

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF CAMBODIA

GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA
DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA HISTORY EDUCATION

REPORT

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Introduction

Now in its second year, March 17th saw the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam) conduct its 5th classroom forum of 2017 at Wat Koh High School on the importance of studying the history of Democratic Kampuchea (DK). Part of DC-Cam's larger Genocide Education Programme, the project is in collaboration with the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, and supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It follows the success of previous forums this year, and these forums have been conducted throughout a number of high schools within Phnom Penh, intending not only to enhance students understanding of Democratic Kampuchea (also known as the Khmer Rouge regime) and the history surrounding the period, but also to encourage open dialogue and critical thinking about the past and its influence on the present and future of Cambodia.

The forum's objectives are as follows:

1. To provide students with an opportunity to share and express their personal knowledge on what happened during the Democratic Kampuchea regime.
2. To let students think critically on the transitional consequences of this legacy to the current Cambodian society.
3. To encourage discussion over this legacy in families and communities.
4. To distribute Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) textbooks to participating students.
5. To facilitate mentoring opportunities between trained SRI/DC-Cam/MoEYS officials and local teachers.

Format and Analysis

The forum that took place on March 17th lasted around three hours, and followed a similar structure to those of previous forums with minor changes. The DC-Cam staff were warmly greeted by the Head Teacher (or vice?) before the forum formally began. Typically, the classroom forums begin with a short introduction whilst the students fill out a 'pre-forum survey'. These surveys intend to gather information on the level of knowledge students already have regarding DK history, perceptions of the importance of studying the period (particularly in school environments), and whether students have discussed the history of DK with family. After the forum, students fill out a 'post-forum survey' to gauge their perceptions of the forum and evaluate how they feel their understanding has improved. The results of these will be discussed in the following section, on page eight.

K-W-L Teaching Method

Within the forum, once students had completed the pre-forum survey they were encouraged to think of questions and knowledge they had about the history of DK, and write these on two blank posters that were displayed at the front of the forum. This relates to Mr. Rasy's teaching methodology, which is based on a 'K-W-L' scheme. 'K' refers to the question 'what do students know?', 'W' refers to the question 'what do students want to know?', and 'L' refers to the question 'what have students learnt?'. These two posters were therefore titled: 'What do you want to learn about the Khmer Rouge regime?' and 'What do you know about the Khmer Rouge regime?'.

The following questions were written in the case of the former (Khmer to English translation):

1. Who created the Khmer Rouge regime?
2. Why did the Khmer Rouge kill their own people?
3. Are relatives of the convicts guilty?
4. What are the causes of this regime?

5. Why was King Norodom Sihanouk absent during the Lon Nol regime until the Democratic Kampuchea regime?
6. Who are the Khmer Rouge leaders and how many members did they have?
7. What are the destructions caused by the Khmer Rouge regime?
8. During the Khmer Rouge regime, what does the term “Angkar” mean?
9. What is the Khmer Rouge?
10. What are the purposes of the Khmer Rouge regime?
11. Why is Tuol Sleng prison called “S-21”?
12. During the Democratic Regime, what are the causes and impacts to our current Cambodia society?
13. Describe the government of that regime.

The following points were written in the case of the latter (Khmer to English translation):

1. The Khmer Rouge claimed the lives of 1,700,000 people by starvation and overwork.
2. The Khmer Rouge evacuated from people from the city with the reason of clearing 17 April people.
3. What are the impacts left by the Khmer Rouge regime to Cambodian people?
4. The Khmer Rouge regime lasted 3 years 8 months 20 days.
5. I know about the 8 principles of the Khmer Rouge regime.
6. The expel of the Vietnamese people
7. Abolish currency
8. The Khmer Rouge regime which was led by Salot Sar entered Phnom Penh in April 17, 1975 at 9:30 pm.
9. The principles and requirements of the Khmer Rouge focused on the export and import of national products and ammunition.
10. S-21 Security Centre during the Khmer Rouge regime was under the administration of Kaing Guech Eav alias Duch.
11. During the Khmer Rouge regime, Angkar forced people to marry with one another without asking them.

12. The Khmer Rouge forced people to overwork and provided insufficient food regarding their labour force.
13. The Khmer Rouge brutally tortured their own citizens.
14. Khieu Samphan used to serve as the head of cabinet and head of state during the Democratic Kampuchea.

Presentation of Khmer Rouge History

Following the creation of these two posters, Mr. Pheng Pong-Rasy – who lead much of the forum - put students' questions about the Khmer Rouge regime in numerical order the students' questions about the Khmer Rouge regime so that they were numbered in an order that reflected the historical sequence of events, and used these questions to explain to the students the history of DK and the implications of the regime. In this way, the forum took a slight change from the regular format, in replacing the usual PowerPoint presentation with the discussion and explanation of students' questions. This particular part of the forum exemplifies the flexibility of the classroom forums; the format can be altered to cater to those students taking part, in order to best respond to their learning needs. Thus, students were taught about the Khmer Rouge regime, but with a focus on those elements that they themselves deemed most significant and relevant. Further, the nature of the questions posed by the students allowed a range of topics to be touched upon; from the more foundational questions about the origins of the KR regime; to the regime's format, language, and purpose; to the implications of the regime in contemporary Cambodia, including legal repercussions.

Short Film Screening

Following the explanation of these questions, Mr. Rasy moved on to show a video made during the 1970's, which depicted a particular view of the Khmer Rouge regime. This component provided the students with a visual representation of the history they had heard about, and in this way might help to reify the history that they themselves had never experienced.

Presentation on Interview Skills

This led to the section of the forum focused on 'interview skills', ran by Mr. Long Dany Long, Team Leader of the 'Promoting Accountability' project. This segment consisted to teaching the students valuable interview techniques, and incorporated a document of pre-written script depicting a fictional interview between an interviewer, and an ex-Khmer Rouge cadre interviewee. Beyond reading over the script and learning how best to engage in an interview, one student was encouraged to volunteer for an interview role-play in front of the forum. One female student volunteered, and used the script to practice interviewing another DC-Cam staff member who played the role of interviewee. Having spoken with the student after the forum, she reported being very nervous about taking part in the interview role-play because she had never experienced a task like it. She also reported having enjoyed what the practice taught her, despite her initial apprehension, and in this way it is evident that including an interview skills section is valuable for the students. This is arguably for two reasons. The first; interview capability is in general an important skill to have in terms of future employment and education. The second; the format of the interview, structured around a fictional interview of an ex-Khmer Rouge member, inadvertently encourages students to go home and informally interview their own family about their experiences of the Khmer Rouge regime. The role-play has the potential to teach students how to approach the topic, what kinds of questions to ask, and how to have the confidence to do so. Thus, the interview skills component appeared beneficial to the students in a number of ways.

Textbook Distribution

Additionally, the students received a copy of 'A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979' textbook. Given the limited time frame of the forums, these textbooks provide students with the opportunity for further research and learning. It is worth noting that elements of the forum would be included in the students' final examinations, and so the textbook also provides a valuable study tool and helps to reinforce the relevance of this kind of historical education for the students' own lives – arguably an important factor in encouraging

engagement with a historical period that occurred outwith the students own lives and experiences.

The Forced Transfer Exhibition

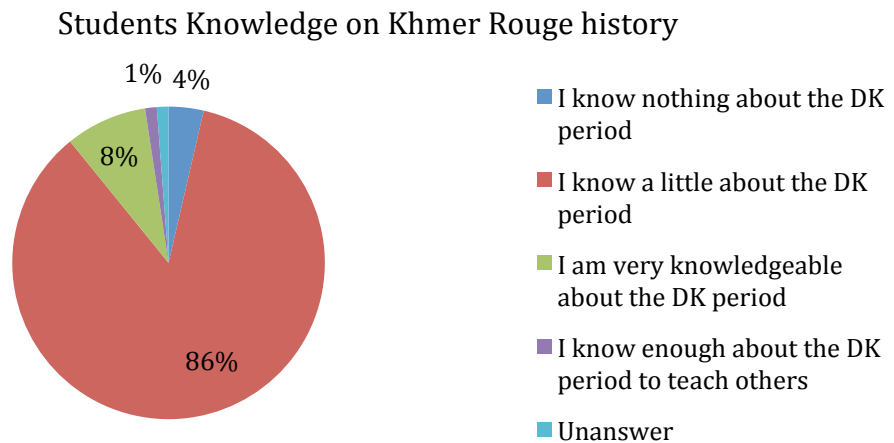
Unfortunately, the forum extended beyond the time constraints that would have allowed the entire group to tour the Forced Transfer exhibition. However, students were able to remain after the forum to tour the exhibition if they wished (which a number of students did, as outlined in more detail below). Further, the exhibition remains at the school for a week, allowing students to tour the exhibition in their own time.

Pre- and Post-Forum Survey Results

The pre-forum survey allowed DC-Cam to gain data on the forum's gender composition. The forum was made up of 83 students; 61% of which were female, and 39% of which were male.

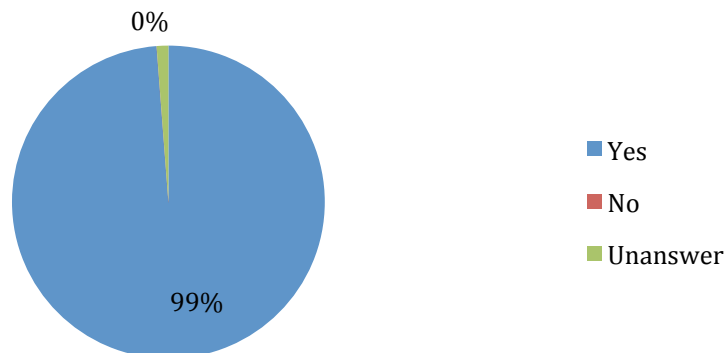
A number of questions are comparable between the pre- and post-forum surveys, whilst others work instead to understand students' perceptions of the forum. The following questions were asked in the pre-forum survey. The

Q.1 How would you describe your knowledge of the DK period?

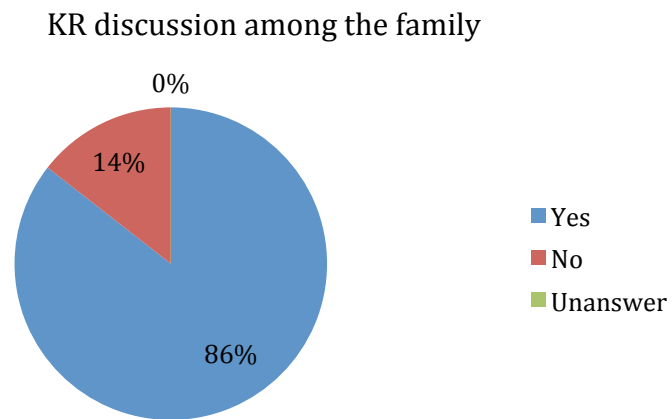


Q.2 Do you believe that mass atrocities occurred during the DK regime?

Students believe that mass atrocities occurred between 1975-79

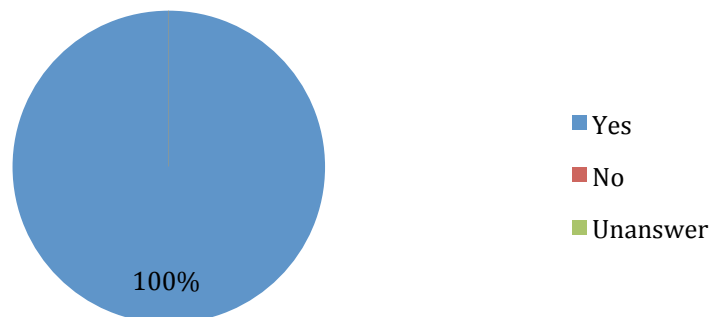


Q.3 Have you ever talked about the DK period with your parents, or with people who lived during that time?

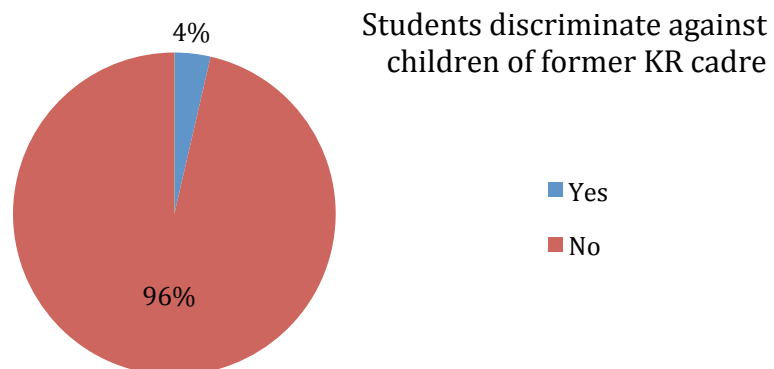


Q.4 Do you think the study of the history of DK is important?

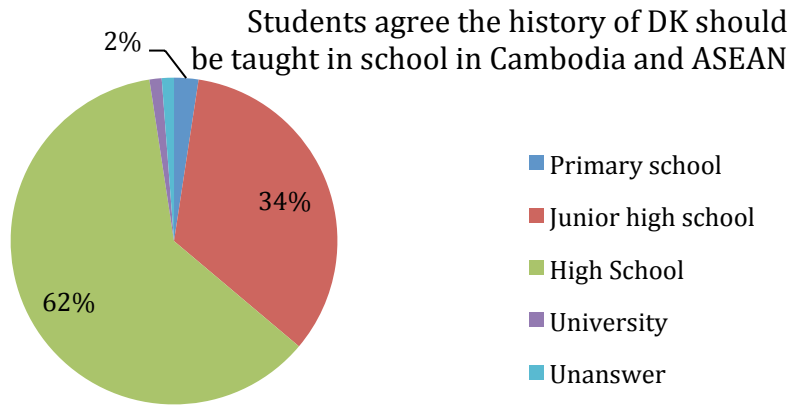
Students think the study of KR history is important



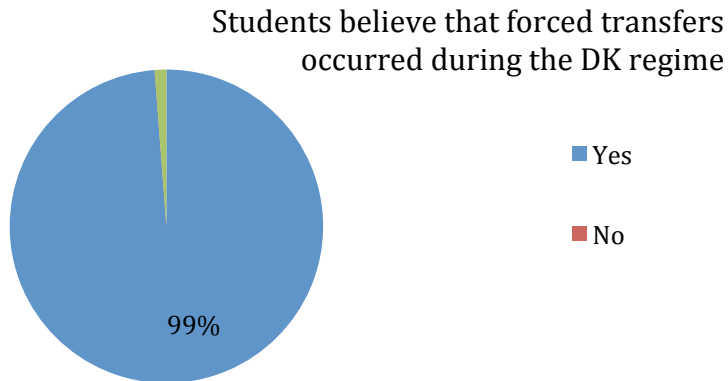
Q.5 If one of your friends is the son/daughter of a perpetrator, would you discriminate against him/her?



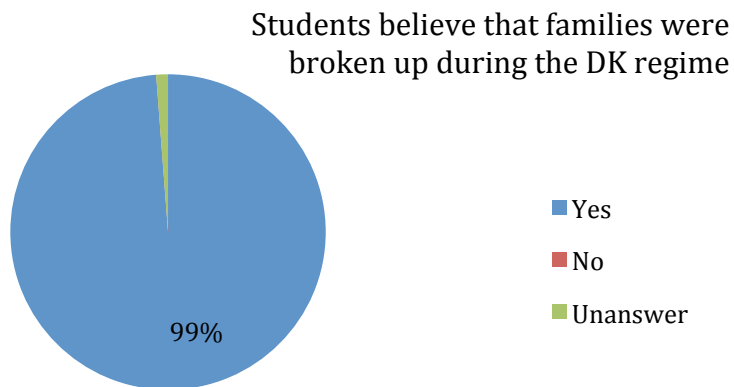
Q.6 Should the history of DK be taught in school in Cambodia?



Q.7 Do you believe that forced transfers occurred during the DK regime?

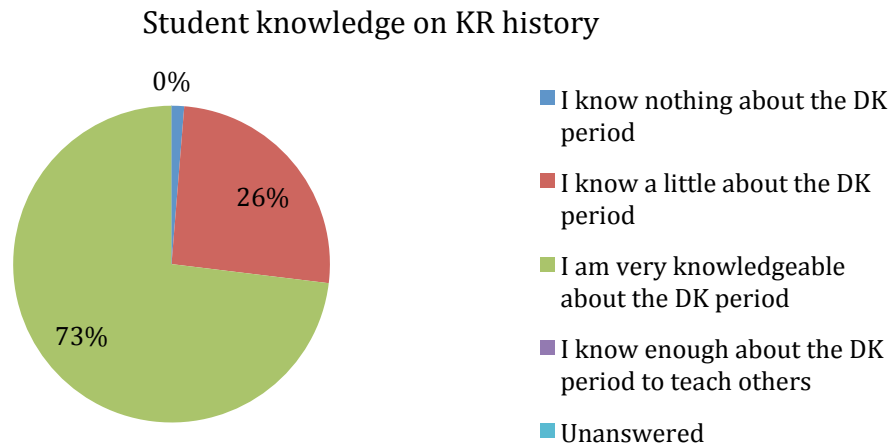


Q.8 Do you believe that families were broken up during the DK regime?

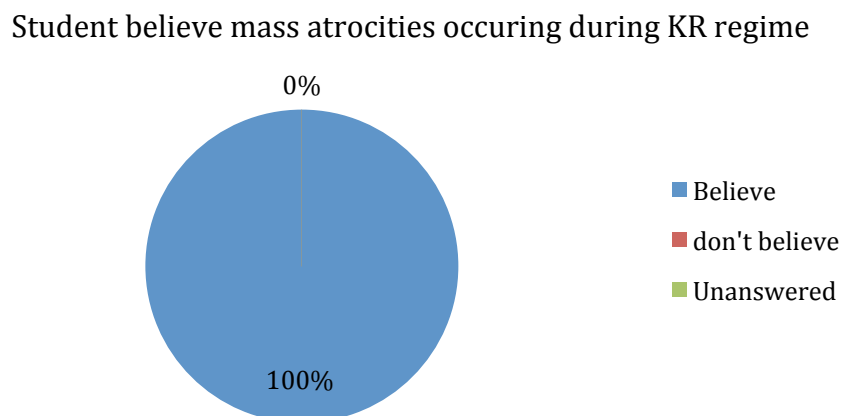


The following questions and answers were given in response to the Post-Forum survey. The answers are also displayed by percentage in the pie charts.

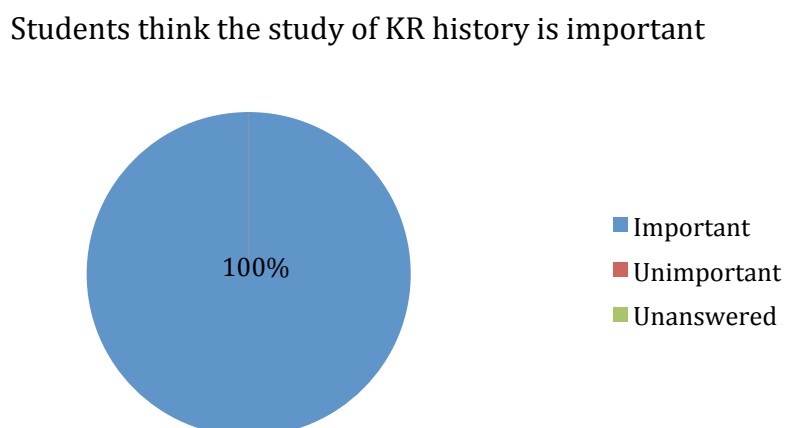
Q.1 How would you describe your knowledge of the KR period?



Q.2 Do you believe that mass atrocities occurred during the Khmer Rouge regime?

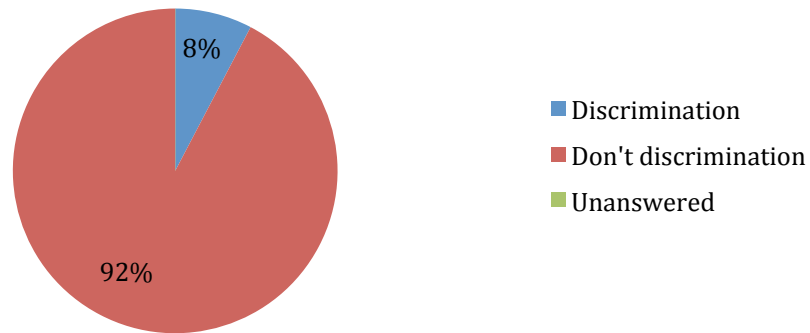


Q.3 Do you think the study of DK history is important?



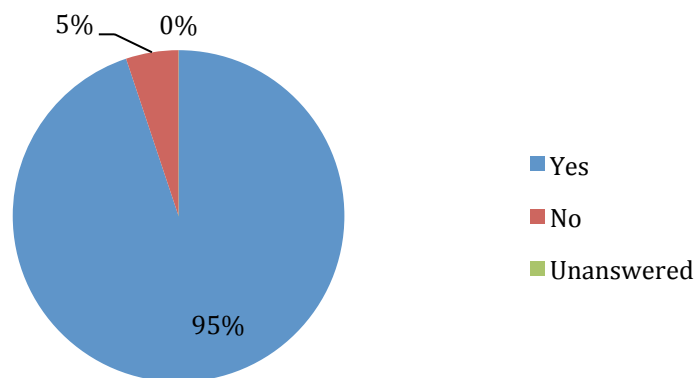
Q.4 If one of your friends is the son/daughter of a perpetrator, would you discriminate against him/her?

Student' opinion on discrimination against former KR cadre' children



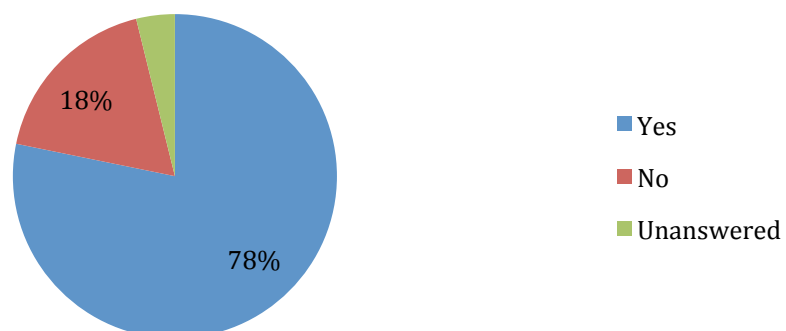
Q.5 Does the study of DK encourage you to think of building peace in Cambodian society?

Students' opinion on building peace after studying KR history



Q.6 Does the study of DK history encourage you to think about the idea of healing?

Students' opinion on healing after studying KR history



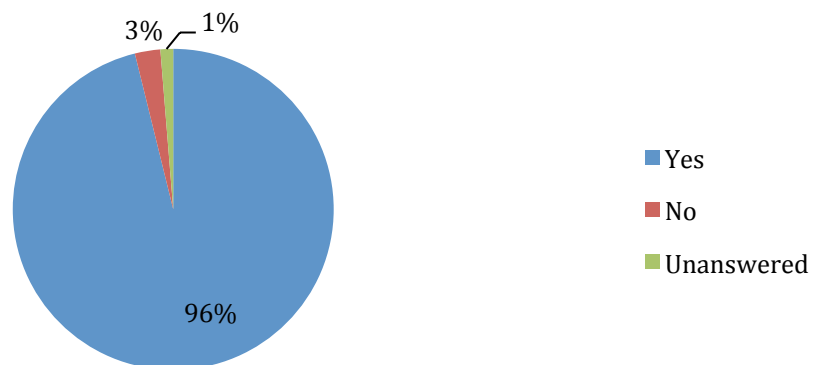
Q.7 Does the study of DK history encourage you to think about the idea of reconciliation?

Students' opinion on reconciliation after studying KR history



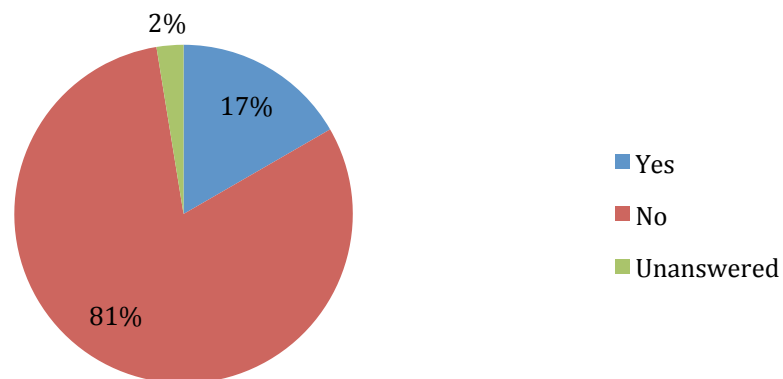
Q.8 Does the study of the history of DK encourage you to think about genocide prevention for the future of Cambodia?

Students' opinion on prevention of genocide after studying KR history



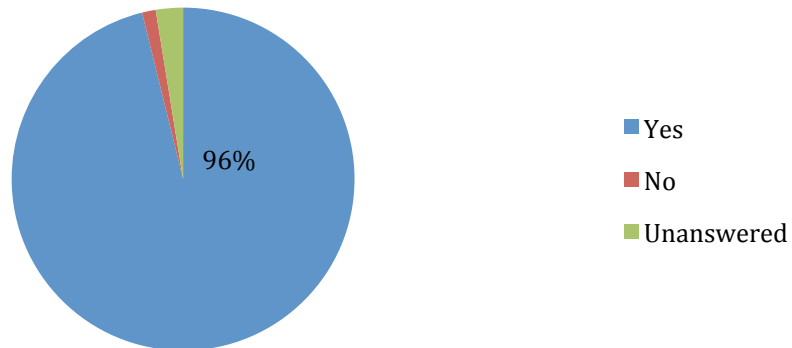
Q.9 Do you feel uncomfortable learning about the history of the DK?

Students' feeling on learning the history of DK



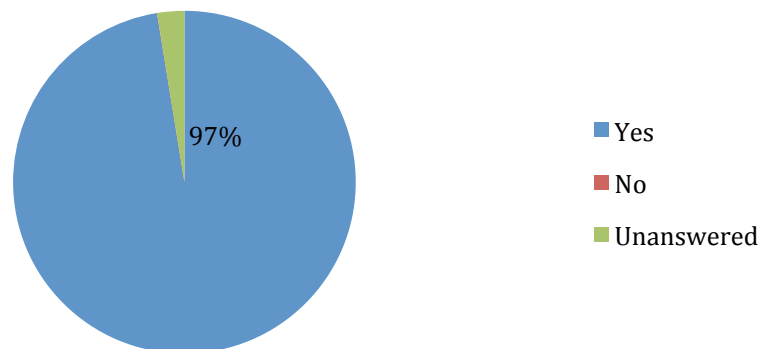
Q.10 Do you believe that forced transfers occurred during the Khmer Rouge regime?

Was "forced transfer" happened during the KR time?



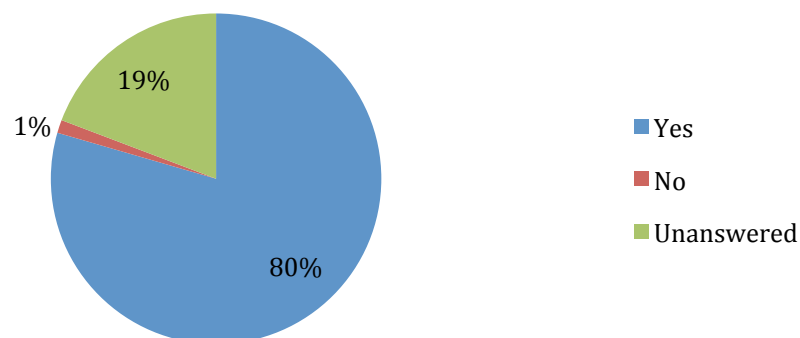
Q.11 Do you believe that the forces separation of families occurred during the Khmer Rouge regime?

Do students believe (forced separation of family) was happened during the KR?

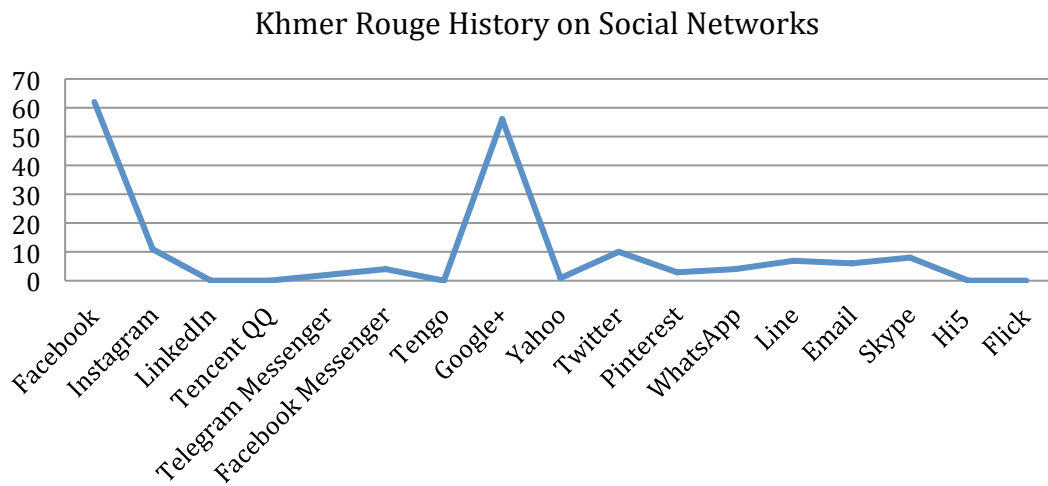


Q.13 Besides studying Khmer Rouge history in the classroom or a public space, do you think this history should be posted on social media?

KR history on the social networks

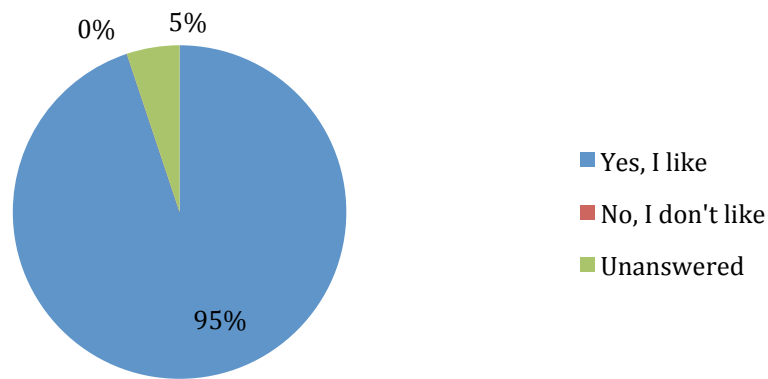


Q.13a What social networks are best for you?



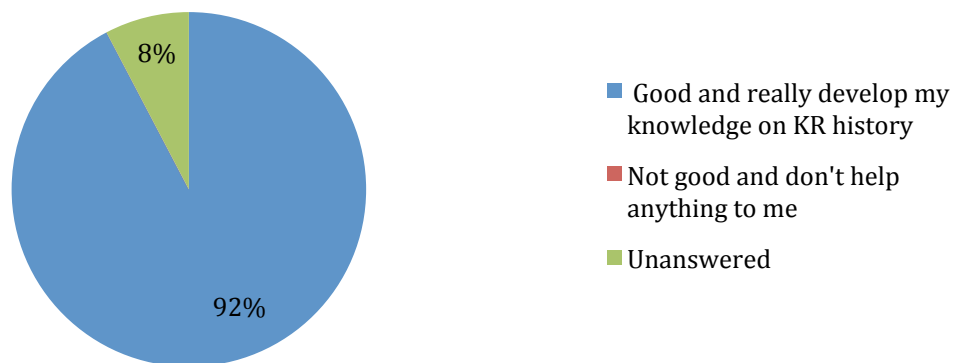
Q.14 Did you like this classroom forum?

Students like or dislike the classroom forum.



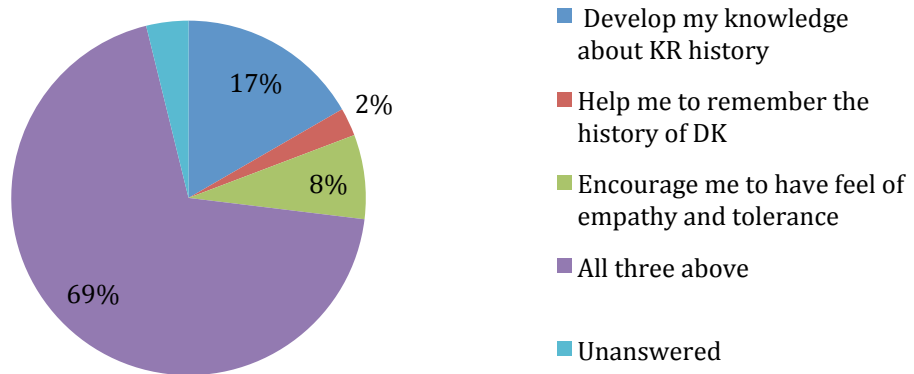
Q.15 What did you think about this classroom forum?

Students' opinion on the classroom forum



Q.16 What has this forum helped you with – what are the benefits of the forum?

Benefits of the classroom forum



Discussion of Results

Comparing the results of the pre- and post-forum surveys, it is evident that students gained a wider knowledge of the history of Democratic Kampuchea within this forum. A number of important comparisons can be drawn:

- Students answering that they know 'nothing' or 'a little' about Khmer Rouge history decreased from 90% to 26%, whilst those answering that they are 'very knowledgeable' about Khmer Rouge history increased from 8% to 73% (it is worth noting that 1% of students answered that they knew 'enough about the DK period to teach others' in the pre-forum survey, whilst 0% of students answered the same in the post-forum survey – however this could be explained by those students who had to leave the forum early to attend another class)
- In the pre-forum survey, 96% of students answered that they would not discriminate against the children of former KR cadre, whilst 4% of students answered that they would. The percentage of students who would discriminate against the children of former cadre actually doubled in the post-forum survey, increasing to 8%, whilst the percentage of students who would not discriminate fell to 92%. Unfortunately, this perhaps indicates that some students struggled with the brutality of KR history (17% of students answered that they felt uncomfortable learning about the history of DK in the post-forum survey), and whilst extensive efforts were made to educate students on the importance of reconciliation in Cambodia, perhaps additional ways to ensure this message is taught should be looked at
- It is also worth noting that the forum garnered very positive responses in the post-forum survey. 95% of students answered that they liked the forum, with 0% answering that they did not and 5% leaving this question unanswered. 92% of students answered that the forum was useful in developing their knowledge of KR history. 96% of students answered that the forum helped to develop their knowledge of KR history, helped them to remember this history, encouraged empathy and tolerance, or all of the above. Finally, 80% of students answered that they would like information about DK history to be available on social media. Indicating that students are looking to engage even further with this kind

of education. This, therefore, might provide a new avenue in genocide education for DC-Cam to explore as they continue to hold classroom forums.

Observations

It was unfortunately clear that there was a real lack of teaching staff present at the forum to ensure the students stayed focused on the class whilst the DC-Cam staff were presenting and teaching. Whilst the students were focused at the very beginning of the forum, as the forum progressed students not only left the forum early, but also seemed to lose concentration. Students were not engaged in the exercises towards the end of the forum. A number of things could be changed to improve this.

First, at least one member of staff from the school could remain with the forum, sitting with students and moving between groups throughout the morning in order to ensure that students concentrated on the discussions and were not distracted by friends or mobile phones.

Second, it might be useful if the forum could be conducted in a longer time frame *and* in a different format. Of course, this takes time from the students other classes, however given the importance of teaching DK history it is arguable that a two-day forum would be of great benefit to students. Having considered the issues of concentration, a number of changes could be made to the forum if the time limit were to be expanded to a two-day period.

1. The forum could be conducted not only in lecture format but also in small groups. Often, lecture format lessons struggle to maintain the focus of students due to a lack of personal engagement. Of course, in the currently restricted time frame allowed for these forums, the combination of these two formats of teaching is impossible. However, it is arguable that by incorporating periods of small group work where groups might discuss their opinions and questions together, and answer questions about what they have already learnt in the forum up to that point, following which they would address the wider class with these points and answers,

students will be encouraged to raise their own opinions *and* to stay engaged with the forum for its entirety in order to be able to answer questions on it.

2. Within these smaller groups, it is arguable that a two day forum would also be beneficial in that it would allow students the opportunity to create presentations based on any component of the DK history that most interests them. These presentations could be worked on towards the end of the forum's first day, and finalised in the morning of the second day, before each group displays their presentation to the wider group. This would encourage more 'experiential learning', and help foster students research and public presentation skills – two components that would complement the 'interview skills' segment of the current classroom forum format.

Despite this, there were clear indicators that the forum had been a success. Following the end of the forum, a group of around eight students decided they wished to learn more about the DK history, and were therefore taught more through the displays DC-Cam had installed in the high school groups in preparation for the forum. This clearly indicated that a number of students took interest in the lessons taught within the forum, and were eager to learn more.

In addition, a number of students were very willing to share their own experiences of discussing DK history with their parents and families, and really engaged in this story-telling component of the forum. The fact that students got involved in this process implies that they enjoyed having the opportunity to share the stories they had learnt with the group, and it might be that these story-telling exercises will encourage other students to discuss such topics with their own families.

Conclusion

It seemed clear that students enjoyed the forum, and students were engaged in the activities to an extent despite the waning concentration towards the end of the session. Student involvement, through Mr. Rasy asking questions of students and Mr. Dany encouraging a student to practice their interview skills through role-play, was positive and appeared to help maintain student engagement in these particular activities.

In future forums, it would be useful to have greater involvement of the staff of whichever high school is involved in the forum in order to maintain students engagement in the activities and lessons. Further, it seems worth considering the introduction of longer, two-day forums to allow DC-Cam staff to incorporate all aspects of DK history that they wish to teach, and to allow for new teaching formats to be used that will really solidify the foundations of the K-W-L method and encourage not only learning, but discussion and debate amongst students.