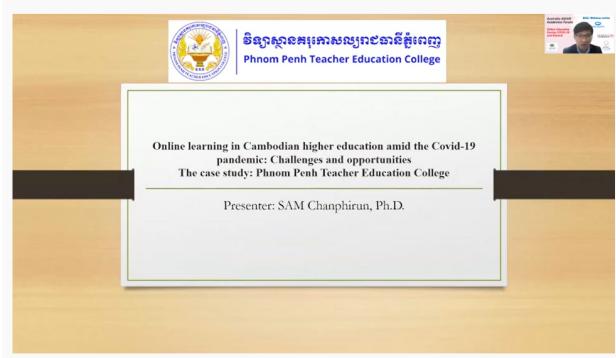


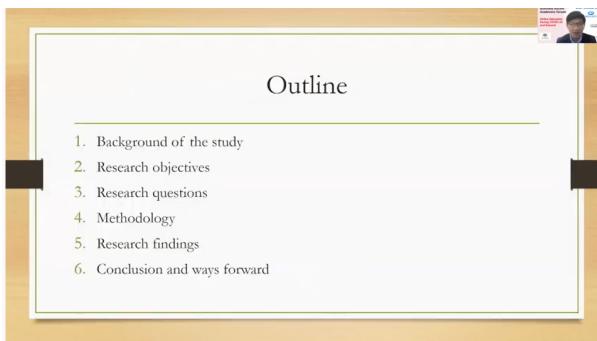
## Australia-ASEAN Academics Forum: Online Education during COVID-19 and Beyond

AAAF Dr. Chanphirun Sam talk 7th Sep 2021

Transcript



Thank you very much Dr Vinh and a very good afternoon to everyone from Cambodia. Right, so I just would like to share the screen. Today I have a topic to share with everyone from different countries and I think it is a good idea that we know about the situation of different countries concerning the online education, online learning in different contexts. Today, it is my pleasure and honour to be invited as the presenter to give a presentation on the online learning in Cambodian context during the pandemic of COVID-19. So I'm going to talk about the challenges and opportunities. Due to the time constraint, so this topic will focus mainly on what is actually happening within the teacher education college, which is one of the Cambodian higher education institution. So I'm going to look at this, a case study, to show you what is actually going on, what challenges we have been encountering, and at the same time, are there any opportunities that we can get, based on the implementation of this online learning, online education.



My presentation will cover a number of sections. I'm going to talk about some background of the study, followed by the research objective, research question, the methodology for this study and research findings, and will conclude with the summary and the way forward for the implementation of online learning in Cambodia. And I think this could be a lesson for other countries as well, especially the country which have similar situation like what is actually happening in Cambodia.

## 1. Background of the study

- The outbreak of the new corona virus, known as COVID-19, has brought about global physical closure of all educational institutions and pushed them to migrate to online platforms.
- Cambodia, one of the countries in Southeast Asia, has suffered the physical closure of educational institutions since mid 2020.
- Cambodian educational institutions are supposed to migrate to online platform despite the fact that they have never experienced it before.
- This issue has necessitated a research study to seek insights into the situation of the migration to the online platform, particularly challenges and opportunities with regard to COVID-19.

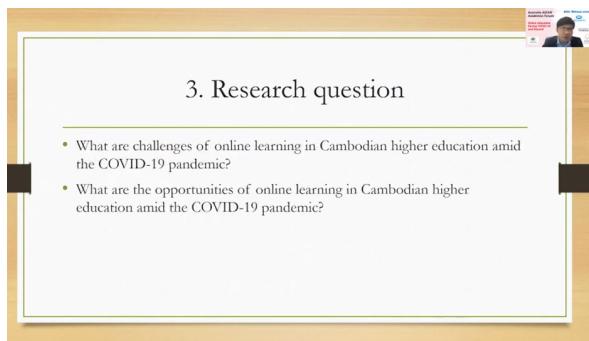
As you could see, I think that we all know this and the COVID-19 has, all the countries and the whole world has suffered the, this kind of pandemic. And this new coronavirus has brought about the, what we call global physical closure of all educational institutions in the whole world. And the only way, the action taken in order to overcome this problem will be to push, in order to make sure that the education is still going on, is actually to push all the educational institution to migrate to online platforms. And that is what we are doing right now. We are using certain online platforms. I think different university, different academic institutions may use different online platforms which are convenient to their students. Cambodia, as well as some other countries in Southeast Asia, all Asia and even other countries in the whole world, has suffered this physical closures of educational institution. In Cambodia itself, it has, some countries, even early 2020, when Cambodia would start to close all the educational institution in mid-2020, but this is just the physical closure of educational institution. We also provide the online services for all the students in order to make sure that the teaching and learning are still going on. So, you could say that this is, I would say, that this is something which is come out of all of a sudden. We don't have any preparation for that. So, we are, at the time that we are supposed to move to school, and we have never had any experience before. And we learn, of course, we learn a lot from the implementation of this online learning. This issue, I would, because of this, because it is actually the first time, we have never experienced that, then I would say that the study on this is really important. This will seek insight into the situation of the migration to the online platform. And I just want to look in particular into the challenges and opportunity with regard to the online education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2. Research objective

- To find out the challenges of online learning in Cambodian higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To ascertain the opportunities of online learning presented to Cambodian higher education institutions amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, the two main research objective, first of all, is to find out the challenges of online learning in Cambodian higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic using the [x] education college as a case study. And secondly, is to find out the opportunity of this kind of online learning presented to Cambodian higher education, presented, particularly to [X] education college, which is the place where I'm working right now. So, we look at this. We have challenges, of course, challenges are something that could not be, I mean, that cannot be avoided, of course, because it is actually our first time, we have never experienced that. But we really want to know what kind of challenges we

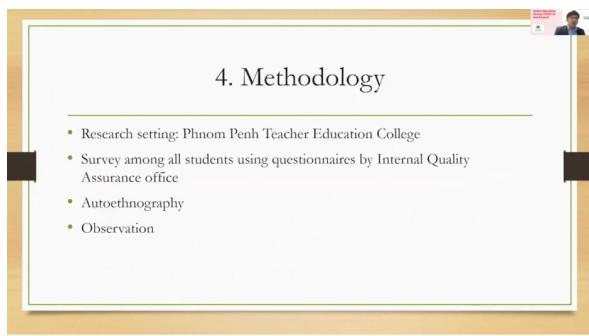
are facing during this online learning. And at the same time, we just want to know whether we can actually get any opportunity from this implementation.



3. Research question

- What are challenges of online learning in Cambodian higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the opportunities of online learning in Cambodian higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic?

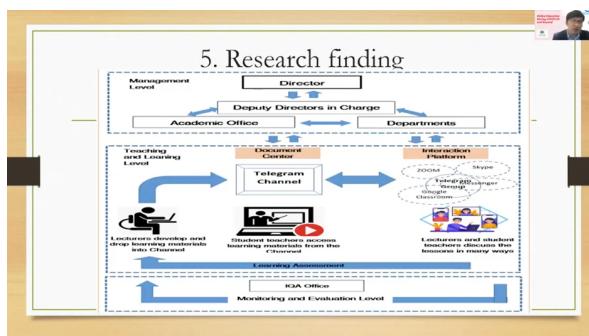
So therefore, we have two main research objectives for this. Number one, we look at the challenges of online learning and the second one, the opportunity of online learning.



4. Methodology

- Research setting: Phnom Penh Teacher Education College
- Survey among all students using questionnaires by Internal Quality Assurance office
- Autoethnography
- Observation

I think, because we don't have much time, I just would like you to look at what has been done in order to gather the data for the study. Of course, the research setting would be [X] education college. This is one of the colleges which provide, I would say, it's a teacher education in the country. So there are different students from different provinces in the country to come and study. So, we have students from the rural areas, from remote areas, from urban areas, so students of different types come to study. And they want to become teachers after they graduate from this institution. So, in addition, we conducted a survey study among students using the questionnaires. And actually got these from the internal quality assurance office in the institute, to share with you all. And another one, it's also applied what we call autoethnography, in which I just look at what is going on and just observe what is going on and to note down what has been happening, what challenges they are, and what the opportunity or something like that. So, this will provide me with in-depth understanding to the practice of online learning in the institution.



5. Research finding

The flowchart illustrates the research process across three levels:

- Management Level:** Director, Deputy Directors in Charge, Academic Office, Departments.
- Teaching and Learning Level:** Lecturers develop and design learning material into Channel, Student teachers access learning material from the Channel, Interaction (ZOOM, Telegram, WhatsApp, Classroom, etc.).
- Learning Assessment Level:** IGA Office.

Arrows indicate the flow of information and interaction between these levels.

So, what are the challenges? Now, before we move through the challenges, I just want to draw your attention to this one. So, as you could see here, this is the management team. We have director and deputy directors who are working in order to, and we also have the management level here, academic office and departments. They're working all together in order to check what is going on during this. As we know, at the beginning, before we started this online learning, we actually did not have ideas about the online platforms. So what we could do, there are a number of platforms that we use or for the student to interact with each other, for the teachers to interact with the students. So, we face lots of challenges. So, we also zoom and we also use skype as you could see over here, everyone. We have zoom, we have used skype, we have used telegram, we use messenger, we have used google classroom. We use all or whatever possible that is quite convenient to our students, to our teachers.

But later on, after using all of this numbers of platforms to communicate during this online learning, we now come up with the platform. We just use one particular platform as the main means for communication and for teaching and learning. We use google classroom and google suite. We use google suite as a platform, so we have google classroom, google meet for the video discussion or whatever. And we still also use telegram. As I just want to tell you that telegram is very popular in Cambodia because we just used it to communicate for the instant communication. This is very quick because it is connected with the telephone number. So, people will have this, and we can send messages very quickly. And you could see that here, it shows you teaching and learning level at these, at this level.

But the thing is that we, so the process here, it's here, which is going, but at the same time, to know whether the students have learned things or not, we need to conduct a learning assessment. So, learning assessment. With the result of the assessment, it gives the ideas to the lecturers what is actually going on, what is the problem. And then the teachers will try to adjust their teaching in order to fit with the students' need, in order to support the student more effectively. So, a regular assessment is actually conducted. So we also have a unit in charge which is mainly in charge of [x] and evaluation. So, we have the formative assessment and we also have the summative assessment, and we have the evaluation, the course and the program evaluation, just to make sure that our program is really effective, or whether the students are really satisfied with that or not. So, we just want to learn from the student. And we know from the students, we know from the lecturers, and this is the basis for our decision as the management to make sure to come up with a certain guideline or mechanism in order to make the course of the program even more effective.



5. Research finding

- Challenges
  - **Digital competence:** Lack of digital literacy; both students and teachers could not perform online learning and teaching properly due to the swift migration to the online platform.
  - **Technology:** limited access to Internet, out-of-date technological devices, lack of awareness about digital platforms
  - **Digital teaching and learning materials:** absence of digital materials and e-library to support students' learning
  - **Socio-economic situation:** Some lecturers and students cannot afford computers.
  - **Student and lecturer workload:** Heavy workload compared to the traditional teaching and learning

If we look at challenges of the online learning, of course, numbers of challenges has been found. First is digital competence. How well do teachers and students, how well and how much are teachers and students well aware of the technology. Previously, teachers and students rely heavily on the

traditional teaching and learning. So teaching and learning can only happen when they can meet each other face to face in a physical classroom setting. So they are not really accustomed to that, and they did not know much about how to use technology. And that is a problem. So the switch, migration to the online platform is really a big challenge because of this. Student and teachers cannot adapt themselves well to this online platform. It takes time for teachers to know how to use the platform in order to use it to teach the student, and the student also have a lot of difficulties. So, this is a very big challenge.

Another important thing, I think this is also mentioned by the previous presenter, concerning the internet connectivity technology. The problem is the access to the internet connectivity. This is a problem because student, during the physical closure of the institution, the students go back to the hometown and their hometown is actually far from the city centre. And they are, some of them are in the rural areas and remote areas where the internet connection is very, very limited. So another important thing is the out-of-date technological devices. So, they use the computer, but the computer itself, it's quite old. So when we use, you could see that we use zoom, we use google meet, or sometimes we use Microsoft teams. So this requires the updated device in order that we can use the platform properly and effectively.

Another one is the awareness about the digital platforms. We don't know much about it. So another important thing, as you know, I think that most of the time before the pandemic, our teachers just use the books, use the material that, the physical materials, to teach the students. But when it comes to the online learning, online education, we don't have the digital materials to share with the students, to support teaching students, to students learning. Teachers find it difficult to get it and students also do not have enough materials to learn. Because the teachers do not have enough time to create the digital materials within a short period of time. And also, we mainly rely on the library, but our library is quite traditional. So, no library, so the student cannot have access to the resources in the library because you need to come to school in order to read the books in the library. So we don't have electronic library, and so that is also another challenge.

Another thing is to do with the social economic situation. Some teachers and some students cannot afford computers. So this is a problem, and many students just use their phones in order to connect to the online platform for their learning, but that is not really effective because it's not as convenient as computers. And some lecturers cannot afford. So, but the thing is that we also support our lecturers as well with the computers for their online teaching purposes. As you could see that because we are not well prepared for this, we never know that such a serious problem happen like this in the whole world. So, lots of things has to be done and there are lots of new things, because things, more things are very new. And this is the new experience. So it takes time. Even student teachers take time to learn and take time to learn how to use the platform, to learn how to prepare the lesson, the digital lesson, to teach. So you could see that there is a lot of workload compared to the traditional teaching and learning. So I think, the heavy workload here is a big challenge. It's not only in Cambodia, but also in some other countries. And teachers provide lots of tasks for the student. They scan it and they scan the tasks, assignment, or sometimes they create, they make it in Microsoft word or pdf and send it to the student. So, student also complained about how heavy the workload is during this online learning.

## 5. Research finding (cont.)

### • Challenges

- **Instructional delivery:** limited ability to organize productive interaction with students online, use active/collaborative learning and teaching, lack of flexibility
- **Assessment and supervision:** Difficulty in regulating and controlling students during the tests, exams, or quizzes
- **Compatibility:** Online learning does not apply well in some disciplines such as sciences and sports where hands-on experiences are required.

So, how about other challenges? Other challenges would be the instructional delivery. Limited ability to organize productive interaction with the students online. How can you promote, how can we promote the active collaborative learning and teaching. And their lack of flexibility. And some other lectures are quite old, and they cannot adapt themselves so well, and the interaction between teachers and students during this online class is very limited. So, the training for the lecturers is still limited. Another thing is the assessment and supervision. So, test, exams. How can we actually control it? So there's a difficulty to make sure that the exam papers are administered in a fair manner and the student will not cheat or whatever. So we are still concerned this is a difficulty, and this is also our concern about regulating and controlling the student during the exam, especially with the final exam of each year.

Another thing is that the compatibility, and what do I mean by that? Compatibility, is to do with online teaching that does not apply well in some disciplines. For example, sciences, sports, this kind of disciplines requires the hands-on experiences. You need to do the experiment, so it's not that easy to conduct an experiment to conduct a virtual experiment to show the student. So, the student also need to do practice. So, we can show all the students, but the students, they cannot actually practice because they cannot come to school, to the laboratory, to experiment what they have learned, to get the hands-on experience. So it's all hands-off experience, rather than hands-on experience. So because as you know, in our institution, there are lots of disciplines, social sciences, pure sciences, languages, math, so lots. And we found that some courses, some discipline are not well compatible with, are not really well applied. So this is also another thing that we are now thinking about.

## 5. Research findings (cont.)

### • Opportunities

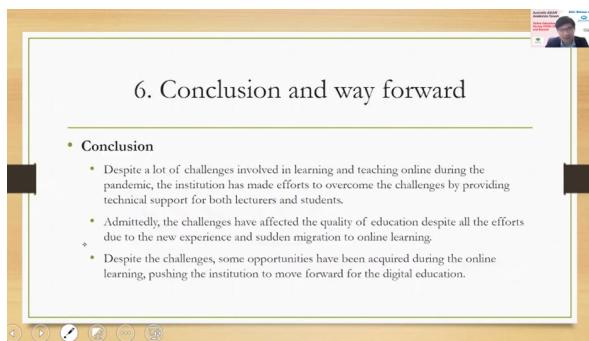
- Independent learning: Students have learned to study independently, compared to the time when they have to study in the physical classrooms.
- Digital competence: Both students and lecturers have learned how to use technology in teaching and learning during the online learning. They have improved their digital literacy.
- Digital materials: The institution has emphasized the use of digital materials for teaching and learning.
- Professional Development: Lecturers have received more learning opportunities on using ICT in education.

But at the same time, there are also some opportunities that we could see, that we could actually get from the implementation of online learning during this pandemic. Number one, we have noticed that students tend to be more independent. So, they start to learn more independently. So, in the past, students just depend on their teachers. So, most of the time that they are in class is mainly the time that they have to study. But this make the student become more independent to study. So this is what we can see and they spend more time conducting the self-study.

Secondly, we could see that both teachers and students start to learn how to use technology in their teaching and learning. So now they start to improve their digital literacy. And at the same time, the institution also try to provide training opportunities on ICT for lecturers. So now, lecturers are more confident in using the online platform to teach their students.

Thirdly is the digital materials. Now, because in the past we did not put a great emphasis on developing the digital material for teaching and learning, but now it is time that the institution needs to consider this. So this is the opportunity, and we also have developed partners who are trying to support the institution in order to develop the digital learning materials for teaching and learning. So this is another thing, so by the end of this pandemic, we will have a number of digital material to teach our students, and our lecturers also have a lot of digital materials.

So, one more thing is professional development. So, lecturers have received more learning opportunity on ICT and education. So there are lots of opportunity, not just the opportunity within the institution but also the opportunity from outside. Even some other country really want to collaborate with institution in order to provide the PD opportunity for our lecturers. So this is the time for people, not only teacher, student but also management team, try to start to pay attention to digital education. So, we learn by doing. This mean that we've learned a lot from the implementation of this online learning.

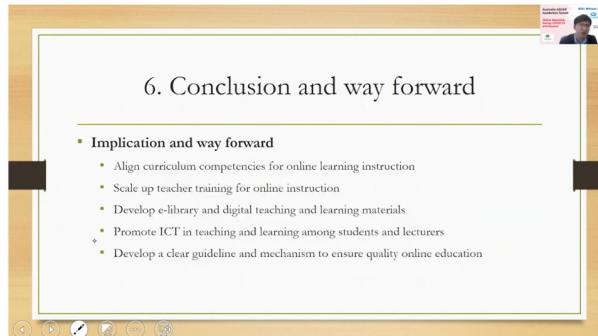


6. Conclusion and way forward

- Conclusion
  - Despite a lot of challenges involved in learning and teaching online during the pandemic, the institution has made efforts to overcome the challenges by providing technical support for both lecturers and students.
  - Admittedly, the challenges have affected the quality of education despite all the efforts due to the new experience and sudden migration to online learning.
  - Despite the challenges, some opportunities have been acquired during the online learning, pushing the institution to move forward for the digital education.

So, I would just say that the institution, there are numbers of challenges of course, but we've made our efforts to overcome these challenges by providing the technical support for not only teachers but also students. And we also need to admit that the challenges has affected the qualities of education within the institution. And this is not really a challenge for this case only, but this is also the challenges of other higher education institution. This online learning, even though it's going on, but the challenges have affected the quality and the effectiveness of the teaching and learning. That is why, even now, the government has started to consider reopening the schools to a certain extent so that the student can come back to school to make use of the facilities in order to improve their knowledge and understanding and to practice, to conduct, to get hands-on experience by practicing in the institution itself.

Next, we could see that there are opportunities during this online, and this is the opportunity that pushed the institution to move forward for digital education. Now, digital education has become one of the priority to promote qualities of teaching and learning in our institution. And digital education has also been emphasized by the ministry of education in Cambodia, in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning throughout the country. So we start now. Last time, we did not pay much attention, but now it becomes one of the priority in developing the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in the country.



6. Conclusion and way forward

**Implication and way forward**

- Align curriculum competencies for online learning instruction
- Scale up teacher training for online instruction
- Develop e-library and digital teaching and learning materials
- Promote ICT in teaching and learning among students and lecturers
- Develop a clear guideline and mechanism to ensure quality online education

So, what is the implication? What would be the way forward? Now, what we can do, and this is also to share with all the participants from different countries. What can we learn and what can we do in order, based on the experience of this online learning during this pandemic? Number one, we will not depend so heavily on the traditional teaching and learning. So, even our curriculum needs to be aligned. We need to align the curriculum competency for the online learning instruction. So this is something that we need to consider. And we also need to skill up. It's not just about teacher training for physical teaching instruction, but it's also about try to think, try to consider scaling up the training and the teacher training for online instruction. This is also another thing. What we can do to be ready for the digital education even after this pandemic, we need to make sure that we have the e-library, digital learning and teaching materials, and we need to promote ICT and teaching and learning among students and lecturers. And at the same time, we will develop a clearer guidelines and mechanism to ensure a quality online education. We don't know when COVID-19 will disappear from the earth. So, even though some of the school in different parts of the countries can be reopened, but the thing is that we cannot open it in a way that it was a few years ago, before the COVID-19. So, we need, to a certain extent, possibly, we can have the, what we call blended learning instead of coming to a school all together to study like what we did in the past. So what we could do would be to think about promoting on digital education, online education for now and for the future.