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The Cambodian Education Forum's contribution to building a research culture in Cambodia

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Welcome to the second issue of the Cambodian Journal of Educational Research (CJER). This editorial will discuss how the Cambodian Education Forum (CEF) has contributed to building a research culture in Cambodia by providing a publication platform and internship programs to support novice or young Cambodian writers and researchers to write for publication in English. It will then briefly discuss each article included in this issue.

The contribution of the Cambodian Education Forum

The Cambodian Education Forum was founded in July 2020 by a group of three PhD candidates, namely Kimkong Heng, Sopheap Kaing, and Vutha Ros, who aspire to promote a culture of research and publication in Cambodia. The group was later joined by Koemhong Sol who serves as an editor. As of December 2021, there are a total of 39 editorial board members, comprising seven editors, two associate editors, six guest editors, 20 registered reviewers, and four junior reviewers. The vision of CEF is "to provide a publication platform for Cambodian researchers, educators, teachers, students, and administrators, especially novice and emerging writers, to publish their written work or research findings on education-related topics relevant to Cambodia and beyond" (CEF, 2021, para. 1). CEF is driven by the following aims:

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

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

Thus far, CEF has contributed to building a research ecosystem in Cambodia in three important ways. Firstly, through its work, CEF has contributed to promoting peer-reviewed publications in the Kingdom. It has provided young or new writers and researchers with academic writing support focusing on the use of citations and how to develop a reference list, following the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing style (7th edition). CEF has also offered rigorous peer review and editorial assistance to help improve the quality of manuscripts submitted for publication consideration.

Over the past year, CEF has published approximately 60 short- and medium-length articles, three edited volumes, and one inaugural issue of CJER that was launched in September 2021. Two of the three edited volumes were republication of some of the articles that CEF had published in 2020. The third edited volume was a result of CEF's 2nd internship program which lasted approximately six months from June to November 2021. There is also another upcoming edited volume scheduled for release in January 2022 as part of CEF's 2nd internship program.

Secondly, through its 6-month internship programs, CEF has offered unique writing support and publication opportunities to young Cambodian writers who are mostly undergraduate students and recent graduates. The internship focuses on providing training and mentorship on academic writing to promote an understanding of the publication process, including peer review and the use of in-text citations and referencing. In the first internship round that took place from November 2020 to April 2021, there were 10 interns, most of whom were undergraduate students. At the end of the internship, seven interns were able

to write 18 articles that were published on the CEF website and later compiled into an edited book, entitled "Cambodian Youth's Perspectives and Reflections on Contemporary Educational Issues and the Role of Education." The second internship round was conducted in 2021 and involved 20 interns, 13 of whom successfully wrote 15 book chapters that were compiled into two edited books. As mentioned above, one edited book, entitled "Online Learning During COVID-19 and Key Issues in Education," has recently been published; the other will be published in early 2022.

Thirdly, CEF is proud to launch the Cambodian Journal of Educational Research, one of the first education-focused journals in Cambodia. We believe that the journal will play a critical role in fostering a research ecosystem in the field of education in the Kingdom. At the time of writing and finalizing this issue, several manuscripts are being reviewed for publication consideration, and if successful, they will be included in the next issue of CJER (i.e., Volume 2, Number 1). We will continue to provide support to authors who have submitted their manuscripts and to those who want to publish with CEF in the future so that the quality of their submissions can be improved to meet the publication standards of CEF.

Overall, through the publication of different types of articles (i.e., short, medium-length, and full-length), the internship programs, and CJER, the Cambodian Education Forum is able to contribute to fostering a culture of research and publication in Cambodia. CEF has particularly established an essential platform for Cambodian writers and researchers, especially novice ones, to publish their work and simultaneously learn the ropes of peer-reviewed publication. Moreover, based on my observation, CEF has inspired a number of novice and/or young Cambodian writers or researchers to write and publish in English. For example, some have published their work in newspapers while others go on to establish other publication platforms to help young writers share their perspectives on matters important to them, their community, and Cambodian society.

The second issue of the Cambodian Journal of Educational Research

In the second issue of CJER, there are eight articles contributed by Cambodian students, teachers, and researchers. All except one of these articles have been

published on CEF's website in an online-first version. They were published between July and November 2021. As CJER is published two times per year, articles published between January and June of a particular year will be included in the first issue of the journal in that year. The second issue of CJER will include articles that are published between July and December of the year. Not all articles are, however, included and published in CJER. Only those that meet the requirements and scope of the journal are considered.

The eight articles in this issue address different educational issues. The first article by Kimkong Heng and Koemhong Sol examines academic research in Cambodia, focusing on recent progress, key challenges, and ways forward. The next article by Vutha Ros and Koemhong Sol looks at the quest for world-class universities and how Cambodia is influenced by this global trend. Another article by Gechu Sambath discusses the role of decentralization of education in narrowing the educational divide in Cambodia. Two other articles turn the discussion to issues related to English language teachers. The article by Sereyrath Em, Nel Nun, and Sophea Phann discusses the qualities, characteristics, and responsibilities of qualified teachers in the 21st century, while Sokphal Seom's article describes professional development activities for English teachers in a provincial setting.

The last three articles provide highlights of empirical findings of three studies on English pronunciation challenges, e-readiness in using Google Classroom, and challenges of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, respectively. In their article, Sodalin Sim and Chan Hum showed that up to 74% of the university students surveyed (n = 70) expressed concerns about their English pronunciation. The students felt less confident when it came to speaking in English. In another article, Kassy Sey reported that Cambodian undergraduate students (n = 110) were moderately ready to learn online through Google Classroom. Sereyrath Em reported in the final article in this issue that Cambodian high school students (n = 80) faced a number of challenges when engaging in online learning, including limited internet connection and interruptions when learning at home.

Concluding remarks

In the editorial for the inaugural issue of CJER, I wrote that:

> CEF aims to contribute to fostering and promoting a culture of research and publication in Cambodia. We are particularly interested and committed to supporting young or novice Cambodian writers and researchers to write and publish their work. We believe that by supporting the new generation of Cambodian writers, we will contribute positively to nurturing a healthy research culture in Cambodia. (Heng, 2021, p. 2).

This quote encapsulates the vision of the Cambodian Education Forum and the publication of the Cambodian Journal of Educational Research. In particular, the efforts and commitment of the CEF team have been driven by a common vision to contribute to the development of a research culture in Cambodia. We hope that these efforts and hard work will not go in vain and that relevant stakeholders in education in Cambodia will increase their efforts to contribute to making a difference in the research and publication landscape in the country.

Finally, on behalf of the CEF editorial board, I wish to acknowledge the limitations of our reviewing, editing, and copyediting skills. Although we have tried our best to ensure the quality of CJER, we believe unintentional errors may remain. In such a case, we hope to receive constructive feedback or comments from our readers to improve the quality of the journal.

References

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