Reflection of Graduate Students' Perceptions of the Impacts of COVID-19 on Education in Cambodia

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Introduction

Every facet of civilization has been impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic. In order to stop the virus from spreading, governments all around the world have temporarily transferred physical courses online, which has created significant disruption to the global education system. Numerous difficulties have been brought on by the abrupt shift from in-person to online learning for students, instructors, administrators, and educational leaders (Em, 2021).

The most difficult issue has been the internet, but there have been also disruptions at home, poor activities of teachers, a shortage of cellphones and money to top them off, difficulty with online learning, and eye issues brought on by prolonged exposure to bright light (Em, 2021; Heng & Sol, 2021).

Impacts of COVID-19 on Cambodian Society

COVID-19 has a variety of effects on Cambodian society. According to a Post outlet, there have been detrimental effects that COVID-19 has had on farmers, sex workers, textile workers, and students (Long, 2020).

The report was presented by the Cambodian Grassroots Cross Sector Network/People Action for Development, the Women's Network for Unity (WNU), the Worker's Information Center (WIC), the Social Action for Community and Development (SACD), The Messenger Band (MB), and the Women's Network for Unity (WNU) (Long, 2020).

According to Chrek Sopha, an MB spokesperson, the report was intended to call for urgent assistance for the four groups of individuals who were severely affected and to start a conversation with interested parties about taking appropriate action (Long, 2020).

According to the survey, these citizen groups have common difficulties such as financial hardship, debt, and health concerns (Long, 2020). The government and pertinent institutions were urged in the report to take action to assist them (Long, 2020).

Phay Siphan, a spokesperson for the government, stated that although he has not yet seen the complete study, if it is accurate and founded on genuine facts, it may serve as a guide for the administration as it attempts to address the problem (Long, 2020).

We will identify the poor and vulnerable persons in each location in addition to reviewing the report. We have also assisted in reducing their burdens in light of the COVID-19 situation. Debtors now experiencing challenges must talk about solutions with creditors, he added (Long, 2020).

**Impacts of COVID-19 on the Education Sector**

All areas of education in Cambodia, from primary to tertiary, have been impacted by COVID-19, and all educational methods have been changed to include distance learning and online classes. In response to the nationwide closure of Cambodia's schools beginning on March 16, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO's Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Program is collaborating closely with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and other pertinent partners to ensure that students in Cambodia continue to receive their education (UNESCO, 2020).

For more than 323,000 early-grade students, lower secondary students, out-of-school adolescents, and industry employees in Cambodia, the organization is enhancing digital and distant learning. 200 video lessons were created and produced as parts of this series of interventions, and they are accessible on Techo TV and the official online and digital learning platforms for MoEYS (UNESCO, 2020).

The creation of 60 video courses on mathematics and Khmer literacy for students in Grades 1 through 3 is supported by UNESCO. The Program made purchases of and provided supplies for the creation of educational materials to make this possible. All video classes begin with an overview of COVID-19 preventative techniques to increase students' awareness. For children with auditory difficulties or hearing impairment, sign language is included in the sessions. To educate communities about the availability of online learning tools and the crucial role parents play in assisting their children's learning while schools are closed, the program also developed and broadcast a TV advertisement on national networks (UNESCO, 2020).

According to the mother of Sao Sovanna, a Grade 2 student in the province of Siem Reap, distance learning has been significantly simpler thanks to the video lessons, which allow broods
to learn and access the materials at any time via MoEYS's Facebook page and Techo TV (UNESCO, 2020).

To guarantee that students receive ongoing education, a teacher who used video lessons said that she was given top-notch assistance, including new teaching strategies, learning exercises, and sanitary materials. Through these video lessons, parents and other adults may actively assist their children's education at home and improve children's ability to use technology to access educational resources in the modern day (UNESCO, 2020).

The video lessons will be available for download at the MoEYS E-learning platform, MoEYS Facebook page, MoEYS Youtube channel, phone applications of E-School Cambodia: EG1, EG2, and EG3, and the educational channel, TV Techo. The video lessons will be initially broadcast live on Krou Cambodia and Komar Rien Koma Cheh, the MoEYS's official Facebook page for Early Grade Learning (UNESCO, 2020).

In order to provide access to digital learning opportunities for everyone, UNESCO, in collaboration with the MoEYS, has made the Basic Education Equivalency Program (BEEP) portal available to the general public as an extra digital learning resource during the school closure period. UNESCO will also construct BEEP Learning Centers in far-off places to offer flexible learning to students, especially those from the most marginalized communities (UNESCO, 2020).

In partnership with the MoEYS Departments of Information Technology, General Secondary Education, and Non-Formal Education, UNESCO is increasing the BEEP platform's capacity to make sure that at least 300,000 lower secondary school students and out-of-school youth, of which half are females, can continue to access the most recent educational materials (UNESCO, 2020).

At the official launch of distance learning of literacy and BEEP teaching videos on May 21, 2020, H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of MoEYS, stated that since the first BEEP Learning Centre was launched two years ago, it has successfully provided an alternative learning platform for lower secondary school students and drop-out youth and prepared them for further skill development. The BEEP platform was made public to allow remote learning for all Cambodian students in light of the COVID-19 situation. It provides a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, and the Khmer language (UNESCO, 2020).

Additionally, 60 additional video lessons for the six BEEP subjects of Khmer, English, Math levels I and II, Physics, and Chemistry will be created and live-streamed (UNESCO, 2020).

The BEEP facilitator at the National Polytechnic Institute of Angkor in Siem Reap Province said the development of supplemental video exercises for each topic provided by BEEP is useful. Because of the COVID-19 scenario, which prevents them from having direct access to facilitators, the questions and answers developed, notably for Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry, efficiently address the needs of our students (UNESCO, 2020).

In addition, UNESCO is expanding access to non-formal education (NFE) for Cambodia’s most marginalized groups by leveraging online learning resources and providing continuing education to teach at least 23,000 adults—70% of whom are female learners—basic reading abilities (UNESCO, 2020).

UNESCO will provide funding for the development of an interactive mobile application and a digital learning platform for the National Literacy Program (NLP), which will allow the most disadvantaged populations to learn on their own. 80 video lessons from the NFE Program will be digitalized and aired live at the same time (UNESCO, 2020).

Prime Minister Hun Sen stated that all ministries, institutions, learning centers, and pagodas must create educational programs and lifelong learning programs for literacy and vocational training [...] to provide lifelong learning through both formal and non-formal education for everyone. H. E. Pit Chamnan, Secretary of State of the MoEYS, emphasized this statement (UNESCO, 2020).

The Department of Non-Formal Education of the MoEYS is receiving assistance from UNESCO through the NFE platform to expand its network to communities throughout Cambodia and to identify various locations, such as factories, community learning centers, and pagodas, where users can access the platform and receive assistance from facilitators who have undergone national training (UNESCO, 2020).

To provide quality education opportunities for everyone, following SDG4, the CapED Program strives to transform discussion and advocacy for the global education agenda into practical action at the country level. With a focus on gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women across all areas of intervention, UNESCO has been extending targeted support via CapED to strengthen national capabilities and provide excellent education opportunities for

everyone in the least developed countries. Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Dubai Cares, and CapED are all supporters (UNESCO, 2020).

**Impacts of COVID-19 on Learning Opportunity**

The equality of education in the Kingdom has also been severely impacted by COVID-19. Similar to Cambodia, every country in the world has seen implications on educational equity that are almost identical. According to an ABA article, the COVID-19 epidemic has caused K–12 and higher education institutions to give instruction virtually entirely online. Instructors and school administrators must keep the school community upbeat and guarantee that education is provided equally to all students. This is the ideal time to inform students about the value of equality, anti-discrimination, timely investigation of harassment and bullying complaints, and the outlawing of xenophobia (ABA, 2020).

The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) of the US Department of Education organized a working group and provided advice to parents, students, and teachers in school districts and postsecondary institutions on March 16, 2020. The working group reminded institutions of higher learning of their duties in upholding anti-discrimination legislation and ensuring that online learning is accessible to students with disabilities (ABA, 2020).

The following is a summary of the main points of the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights' advice to educators.

According to a different PBI post, Senior Education Associate at BPI Artishia Hunter recently had the opportunity of interviewing a parent and an educator in the Altgeld-Riverdale neighborhood. Although the emphasis of our interviews was equality in education, these people also discuss how families are dealing with a variety of injustices including economic, food, and housing instability that have been made worse by the epidemic (BIP, 2020).

Teachers have personally witnessed the effects of COVID-19 on education and educational equity. They have witnessed firsthand the difficulties families are dealing with at this time. Our PreK-to-K Transitions team includes Sonja Dickerson, a PreK teacher at Aldridge Elementary School, who works closely with local families. By providing everyday learning opportunities for pupils, educators like Ms. Dickerson are attempting to preserve a sort of continuity for their students while they navigate this new normal with families. Her viewpoint is important because instructors may assess how students are coping with online learning and support young children.

whose lives have been unexpectedly disturbed by the pandemic by helping to retain some regularity (ABA, 2020).

Disinvested neighborhoods are frequently struck the hardest during times of national crises. Teachers may act as a link between families and the resources they need, which are frequently few in places. This time is also being utilized by educators like Ms. Dickerson to connect parents and offspring in fresh ways. The hardest aspect of the shift to remote learning, as she describes in the video, was having to translate what she does in the classroom to the parents. Parents are a child's first teachers, according to Ms. Dickerson. How can I impart my professional expertise to them in a way that keeps learning for their toddlers relevant and interesting? (ABA, 2020).

Quality of Education during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Town:** The town is home to thousands of residents and hundreds of educational institutions. All schools and other educational institutions were closed during this most recent period, COVID-19. Every educational media has switched from traditional classroom settings to online learning. Although the students and learners can still study, it is not as effective as learning in a classroom. In actuality, some understudies doze off in front of the displays as the teachers’ work (Toquero, 2020).

**Countryside:** The Network and Internet are additional COVID-19 detrimental effects on rural learning methods. Internet is a difficult issue for learning in rural areas, and it influences the outcomes of the educational process. Nevertheless, it enables the learners to learn despite the difficulty (Toquero, 2020).

**Challenges for Students in General**

Concerns regarding how to provide children with the proper care and make sure they return, if at all possible, to a safe home are shared by all areas. In addition to being concerned about sustaining services remotely, if not with facemasks, they are also worried about student visas, housing, and health care.

Concerns have been raised regarding COVID-19 sending students back to neighborhoods that are not necessarily supportive of higher education objectives and occasionally unsafe homes. Additionally, COVID-19 denies certain students the chance to work part-time, casually, or as work-study students, all of which are crucial sources of money for many students (Block et al.,

We are aware of the risks that student affairs and services are concentrating primarily on crisis responses, essentializing Statistical Analysis System (SAS) to a limited range of response services that aim to provide a service to the practical aspects of learning, aside from these more overt difficulties related to student wellness and teaching and learning continuity (Rios & Longoria, 2021).

The disparities in educational systems have been made clear by the COVID-19 problem. When we firmly believed that education would be a social equalizer and a path to social mobility, we are now faced with the stark differences between those who are connected and those who are not (Rios & Longoria, 2021).

But there are other factors at play in our world's division as well. Concerns about access to facilities and resources, clean water, secure housing, and proper healthcare also cause us to disagree. We disagree on topics such as student and institutional preparedness for innovation, political control over our institutions and financing formulae, and institutional autonomy and regulatory organizations (Rios & Longoria, 2021).

Fear of spreading has intensified due to COVID-19, which has caused people to become more fearful of one another. This is a concern that we might not be able to address when students slump over their keyboards, a concern that we might not be able to address with online conversations, webinars, or learning tools. The general goals of higher education are neglected when coursework at institutions of higher learning is restricted to topic mastery (Rios & Longoria, 2021).

Students who participate in higher education should cultivate a sense of their responsibility as social justice agents, leadership awareness and skills, critical thinking and behavior, and respect for inclusiveness, diversity, and pluralism (Rios & Longoria, 2021).

The claim is not that this cannot be created elsewhere, but rather that when the university experience and teaching and learning are limited to online interaction, many chances for student growth are lost (Rios & Longoria, 2021).

How can we progress these graduate characteristics and abilities when online learning and modularized learning units become the norm? These are the fundamental difficulties SAS faces. How can the COVID-19 situation be used to benefit institutional, staff, and student

The challenge for the post-COVID-19 world is how to ensure that students become agents of social justice, develop a sense of community and empowerment to participate in knowledge creation, and ultimately develop the kinds of traits that will enable them to change the world into a shared space where fear of the other is replaced by care for one another (Rios & Longoria, 2021).

Challenges of Education Reform during the COVID-19 Pandemic

My school temporarily closed the school for nearly six months during the early stages of the epidemic as per the directives of the Kingdom’s Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport. However, the assignments for students in grades 7 through 12 are still in use. That implies that each teacher is in charge of the subjects they teach. They must always ensure the caliber of instruction for their subjects. Each instructor scheduled a time to meet with their class of no more than twenty pupils to provide homework. Although severe procedures introduced by the Ministry of Health and World Health Organization (WHO) were put into place during this particular conference. To share the lessons, many teachers established Messenger Groups, Facebook Groups, Telegram Groups, or Telegram Channels. To share the lessons with students, I set up Facebook Groups, Telegram Groups, and YouTube Channels (Djalante et al., 2020; Soeung & Chim, 2022).

Up until recently, the Ministry relaxed the restrictions since all of the patients had been successfully treated and released, allowing students in Grades 9 and 12 to resume their studies while maintaining social and hygienic standards. This implies that although students in Grades 9 and 12 are permitted to continue their education at school, there are only a maximum of 20 of them in each class. We normally adhere to the higher criteria because we are a government institution, and the aforementioned items are what we have been doing at our high school (Djalante et al., 2020; Soeung & Chim, 2022).

Education Reform during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the global COVID-19 outbreak, the Cambodian government made the painful choice to close schools in March 2020. Since this announcement, the U.S. Agency for International Development-funded All Children Reading-Cambodia project has been working to ensure that students are practicing their reading and writing skills every day at home using online resources that parents are familiar with, like Facebook and YouTube, as well as encouraging the use of Source: https://sereyrathlearning.wordpress.com/2022/11/25/reflection-of-graduate-students-perceptions-of-the-impacts-of-covid-19-on-education-in-cambodia/
printed books (USAID) (RTI, 2020). Even in well-resourced settings, it can be challenging for parents to help their kids study at home online. Given that the majority of households in Cambodia don't own computers and that many parents have poor IT abilities, the issue is extremely difficult. However, even in rural areas, Facebook is often utilized on cell phones. To reach parents and kids, the initiative has focused on exploiting this already-existing media (RTI, 2020).

With three sets of activities created for students in preschool, Grade 1, and Grade 2, All Children Reading-Cambodia started posting simple story books as albums of images on Facebook every day the week that schools were out so that children could practice age-appropriate reading and writing skills with their parents. Each narrative was also presented as a video with audio and Cambodian Sign Language. Parents and caregivers who struggle to read on a screen or who lack confidence as readers will find the audio to be of particular assistance (RTI, 2020).

Additionally, the Ministry has developed TV channels for students to learn on because nearly all homes with people have a TV. Students can learn by doing appropriately (RTI, 2020).

The greatest method among the ones stated is, in my opinion, TV broadcasting, but to improve the results, parent education programs on how to help their kids learn should also be taken into consideration (RTI, 2020).

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

COVID-19 is what is unavoidable, to sum up. This particular illness has been going on across the world. It is a task for all of the people on our globe, not just one person. The majority of nations worldwide have switched to online education. If there are not enough resources available, online learning is not a simple way to study, but it is a novel possibility for the astute. The majority of students often criticize online classes. Some claim that going to school is challenging. Many students counter that they have plenty of time to conduct research. They do not wear formal uniforms when they are studying. The most crucial thing is to provide teachers or educators with all of the offered assigned work back.

Similarly, I believe that COVID-19 is a significant problem when first seen, but if we look closely at other things that we have never done before it emerged, it will become a unique opportunity. For instance, despite teaching in a government school for over ten years, I had

only ever done so in the classroom. However, the harsh impact of COVID-19 has inspired me to try an online class as a different method of instruction. Additionally, I have been looking for a better way to instruct my students and have come up with the novel concept of creating video lessons that I can publish for them. They can learn anytime they want, wherever, and this also has certain advantages for me. In a nutshell, COVID-19 is a difficult issue for education, but it also offers many students and other people new opportunities.

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