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GENOCIDE EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

A TEACHING OF A HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA (1975-79)

REPORT
CLASSROOM FORUM ON THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE
HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA (1975-1979) PREAH
SISOVATT HIGH SCHOOL
1 APRIL 2016

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ABSTRACT

The Genocide Education Program seeks to establish a genocide education curriculum across all high schools in Cambodia and distribute 'A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979' textbook, which was published by the Documentation Center of Cambodia with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. To be able to establish a foundation of genocide education, forums are held at each high to ultimately give them their first lesson on DK history. On April the 1st 2016, Mr. Pheng Pong Rasy and Ms. Sanas Min took to Preah Sisovatt High School to conduct a forum for 35 students all in grade twelve. The aim of the forum was to help students gain a better understanding of the Democratic Kampuchea era and think about ways to help better the Cambodian society.

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INTRODUCTION

On April 1st, 2016, the Documentation Center of Cambodia with the support of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, conducted another school forum as part of its Genocide Education Program at Preah Sisovatt High School. Twenty-three females and twelve males all in Grade Twelve attended the school forum conducted by Mr. Pheng Pong Rasy, the Coordinator for the Genocide Education Project. The 35 students were given a pre-survey to fill out before the forum began to test their level of knowledge about Democratic Kampuchea history, the importance of studying DK history, whether they have communicated to their parents about the DK period and whether they would discriminate against children of perpetrators.

The learning part of the forum consisted of asking students what they already knew about DK history and the Khmer Rouge regime, which was written on the classroom's whiteboard by Mr. Pheng Pong Rasy (see Appendix 1). The next question students were asked was what they wanted to learn about in regards to DK history, which was written down in another column next to the 'know' list so that students were able to follow this list throughout the program (see Table 1).

Following the learning portion of the forum, students were given a post-forum survey to fill out which once again tested their level of knowledge on DK history, importance of DK history, whether they would discriminate against the children of perpetrators, if learning DK history encouraged the students to think about healing, reconciliation, peace building and prevention of genocide in the future. At the end of the school forum, students were each given a DK History Textbook, Searching for the Truth Magazine and posters promoting the Genocide Education Project.

OBJECTIVE

The aim for the school forum was to help the 35 Grade Twelve students from Preah Sisovatt High School gain a solid understanding of Democratic Kampuchea history. The importance of learning about DK history and the difficult past Cambodia has endured was also a main objective in order to be able to get students thinking about working towards building peace in Cambodia, encourage students to think of healing, reconciliation and prevention of genocide in the future. The forum intended to educate all students whom attended, about DK history and give them an opportunity to voice what they already know and encourage dialogue about questions the students had about DK history. By providing students with a foundation about DK history, the next objective of the Genocide Education Program was to expose students to the 'A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979' textbook, which every student whom attended the forum received. The textbook is the only and leading material for learning about the Khmer Rouge genocide in high schools across Cambodia. The Genocide Education Program intends to help develop a sufficient framework and curriculum of studying Democratic Kampuchea history within schools.

METHODOLOGY

Throughout the school forum, there were four main practices that were used, including two surveys (pre-survey and post-survey), a KWL chart, a silent video and PowerPoint slides throughout the learning part of the forum.

i. PRE-FORUM SURVEYS

At the beginning of the forum, thirty-five surveys were handed out to students to test their level of knowledge about DK history prior to the informative part of the forum, whether students have spoken to their

parents about the Khmer Rouge period, whether they believe it is important to study DK history and whether it should be taught in schools, and whether students would discriminate against children of perpetrators. Students had fifteen minutes to complete this survey.

ii. KWL CHART

The next portion of the forum was to complete two parts of a KWL Chart, with the two sections that were completed included the 'What Students Know' and 'What Students Want to Learn' sections. With the 'L' section, which is 'What Students Learned', being completed after the learning part of the forum and before the post-survey was completed. The purpose of a KWL chart is to differentiate what the students already know from what they want to learn, and finally at the end of the forum, to see what the students learnt from the forum and visual presentation. KWL charts allow the students to be more interactive all throughout the forum and helps regulate thinking and self-consciousness about the students' own feelings and thoughts about DK history, as well as help students to set personal objectives for the forum. KWL's are a great use of an interactive form of assessment to maintain focus and enthusiasm throughout the forum. The results from the KWL chart will be presented later along the report.

iii. SILENT TUOL SLENG VIDEO

Following the 'Already Know' and 'Want to Learn' sections of the KWL chart, the education part of the forum began with Mr. Pheng Pong Rasy exposing students to the horrors that occurred in Prison S-21, also known as Tuol Sleng Prison through a silent video dedicated to exposing the inhumanities that occurred in the prison such as the torturing and killing of men, women and children. The use of images and videos benefits the depth of topics, as it is a form of evidence relating to the issue being studied as well as being a source of aid for students to retain more.

The images of dead corpses, malnutrition and starving children, produced many emotions within the students.

iv. POST-FORUM SURVEY

Post-forum surveys measured the students' level of knowledge after the learning section of the forum. The survey asked students whether they believe mass atrocities took place, whether it is important to study DK history, whether they would discriminate an individual if they found out their parent was a perpetrator and asking students how they now feel about building peace in Cambodia, healing within the community, reconciliation and the prevention of genocide in the future. The post-forum survey also assesses how students feel about studying DK history and which topics of DK history are the most important for them to learn about within school curriculum.

RESULTS

i. KWL Chart

Already **KNOW**- Students from Preah Sisovatt knew very little about Democratic Kampuchea history and had only heard of Pol Pot's name and not his role in the Khmer Rouge regime. The students who did know little about DK history were almost all female students who contributed to this part of the forum.

Table 1. 'What I Already KNOW'

What students already KNOW about DK History.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pol Pot- There was scarce food for the Cambodian people- Cambodians were forced to work in the agriculture sector

- The Khmer Rouge killed scholars
- There were many refugees as a result of the Khmer Rouge regime

Want to **LEARN** – There were many questions floating around that students wanted to learn the answers with many of the questions centered on disbelief that Cambodians could do this to their own people.

Table 2. 'What I want to WANT to learn'

What students WANT to learn about DK history
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Events that occurred before and after the Khmer Rouge regime - Why did the Khmer Rouge establish a regime? - Why did they kill the Cambodian people? - What was the reason behind the black costumes? - Who was Pol Pot exactly? - What were the provinces and Phnom Penh like after the end of the Khmer Rouge regime? - Why did the Khmer Rouge prefer girls to have short hair? - What is the importance of studying the Khmer Rouge regime?

What students **LEARNED**- Mr. Pheng Pong Rasy started the educating part of the forum with visuals of the horrific crimes committed against the Cambodian people, which immediately emotionally connected the students to the topic.

Table 3. 'What I LEARNED'

What students LEARNED about DK history
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pol Pot was leading the Khmer Rouge troops - The overthrowing of the King - The Khmer Rouge regime took place from 1975 till 1979 - In the beginning of the Khmer Rouge regime, the people of Phnom

Penh were happy to see the Khmer Rouge

- The USA killed many Cambodian civilians during their bombings
- Pol Pot was following in the footsteps of Mao Zedong
- There were no markets, no schools, no private enterprises
- The Khmer Rouge abolished religion and killed many monks
- Schools and buildings were shut down and used as prisons, stables and reeducation camps
- The United States, Russia, Vietnam and Thailand were involved during the time of the Khmer Rouge
- The reason why intellectuals were killed
- The aftermath of the Khmer Rouge regime
- The importance of studying the Khmer Rouge is to ensure there is not a repeat of history and prevent the occurrence of another genocide, to build peace and achieve reconciliation for all Cambodians, and to learn to forgive and help Cambodia move forward.

ii. Pre and Post Surveys

There were four of the same questions that were asked in both the pre and post forum surveys to be able to compare the difference that the forum made to their level of knowledge and understanding about DK history. The biggest change from those four questions was the very first, which asked students to describe their knowledge of the DK period. In the pre-forum survey, 91% of students said that they know little about the DK period and 9% claimed that they were very knowledgeable about the DK period. The post-forum survey say a big change, with 82% of students believing the forum made them very knowledgeable about the DK period, 12% of students still believed they know a little about the DK period and 6% did not answer the question. The other question that stood out was the

question 'If one of your friends is a son/daughter of a perpetrator, would you discriminate against him or her?'

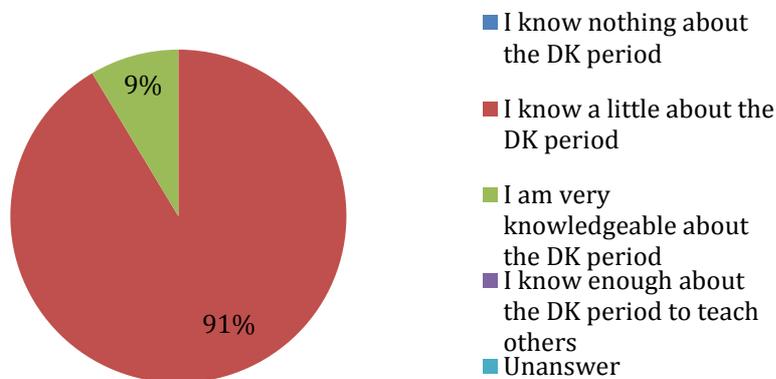
It was surprising to see that the pre-survey saw that 94% of students state that they would not discriminate, with 6% answering that they would discriminate. The post-forum survey was a shift of opinions with 88% suggesting that they would not discriminate, 9% said they would discriminate and 3% did not answer. It is important to note that only 34 post-forum surveys were handed out as one student left the forum early.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

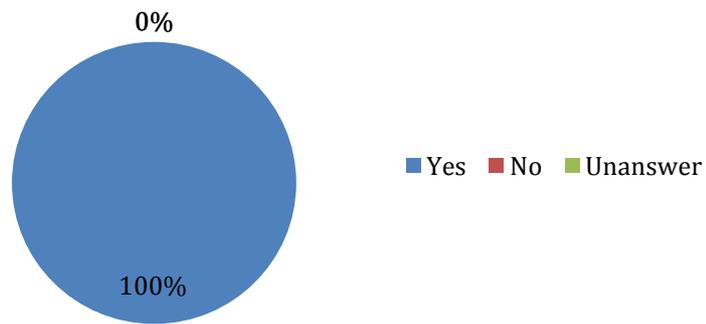
Graphs and pie charts below have all been created with Microsoft Excel where the data from both pre-forum and post-forum surveys were inputted to create these graphs and charts.

Pre-Forum Survey Analysis

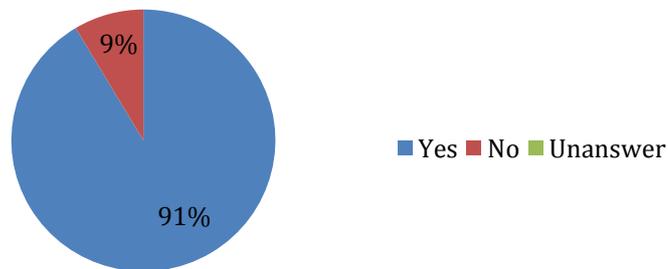
Q1. How would you describe your knowledge of the DK period?



Q2. Do you believe that mass atrocities occurred during the DK regime?



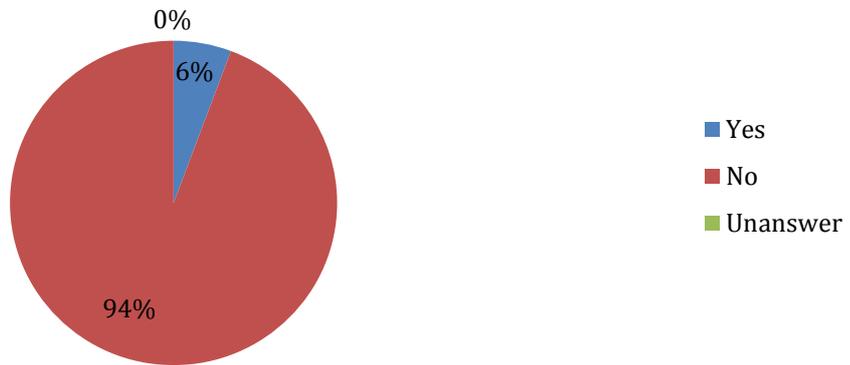
Q3. Have you ever talk about the DK period with your parents or people who lived during this time?



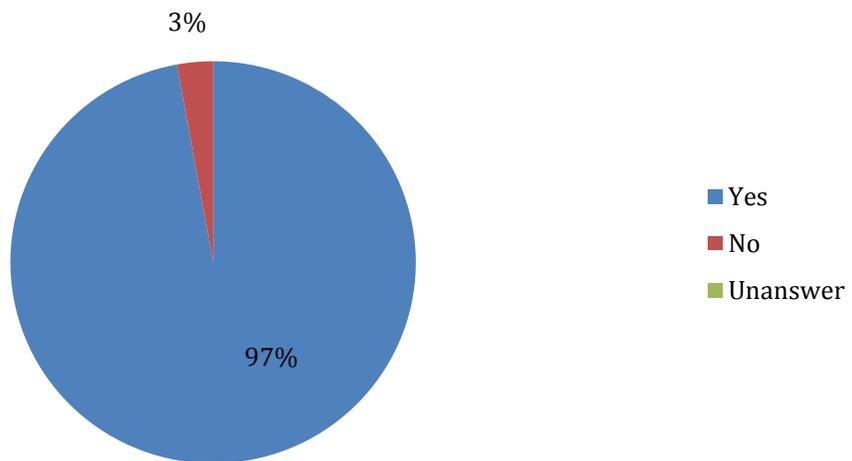
Q4. Do you think the study of a history of DK is important?



Q5. If one of your friends is a son/daughter of a perpetrator, would you discriminate against him or her?

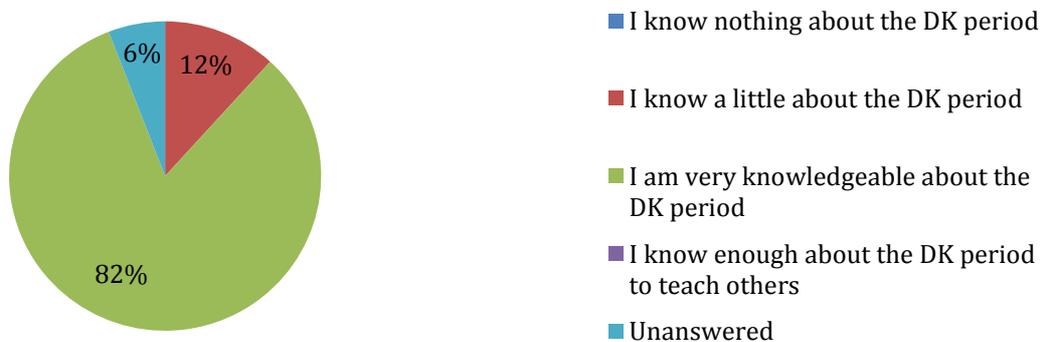


Q6. Does the history of DK could be taught in school in Cambodia and Asian?



Post-Survey Analysis

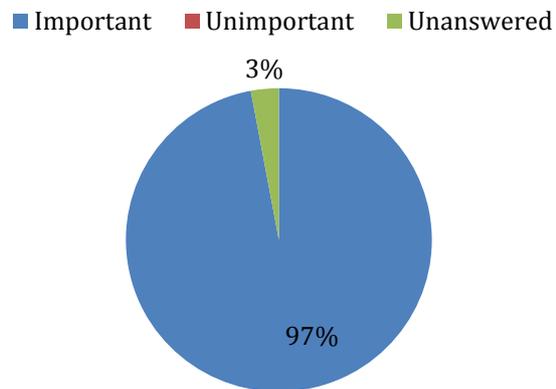
Q1. How would you describe your knowledge of the DK period?



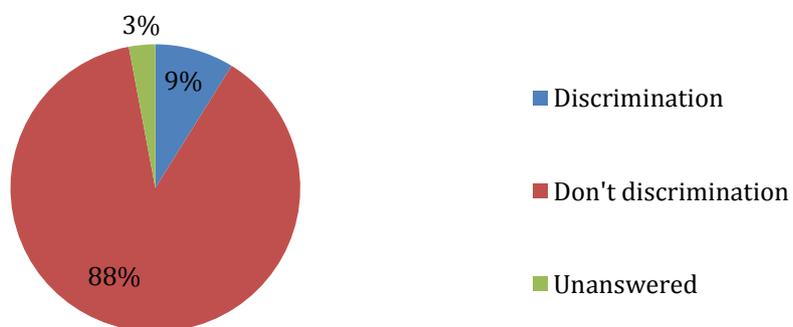
Q2. Do you believe mass atrocities occurred during the DK regime?



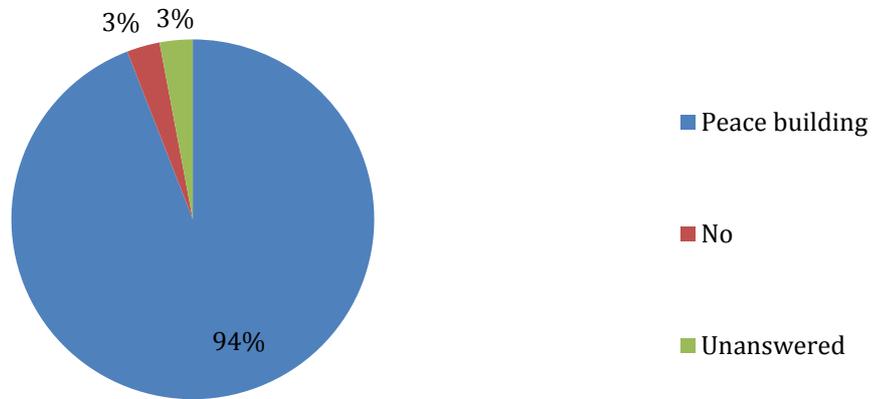
Q3. Do you think the study of DK history is important?



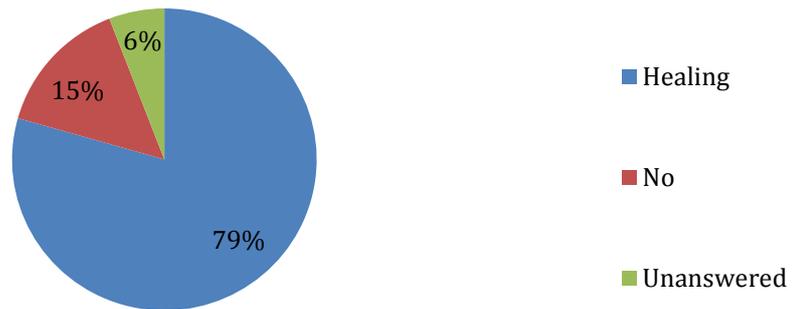
Q4. If one of your friends is a son/daughter of a perpetrator, would you discriminate against him or her?



Q5. Does the study of a history of DK encourage you to think of building peace in Cambodian society?



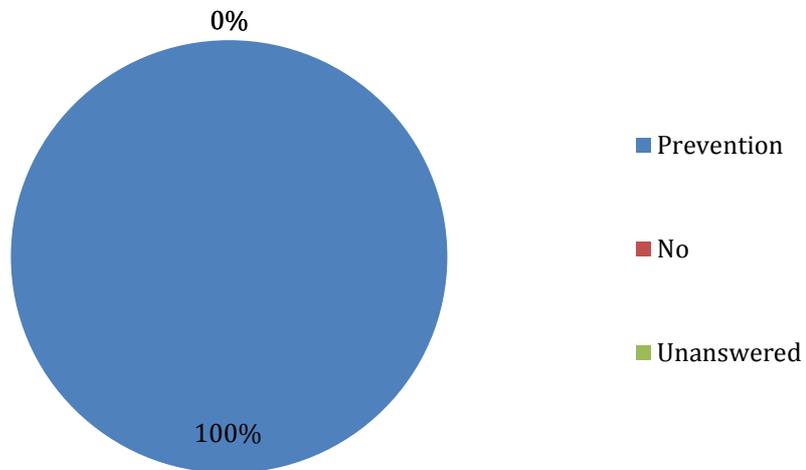
Q6. Does the study of a history of DK encourage you to think of healing?



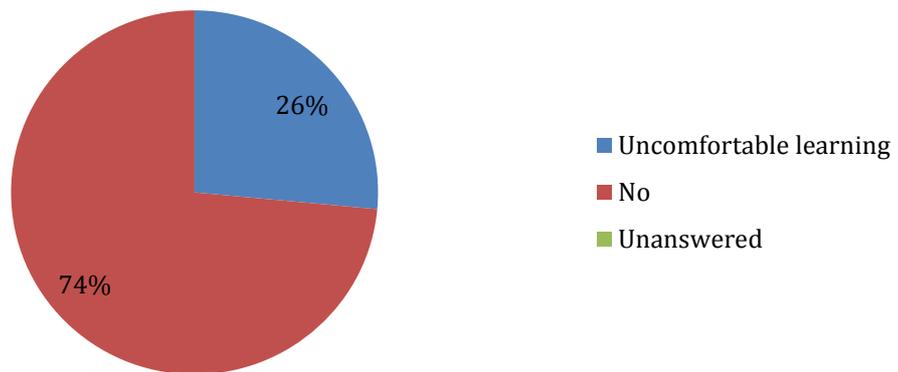
Q7. Does the study of a history of DK encourage you to think of reconciliation?



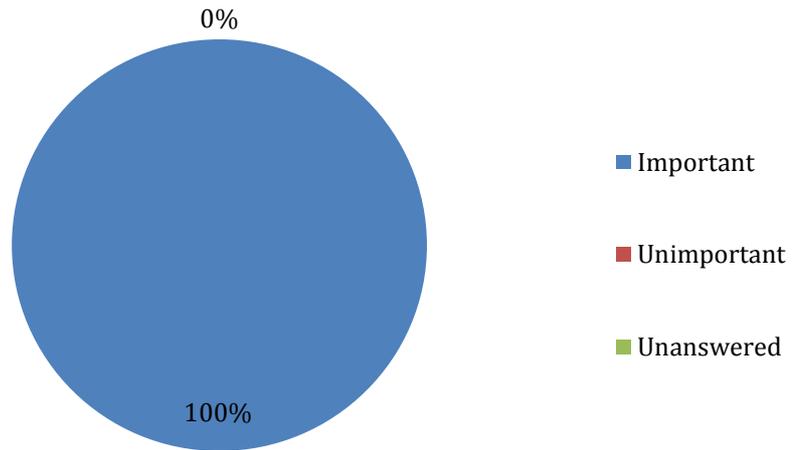
Q8. Does the study of a history of DK encourage you to think of Prevention of genocide in the future?



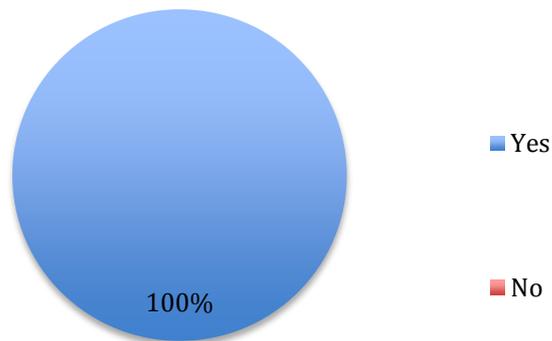
Q9. Do you feel uncomfortable learning the history of DK?



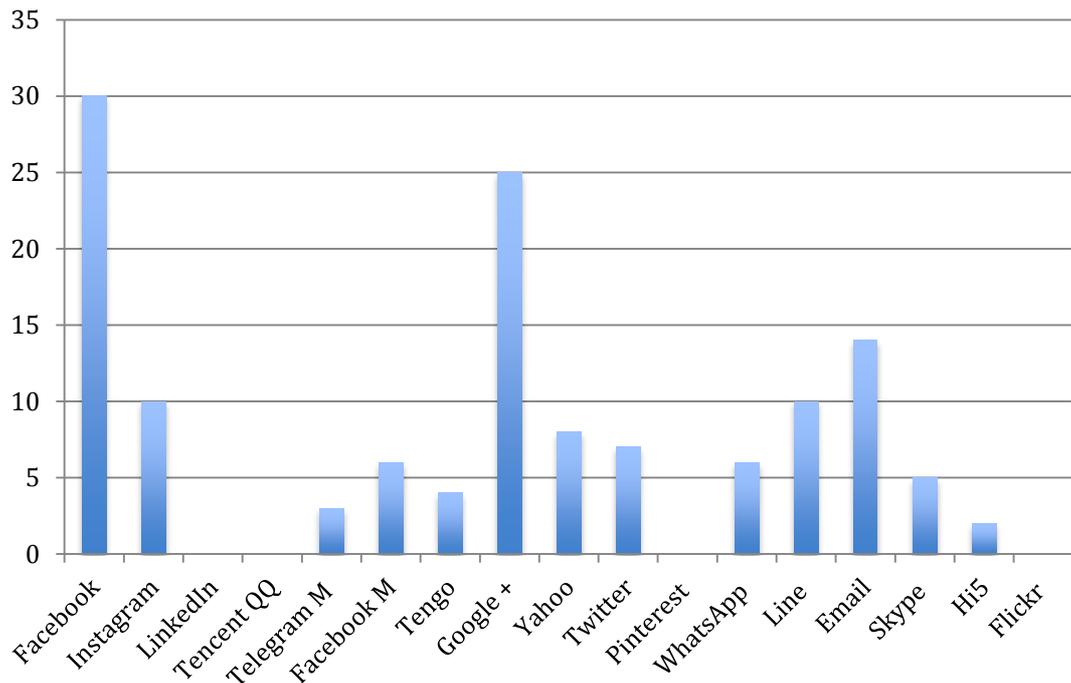
Q10. Is it important to remember the history of Democratic Kampuchea?



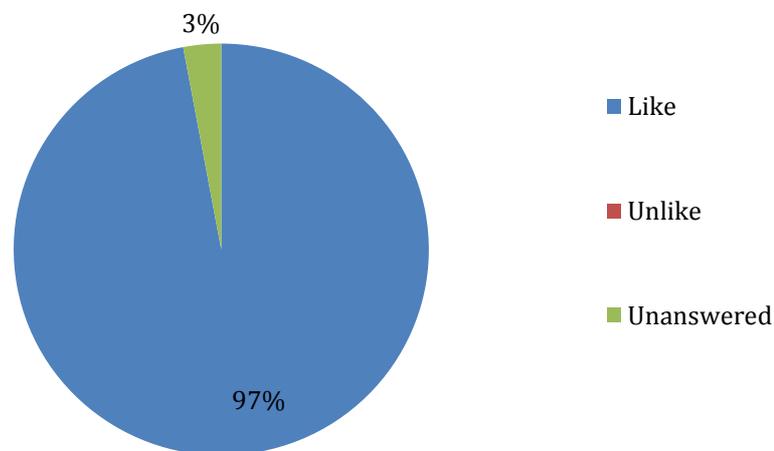
Q11. Besides studying Khmer Rouge history inside classroom or in public space, do you think this history should be posted on social networks for additional learning and learning materials?



If yes, what networks are best for you?



Q12. Do you like or dislike the classroom forum?



ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

It is clear from the analysis of results of both the pre and post surveys, students gained a greater understanding of Democratic Kampuchea history from the forum that Mr. Rasy conducted. As opposed to the 9% of students who said they were very knowledgeable about DK history before the forum, those numbers rose to a substantial 82% whom stated that after the forum they feel they were very knowledgeable about DK history.

To see the difference the forum made to the understanding of DK history, *Table 4 below* has outlined the transformation.

Table 4.

Category	Pre-forum	Post-forum
Knowledge of the DK history	91% Know little about the DK period 9% Are very knowledgeable about the DK period	82% Are very knowledgeable about the DK period 12% know a little about the DK period 6% did not answer
Do you believe mass atrocities occurred during the DK regime?	100% said yes	97% do believe mass atrocities occurred during the DK regime 3% did not answer
Spoken to parents or people who lived during this time about the DK period	91% answered yes 9% answered no	
Do you think the study of DK history is important?	100% answered yes it is important	97% answered it was important 3% did not answer
If one of your friends is a son/daughter of a perpetrator, would you discriminate against him/her?	94% answered no they would not discriminate 6% answered yes they would discriminate	88% would not discriminate 9% would discriminate 3% did not answer
Does the study of DK history encourage you to think about: a) Building peace b) Healing c) Reconciliation d) Prevention of genocide in the future		a) 94% answered yes 3% answered no 3% did not answer b) 79% answered yes 15% answered no 6% did not answer c) 88% answered yes 9% answered no 3% did not answer

		d) 100% answered yes
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OBSERVATIONS

During the fifteen minutes that students were given to complete the pre-forum survey, it was evident that very few knew about Democratic Kampuchea history as was also evident in the pre-forum survey results. Students were looking at each other puzzled whilst completing the survey and asking one another for help, clearly they had never been exposed to these kinds of questions about the genocide. Following the pre-forum survey was the presentation of the silent video about Tuol Sleng prison, which exposed students to the reality of the Khmer Rouge regime. Every single one of the 35 students covered their eyes, gasped in shock and shook their heads in disbelief. It was clear that the video brought on a wave of emotions for every student that resulted in all students being very active in the education section of the forum. The very first question to be asked was from a female student who stood up and questioned 'what was the importance of studying DK history?' Mr. Rasy gave the class three vital reasons for the significance of studying the Khmer Rouge regime:

- 1- So as not to repeat history and prevent the occurrence of another genocide
- 2- To build peace and achieve reconciliation for all Cambodians
- 3- And to learn to forgive and help Cambodia move forward.

With the question answered, the forum began with who were the Khmer Rouge and how they came to power, followed with the significance of the Old people and the New people, the reason for the lack of food, the torture and inhumanity that occurred in Prison S-21, the countries that were involved and eventually the fall of Democratic Kampuchea.

Following the education section of the forum, students were given the post-forum survey to complete in which they did with much more confidence and thoroughness. The final part of the forum was the distribution of 'A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979' textbook that the students all eagerly opened and had a look through.

CONCLUSION

Although 91% of students stated that they had spoken to their parents or people born during that time about DK history, it seemed as though they had not been told nor exposed to the realities of the cruelty of Democratic Kampuchea. Students experienced a wave of emotions throughout the forum and as a result it made 94% of students think about building peace in Cambodian society, 79% of students now think about healing, 88% of students are encouraged to think of reconciliation and 100% of students believe in the prevention of genocide in the future. With these results, it is evident that with the educating of students about DK history, it will transform the society of Cambodia into working towards building a better future, reconciliation, peace building and prevention of genocide. These forums encourage students to speak to their parents and family members about the genocide and understand the personal pain their families experienced throughout the Khmer Rouge genocide. The distribution of the textbook is just the beginning of developing genocide education within school curriculums and working towards a better society for all Cambodians through education.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: KWL CHART WRITTEN UP ON CLASSROOM WHITEBOARD

ដឹងអ្វីខ្លះៗពីក្រុមប្រឹក្សាប្រជាជន	ចង់ដឹងអ្វីខ្លះៗ
<p>Pol Pot - បេសិកក់</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - បង្កើត HMP - ធ្វើការប្រយុទ្ធនឹងបារាំង - សង្គ្រាមក្រសួងសេដ្ឋកិច្ច - ឥទ្ធិពល/សិប្បកម្ម - 1975 - 1977 	<p>អ្នក KR មានបង្កើតខ្លះ?</p> <p>គ្រូបង្រៀន KR - 1 - ?</p> <p>ពេទ្យបង្កើតនៅលើបង្កើត KR?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ត្រូវបានការសង្ខេបបង្កើត? - បែបណាដែលគ្រូបង្រៀន + ការសង្ខេប? - ពេទ្យបង្កើតក្រៅប្រទេសបង្កើត? - ប៉ុន្មាន ឆ្នាំ បានបង្កើត? - ពេទ្យបង្កើតបង្កើតក្រៅប្រទេស? - គ្រូបង្រៀន KR តើប្រើប្រាស់ប្រយោជន៍ដូចម្តេច?