



WDE Commentary No. 5

“Ed-tech During Crisis”

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The WDE Policy Dialogue

វគ្គ ៥៖ "ការប្រើប្រាស់បច្ចេកវិទ្យានៅក្នុងវិស័យអប់រំក្នុងបរិបទកូវីដ-១៩"

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The 5th episode of WDE Policy dialogue titled “Ed-tech During Crisis” was hosted on 23rd July 2021 via Zoom and live-streamed on AVI’s Facebook page. The two guest speakers were H.E. Dr Sann Vathana, Under Secretary of State of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS), and Okhna Pech Bolen, Executive Director of Westline Education Group Co., Ltd.

The dialogue started with the definition of educational technology (Ed-tech). It is followed by the importance and impact of technology in educational institutions. Both guest speakers additionally discussed the contribution of women in Cambodia’s education sector. Finally, the dialogue concluded with suggestions and recommendations from the guest speakers that encourage women to continue standing up to their challenges.

According to H.E. Vathana, Ed-tech is not only about studying online, but it is formed by education theory, education management, education methods, education subjects, and education infrastructure. In addition, Okhna Bolen claimed that Ed-tech was not only significant amid the pandemic. However, it should be used even before the pandemic occurred. He noticed that Ed-tech had significantly gained traction in the last two years, and it was easy for students living in remote areas to study in private schools in Phnom Penh. Moreover, both guest speakers strongly agreed that online classes could not replace the physical classroom, which is compulsory to promote human interaction and social awareness.

The discussion proceeded by discussing the impacts of Ed-tech. Even though Ed-tech has helped significantly during the

pandemic, it also comes with negative impacts. As stated by H.E. Dr Vathana, there are challenges when using Ed-tech, including digital security, Internet service, and expense on license and server required in each classroom. He continued that there are currently many mobile applications that are harmful to users’ privacy. He also encouraged Internet companies to extend their Internet connection to those living in remote areas. Furthermore, Okhna Bolen shared his concern about students’ mental health due to the lack of physical activities during online classes. Therefore, more activities and tools are required to create a social environment that can help them grow up physically and mentally.

Finally, both guest speakers discussed the contribution of women in the educational sector in Cambodia. According to H.E Dr Vathana, the number of women holding advanced degrees is low compared to men. He mentioned that the MoEYS had formulated several policies to support women and girls, such as Lifelong Learning Policy, Youth Development Policy, Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, Inclusive Education Policy, Teacher Policy Action Plan, STEM Education Policy, and School Health Policy. He added that the MoEYS has also established programmes to allow women to show their talents in the technological field, such as Technovation competition, educational institutions for women and girls, special scholarships for them, and other curriculums that value and promote women and girls. He raised an example of his elder sister, who had to take care of her parents and finished her doctoral degree after her siblings. In addition, both guest speakers shared the same views on women’s role in Ed-tech. Women have taken many responsibilities and sacrifices

for both family and society, but their contribution to the education field, especially in higher education, is still limited. Therefore, both guest speakers encouraged the MoEYS and relevant stakeholders to pay more attention and provide additional assistance to women in the educational sector. More importantly, women themselves must not be discouraged from participating in education despite the difficulties and obstacles they have confronted.

To sum up, the use of educational technology in Cambodia has been in high demand amid the pandemic. Moreover, it is important to note that the role of women in the educational sector is still limited. However, with the support from MoEYS, relevant stakeholders, and especially the utmost determination of women themselves, women students could achieve their goals in education, and women leaders could thrive in the educational sector.

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