seminar Series was successfully held online on July 16, 2022. The CEF team was content with the eager involvement of our participants, especially during the Q&A session. We hope to run this Research Seminar Series at least once or twice a month. Therefore, we encourage interested individuals to take this opportunity to disseminate their research work or findings and help this Research Seminar Series make a positive impact on the research landscape in Cambodia.

Keeping the momentum going

CEF will carry on its existing initiatives, including CJER, internship program, and the newly-launched Research Seminar Series, to keep the momentum going. As an academic journal, CJER will continue to publish original manuscripts in the field of education, particularly those concerning the Cambodian context. We endeavor to ensure that any accepted manuscripts are of high quality; we will therefore maintain the rigor of our peer review and publication process. At the moment, CJER publishes two issues annually and accepts three types of articles, specifically full-length articles (no longer than 7000 words), short articles (no longer than 3500 words), and book reviews (no longer than 1500 words). Interested contributors can make their submissions to CJER throughout the year. Submission guidelines for CJER are available on the CEF website and at the end of this issue.

CEF will also continue to offer its internship program to novice writers, especially university students and recent graduates, to learn the necessary academic writing skills in English and publish their academic articles or book chapters with CEF and beyond. This unique opportunity provides our interns with practical learning experiences while working to produce their writing products.

As CEF's new initiative, the Research Seminar Series will now be one of our main activities. We hope this initiative will serve as a sharing and learning platform for those interested in research and be able to instill a culture of conducting and publishing research among Cambodian researchers, academics, teachers, and students. Meanwhile, we encourage our participants to exchange ideas and have an open dialog with our presenters. We believe that

this Research Seminar Series, together with other activities of CEF, will contribute to building a better research ecosystem in Cambodia.

Overview of the issue

This issue of CJER contains nine articles, three of which are short articles that have recently been published by CEF and are freely available for reading or download on its website. There are six new full-length articles in this issue. As noted in the previous editorial (Heng, 2021), articles published between January and June of the year will be included in the first issue of the volume in that year, provided that they are qualified for inclusion.

The nine articles included in this issue examine various educational issues affecting Cambodia. The first full-length article by Murat Yildizoglu explores issues concerning international standards for Cambodia's academic system. The article discusses the rationale for and key elements of international standards. It elaborates on the challenges facing Cambodian higher education and provides some suggestions to build the academic system in Cambodia toward international standards. The second article by Molika Heng analyzes Cambodia's gender policy, focusing on women and girls' education strategies in the Neary Rattanak IV Strategic Plan introduced by the Cambodian Ministry of Women's Affairs. It was found that the policy implementation was successful; however, some challenges required further actions and efforts from policymakers.

Another article by Sereyrath Em examines the challenges of English language learning and teaching in Cambodia. Based on a survey and in-depth interviews, the study showed that various factors such as the quality of teachers, study materials, and class size, among others, were the key factors contributing to the challenges in teaching and learning English in a Cambodian secondary school. The next article by Nathan Polley and Russell Mills also focuses on secondary education. It examines the use of dashboards to support learning and teaching in two international secondary schools in Cambodia. The study revealed that dashboards were useful in facilitating teaching, learning, and career counselling.

Two other full-length articles focus on motivation in language learning and continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers, respectively. The article by Panharith Nat looks at how to enhance students' motivation in learning a foreign language. It provides some suggestions on how to motivate students in online learning. Bunhorn Doeur's article discusses issues concerning teachers' CPD. It offers a set of recommendations to improve CPD opportunities for Cambodian university teachers.

The last three articles are short articles that CEF published between April and June 2022. The first article in this category, written by Kimcheng Ngel, explores the significant roles of English and argues that good English proficiency can unlock many educational opportunities for Cambodian students. Another article by Kimkong Heng and Bunhorn Doeur examines the phenomenon of digital transformation in Cambodian higher education. It argues that higher education digital transformation is key to enhancing Cambodia's higher education sector. The final article in this issue is co-authored by Virak Sorn and Monirath Suon. It looks at how to motivate Cambodian high school students to pursue science and health science majors in higher education. The article offers some suggestions to achieve this aim.

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