

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PAPER

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
JUNIOR YOUTH SPIRITUAL
EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM
IN BATTAMBANG PROVINCE
BY THE
CAMBODIAN ORGANIZATION FOR
RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND
EDUCATION**

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Since the implementation of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program in Battambang Province in the year 2003 and widespread reports of its success, many individuals and organizations aware of this program are interested to know more about how the program is carried out and the learning experiences that could be learnt from it. This research paper seeks to fulfill just that purpose.

The research findings have all been gathered together in Chapter 3 and hope to present an unbiased view of the current situation of the implementation of the program by the Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education. Issues such as the background of the teachers, the use and length of the program in CORDE classes, the methodologies applied in carrying out the program as well as the effect of the program on the lives of the participants are among some of the points covered in that chapter.

As much as this research paper might help those interested to implement the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program in their own communities, there is always room for improvement and more learning experiences. *The journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step.*

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1.1 Background of the title

The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program (JYSEP) is a worldwide effort for the promotion of literacy and expression among the pre-youth of the society. It was carefully prepared by the **Office of Social and Economic Development (OSED)** to “*endow young people between the ages of 12 and 15 with the capabilities needed to effectively use ‘the word’ as an instrument of their own transformation and the transformation of their society*”.¹ Many social and economic development agencies/organizations have been working closely with this program. The Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education (CORDE) is among the few who have been implementing this program over the past 2 years.

The mission statement of the Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education (CORDE), formed in 1994, states that CORDE was initiated “*as a private, non-profit and non-political voluntary development organization to facilitate social transformation of communities in Cambodia through the transformation of individuals. ...The aim of CORDE is to raise the quality of human life and well-being of individuals, families and communities.... CORDE's vision is to transform Cambodia into a creative, productive and confident society through individual transformation.*”

In line with the objectives of the program, CORDE is trying to work towards the promotion of higher levels of literacy and the increase in the power of expression among the junior youth, and wants to effectively translate these capabilities into social action for the progress of the communities and society at large.

The materials used by CORDE in this program consist of 3 books, each book for each level of study. There is a significant increase in the level of literacy in each book, as well as an increased level of difficulty in the introduction of moral concepts, once again, focused on personal development and social progress. A brief description of each level of the program is given in the glossary.

¹ Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Campaign, Office of Social and Economic Development, Haifa, August 2002.

1.2 Rationale of the study

An extensive and focused study of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program practiced by CORDE may provide an understanding of the background and supervision related to the implementation of the program. Along with this research, many of the challenges and the learning gained from the program will be documented and can be used as future reference by CORDE and any other organizations interested in the program.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- a) To gain a deeper understanding about the reality of the implementation of the program in Battambang Province by CORDE from the time it was first introduced.
- b) To observe the methods applied by CORDE teachers around Battambang Province in using the JYSEP.
- c) To obtain feedback by the CORDE teachers about their experiences in using this program.
- d) To gauge the response of the participants towards the program.

1.4 Scope of the study

This research paper may be useful to the following:

- a) To assist any individual or organization who are currently working with the program and CORDE to assess the implementation of the program.
- b) To provide documentation for those interested in learning about the program based on the response by CORDE teachers and participants of the program about their experiences with it.

2.1 Nature of this research

This is a social research, based on primary research mostly done through interviews and observation. It is compiled in the form of a qualitative research to give the reader an overall understanding of the situation of the implementation of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program (JYSEP) by the Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education (CORDE).

2.2 Population size

The population this research is focused on consists of 4 segments of the society:

a) Individuals who are currently overseeing implementation of the program

- Mr. Sam Voha is the Assistant Executive Director and Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program Trainer for CORDE.
- Mr. Kang Eng Soo is a trainer for the program from Sabah, Malaysia.
- Mr. Pahlaj Kumar Premy is the Assistant Vice Chancellor of the University for Education and Development.

b) CORDE staff and teachers

There are 93 teachers registered with CORDE since the time the JYSEP was introduced to CORDE (year 2003). Of the total, 60 are still teaching for CORDE while 33 have stopped. Of the 60, 38 teachers are teaching within the Battambang Province, 4 in Kandal Province, 4 in Banteay Mancheay Province and 14 in Preah Vihear Province. Please see Appendix A, Composition of CORDE teachers throughout Cambodia

c) Participants in the program

An accurate figure of this population is currently not available. The estimate number of participants in the JYSEP in CORDE classes in Battambang Province is 590 participants.

2.3 Sampling procedure

The following sampling procedures were applied to the 4 categories of population above:

a) Individuals who are currently overseeing implementation of the program

The individuals listed in this population were all selected based on their involvement with the program and with CORDE.

b) CORDE staff and teachers

From among the population mentioned in 2.2 (b), all the current teachers of the CORDE, except 3 person, in Battambang Province were interviewed (35 teachers). Of the 35, 17 are new teachers (less than 2 years service with CORDE) and 18 are old teachers. Of the total, only 1 teacher does not use the JYSEP in his CORDE class while of the remaining 34, 26 are active users of the program and 8 have stopped using it.

c) Participants of the program

Just to gain an impression of the response of the participants towards the program, 40 participants from around Battambang Province were selected for interviews. The selection was based on the selection of 7 current CORDE teachers, who personally selected 5 or 10 of his/her participants in the program. These teachers are from Austok Village, Osralao Village, Sdey Village and Bospo Village.

2.5 Period of Data Collection

Research for this paper began in November 2004, and went on until September 2005.

2.6 Techniques of data collection

The following methods were applied throughout the research:

a) Interviews

Each of the samples mentioned in section 2.3 were interviewed individually, using different sets of questions, affixed as Appendix B and C, Interview Questions for CORDE Teachers and Interview Questions for Participants of the Program. The questions that were formed centered on gaining information of the interviewees opinion about the implementation of the program.

b) Consultative discussions

Throughout the research period, there have been discussions on the program with many of CORDE teachers, formally and informally. Some of these discussions were held during the JYSEP animator training sessions, at CORDE teacher's meetings, in the UniED classes and during informal visits. The above mentioned sessions provided a lot of time for open discussions, during which many of these individuals shared their ideas, understanding and views of the implementation of the program. Some of the comments made in this research paper are a summary of what they have said.

c) Observation

During the research period, many visits to the classes were held to observe the classes conducted by the CORDE teachers. There was a period from 20 - 31 December 2004, in which 8 different classes of the teachers throughout Battambang was visited. There were 5 teachers who were visited more than once within those 10 days to form a better view of what is the real situation. Since then, periodical and random visits have been conducted to observe the classes.

d) Reading of documents and books

Some of the related documents and books that were referred to throughout this research are as follows:

- Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Campaign by the Office of Social and Economic Development, August 2002
- The Role of CORDE on Education in Battambang Province, unpublished copy of the undergraduate research paper by Mr. Hou Sopheap

e) Collating statistics

Free access to the statistics and reports by CORDE teachers were obtained for this research. However, they were provided in the form of raw data and much collating of statistics was necessary.

Applying the methodologies mentioned in Chapter Two, this chapter seeks to document the results of the research done on the implementation of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program (JYSEP) that has been carried out by the Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education (CORDE).

3.1 Educational Background of the Teachers

Of the 35 current CORDE teachers who were interviewed, 11 teachers (31.4%) have completed their formal education (up to Grade 12), 14 teachers (40.0%) are currently studying between Grade 9 to Grade 12 at the public schools and 10 others (28.6%) did not continue their education.

It is important to note here that among those who are currently studying in public schools, only 3 teachers have been teaching for more than 2 years, while the other 11 are new teachers (less than 2 years of services with CORDE). This goes to show that CORDE, whether intentionally or not, has been recruiting younger individuals as volunteers. While this may be an advantage, as they are all youth and have the energy and enthusiasm for promoting transformation, these individuals are only beginning to gain more responsibilities in life. Their services with CORDE may end up to be short term due to changes like getting married, finding a full-time job to support the family or enrolling into universities.

Data shows that all of the teachers who have finished and are currently pursuing their formal education have used the JYSEP in their classes before. On the other hand, among the 10 teachers who stopped studying and are not continuing it, only 6 have tried the program and of that, only 3 are continuing it. Of the batch of new teachers, numbering 17 teachers in total, only 1 teacher among those who are still studying have not tried using the program. Also, 3 of 10 of those who have stopped studying at public schools without completing their studies have not tried using the program. Among the reasons for this could be because this teacher have little knowledge of the English language, the medium of instruction for this program, or have not had enough exposure to the concepts talked about in the content of the program.

Another aspect of the educational background of CORDE teachers is their opportunity to further their studies in the University for Education and Development (UniED). Of the 35 CORDE teachers interviewed, 31 teachers have studied or are currently studying in UniED.

That is 86.1% of the teachers who are able to improve their capabilities in teaching and affecting change in their communities.

Through their involvement in UniED, they are able to participate in courses which uses the 3 main materials in English (Breezes of Confirmation, Walking the Straight Path and Drawing on the Power of the Word), as well as in trainings for animators of the program with experienced individuals.

A remarked success in this is that they are more able to gain more exposure to the content of the program, prepare related activities to enhance the understanding of the concepts for each lesson and carry out more discussion-based lessons as opposed to only book learning. They are also more outgoing in class, and confident to carry out a variety of activities besides book learning.

3.2 Recruitment of Teachers

There is a trend here that CORDE has been able to produce its own resources from the classes they conduct in the villages. There is a record of 11 CORDE teachers who were students of other CORDE teachers before and among them, 7 are newly recruited teachers.

There is no question about whether the teachers understand the purpose of CORDE. The following is a summary of their responses to that question:

- a) To help and develop their communities and society
- b) To educate the children and junior youth of the community
- c) To provide educational opportunities for the poor and those who could not complete their education.
- d) Allow others to gain knowledge of morals and virtues, spirituality, health, agriculture and English literacy.
- e) To produce human resources, including increasing the capabilities of teachers
- f) Personal transformation, developing the moral capabilities and other capabilities, in general, of individuals.

3.3 Using the Program

The JYSEP was introduced to CORDE teachers in May 2003. At that time, 18 of the teachers had started their services with CORDE. Of the 18, 11 of them went through the training on the program with particular focus on the book 'Drawing on the Power of the Word' conducted by Mr. Kang Eng Soo. However, since the beginning of the implementation of the program, none of the current teachers have ever taught using that book. The book is currently being translated into Khmer.

There was a second training, held in the year 2004 by Mr. Kang Eng Soo and some of the teachers went through that training also. However, many of these teachers could not recall if they had attended this second training. There was a remarked increase in the use of the book 'Breezes of Confirmation' as 15 of the current teachers said that they started using the book within 6 months of the training.

Among the new teachers of CORDE, 10 of 17 had started using Breezes of Confirmation within 10 months of starting their services with CORDE. There is also another group of old teachers, who only started using the program since 6 months ago.

Of all the teachers interviewed, only 14 teachers (4 new and 10 old teachers) have completed Breezes of Confirmation with at least one group of participants. Up to date, only 10 (4 new and 6 old teachers) had started on the book 'Walking the Straight Path'. There were 3 teachers (2 new and 1 old teacher) who reported that they taught 'Breezes of Confirmation' and 'Walking the Straight Path' at the same time without finishing one book first.

It can be concluded here that no matter how long or recent it has been since the teacher became a volunteer for CORDE, there are some who are willing to start the program and others who took awhile before trying it out and yet a few who still do not use the program.

3.4 Length of the Program

The length each teacher spends on the program is indefinite and as none of them have completed all three levels of the program, it is hard to gauge the length of the program. So far, the range of a group studying Breezes of Confirmation is very wide, from 3 months to 1 year. Some of them don't even keep track of how long was spent on any of the books. This could also be an indication that they did not plan the lessons ahead and target for a completion of a certain book. There have been numerous complains by many of the CORDE teachers that they are unable to complete even a book from the program because the students are irregular or late for class (as late as half an hour in a one hour class) and hence, the teacher has had to keep reviewing what was learnt before (for those who missed the classes).

Among the reasons for the irregularity and lateness of the participants are as follows:

- a) They do not have time because as their parents are busy planting or harvesting crops, the younger participants stay home to look after their siblings while the older ones are expected to help in the fields.
- b) Some of the poor families have had to relocate to find other economic opportunities in other provinces.
- c) Classes are located a distance away from home and this hinders their traveling daily for classes.
- d) Other schools or organizations start new classes (especially in English) and the students are more attracted to go to those schools because of other benefits, like promises of walkmans and radios.
- e) Rainy weathers keep the participants away from class and it also causes the roads to be difficult to pass through.
- f) Disinterested in the content but partial to learning English. Part of the content includes spiritual concepts, particularly speak of God and His Teachings, which some of the participants do not want to learn about.
- g) Students and parents do not take the CORDE classes seriously. Some of the parents do not understand the necessity to allow their children to get a proper education, especially for girls, and hinder them from coming regularly by asking them to do housework or run on errands at the last minute.

However, the challenge is not only on the part of the participants. There are few teachers who themselves, do not take the program seriously and lack discipline in teaching. As a consequence, they do not turn up for class regularly and do not find replacements. When the participants come and find no one there to teach over a few days, they do not see a need to return to that class. This is also part of the reason why some of the classes have only few participants by the end of the program.

3.5 Language and Content

Of the three books, Breezes of Confirmation is by far the easiest for the CORDE teachers to carry out because the language is simple and gradually built up to higher levels, following along a story line. However, when given a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being easiest and 5 being very difficult), 15 of them chose '4', showing that it is quite difficult to conduct. Meanwhile, another 12 teachers chose '3', showing that it is not too difficult and neither is it easy to carry out Breezes of Confirmation. Of the rest, 4 teachers said that it is very difficult and they are all new teachers. The only 2 who said that it is very easy are old teachers and the 1 teacher who chose '2' on the scale is a new teacher. Please see Appendix D, Level of Difficulty in Carrying Out 'Breezes of Confirmation'

For the book Walking the Straight Path, a similar scale was given to the 12 teachers who have tried using the book. 6 of them (50%) said that the book is quite difficult to conduct and 1 person said that it was very difficult. 3 of them agreed that it was neither too difficult nor too easy to carry out Walking the Straight Path. Surprisingly, it is the new teachers who felt that way and this can be attributed to the fact that they are students at UniED and have studied the book as part of their courses. 5 of the 6 who scaled it at '4' also happen to be old teachers and students at UniED. The difference could be that these 5 teachers are also among the earlier batches of students at UniED. On the other hand, the only 2 who said that conducting Walking the Straight Path is fairly easy are old teachers and are also students at UniED. Please see Appendix E, Level of Difficulty in Carrying Out 'Walking the Straight Path'.

Since none of the teachers have tried the book 'Drawing on the Power of the Word', it is hard to ascertain the language factors surrounding it. Undoubtedly, the language is a much higher level

than the previous two books and the reason that the teachers do not use this book can partly be because of the language difficulty.

The following are some of the comments made by the teachers about the language in the book ‘Breezes of Confirmation’:

- a) It is difficult to understand the concepts behind the lessons if the teacher only uses it in English. It is easy to conduct this book when the teachers use a Khmer version to verify the concepts and meaning of the stories.
- b) The English is easy to teach and has none or few difficult words only. However, it is difficult to explain the meaning of the difficult words, even though the teacher knows what it means. Some of the words are also not common words used in daily speech.
- c) The content is deep and meaningful and if carried out well, it will help the participants to understand more about living their lives.
- d) It is easier to teach it in Khmer although for few teachers, there are even Khmer words they are not familiar with.
- e) There are parts of the Khmer translated book that the teachers and participants do not understand and are not sure of. It is difficult to find the meaning. There are also few typo, including missing full-stops and words.
- f) There is no need for those in the village to learn it in English.
- g) The students like to study in English. There are sufficient exercises for them to practice with.

The following comments are about the language in the book ‘Walking the Straight Path’ which the teachers made during their interviews:

- a) There are more or too many difficult words in each of the lessons. It is very easy to teach it in Khmer. Some of the words are also not common words used in daily speech but are meaningful words.

- b) The exercises, especially the ‘fill in the blank’ exercises, are difficult to understand and do.
- c) The content is very meaningful and if carried out well, it will help the participants to understand more about living their lives.
- d) In the form of stories, the participants remain interested and want to read a lot more.
- e) It is good that there is the use of the word ‘God’ in the content because it will help the participants to know the Words of God.
- f) The Khmer translation of the book is good.

Although none of them have taught the book ‘Drawing on the Power of the Word’, there are a few who have studied it and they made the following comments about the language:

- a) It is difficult to be translated.
- b) There are some or many difficult words.
- c) The content as a whole is difficult.

As a whole, the program is more difficult if conducted in English and there is more focus on teaching the English language than in sharing the concepts of the stories. There is a confusion among the teachers because they are unsure if they should carry out the program in English or in Khmer language for the following reasons.

- a) As CORDE teachers, they are supposed to teach in English and as part of their service in Bahá'í activities or as UniED students, they should teach in Khmer.
- b) As they try to teach it in English, they face difficulties teaching and fear the students cannot understand and they end up teaching in both, English and Khmer.

3.6 Methodologies Applied in Teaching

13 of the 34 teachers who use the program start with prayers in their class and only 1 teacher said that she takes attendance at the start of the class. 11 of them said they review the past lesson before going on to a new lesson, some having to teach the old lesson again because many were absent in the previous class. Some engage their participants in cleaning the study area before starting lessons.

When starting the new lesson, some teachers need to write part of the story onto the blackboard and give time for the students to copy them into an exercise book. This is because not all the tutorial class teachers provide the book for their students. Only 8 teachers said that they follow the structure of the lessons in the book. Meanwhile, 26 teachers mentioned individually the main activities that they do when teaching a new lesson, which include reading, finding the meaning of difficult words (10 of them just translate or explain the meanings of the words and the content of the story in the Khmer language), do the exercises, discuss the answers of the exercises and giving homework.

There is a range of other activities done, outside the lessons in the books. 23 teachers organize and play a variety of indoor and outdoor games with their participants and 21 teachers teaching and sing songs together with 2 teachers saying they encourage their participants to also compose songs. 15 and 12 teachers respectively, encourage their participants to prepare dramas or role-plays and do drawing activities which are related to the stories in the lessons.

Few teachers said they have planned for activities like doing tests, organizing study circles and carrying out devotional gatherings. 6 of the 34 teachers said they encourage their participants to carry out acts of service like cleaning around the classroom, in the school area, or the streets and planting.

When comparing between the old and the new teachers and the activities they carry out that may differ, some details came up. One of this is that more of the new teachers did activities like praying and reviewing the lesson at the start of the class. More new teachers also take time in class to find out the meaning of difficult words and discuss the answers to the exercises. More of the new teachers also conduct games, composing songs, drawing and art activities as well as dancing with the participants. It is also the new teachers who organize more service oriented activities and memorizing quotations.

On the other hand, the old teachers were the only ones who did activities like translating the story to Khmer, giving dictations and encouraging the students to memorize the story, as well as conducting study circles and devotional gatherings. Activities like singing, doing dramas or role-plays and telling stories are among the activities the old teachers did more than the new teachers.

3.7 Training of the Teachers

CORDE has been carrying out the JYSEP for more than 2 years, beginning in 2003. At about this time, UniED invited a trainer and supervisor of this program from Sabah, Malaysia, Mr. Kang Eng Soo. The 4 day training was held in May 2003 for the students of UniED, among whom were CORDE teachers. 10 of the current teachers (all of them old teachers) had attended the training. He gave a brief overview of the overall Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program and then, focused more on how to conduct the book *Drawing on the Power of the Word*.

In the mean time, UniED appointed Mr. Ryan Duly, an international volunteer teacher, to conduct classes on *Breezes of Confirmation* throughout the semester. Of all who were interviewed, only 1 teacher remembers attending his sessions.

In April 2004, Mr. Kang Eng Soo conducted another 4-day training, focused on the book *Breezes of Confirmation*. This time however, he came by the invitation of the Cambodian Bahá'í Institute for Training and Development and 8 of the current teachers (6 of them are old teachers and 2 are new teachers) participated in the training and gained a better understanding on how to start classes using this book.

At this point, Mr. Akhteruzaman Sano was teaching the JYSEP to a new batch of UniED students, starting with the book *Breezes of Confirmation*, proceeding with the books *Walking the Straight Path* and *Drawing on the Power of the Word*. This was taught to the batch of students in the year 2003. 5 of the current teachers remember attending his classes, 4 of them being old teachers and 1 of them a new teacher.

In November 2004, Ms. Prema Swea Choo was given the position of JYSEP Trainer for CORDE as an international volunteer from Yayasan Salam Malaysia. During her assignment, she conducted skills training sessions and for 5 months, a series of weekly trainings for CORDE teachers, to enhance their capability to become better animators, using the official document by the Office of Social and Economic Development on the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Campaign (August 2002). 15 of the current teachers were trained in these weekly sessions.

From October 2004, UniED also started a course on English Literacy and Empowerment (*Breezes of Confirmation*) for foundation year students in the first semester and English Literacy and the Power of Thought (*Walking the Straight Path*) in the second semester. 2 of the teachers for UniED was Mr. Yoth Chayya, who is a local graduate from UniED, and Ms. Prema Swea Choo K. 11 of the new teachers are from that batch of UniED students and had attended both courses. They are currently studying a course on English Literacy and the Power of Words (*Drawing on the Power of the Word*). The teachers for this course are Ms. Melissa Furst, a volunteer from Canada, and Ms. Prema Swea Choo K.

In December 2004, Mr. Akhteruzaman Sano also stopped teaching at UniED and his role as teacher for the JYSEP was taken over by Ms. Prema Swea Choo K. until March 2005. The course they were taught was an Animator Course and the content is about the same as the recent CORDE weekly trainings. Hence, when they were to continue in the second semester, April 2005 to September 2005, Ms. Prema took them through the book '*Breezes of Confirmation*', lesson by lesson (done in groups) to discover the main concepts and find related activities to

assist in teaching the junior youth. 11 of the CORDE teachers are students of this batch and had gone through 2 semesters of this Animator's Course. 9 of them are old teachers and 2 are new teachers.

Despite the numerous training and reviewing done on the program with the teachers, 30 teachers still say that the training given are not enough and they hope to have more training sessions. Some of the training they mentioned that they might need are on specific techniques of teaching the books, on how to be better animators, on understanding, attracting and teaching junior youths, on improving their English, on using games, songs and stories in their classes and on management skills and leadership.

It seems to be that the teachers are comfortable using the book if well prepared lesson plans and trainings focused on specific skills to facilitate the program are provided for them as examples. Otherwise, they are not sure about what they do and not confident in carrying out the classes, whether in English or in Khmer.

3.8 Outreach of the Program

From the current batch of teachers, there are now a total of 590 children, junior youth and youth participating in the program, with 34 teachers carrying out the program. This gives an average of 17 participants in a group for each teacher. Statistics show that 324 students are students of 19 old teachers and 266 are students of 16 new teachers, giving an average of 19 persons and 16 persons in a class for each group of teachers respectively.

Of the 590 participants, 34 of them are children, 186 are junior youth and 302 are youth. Please see Appendix F, Composition of the Participants of the JYSEP. Clearly, the majority of the participants of this program are the youth (above the age of 15 years old). During the discussions held about junior youth and the changes that they go through (Please see Appendix G, Changes a Junior Youth Goes Through), many of the teachers agreed together that the description of junior youth fits more to the youth here (14 – 18 year olds). The average age of physical maturity, the time when many changes are occurring within them, is in the range of 15-17 year olds.

3.9 Overall Successes of the Program

Based on the interview conducted on the teachers and the participants of the program, the following is a list of responses about the effects of the program on the lives the participants:

- One of the response by Chhoeurn Sithat about the effect is that ‘They (the participants) want to have attitudes like the characters in the story. They want to use gentle and loving speech, and they want to do something useful in life.’
- “It helps the students to think for themselves about their future,” was also the response of another teacher, Ten Sovannara, who has been a CORDE teacher for more than 4 years.
- “The program provides a moral education for the young ones,” was Von Sakun’s response.
- A 16 year old, Oam Srenga, said, “It gives me ideas to think about and gives me an opportunity to read and write more.”
- Being part of the program has helped Mai Channy decide, “I want to become a teacher also, to be able to help the future generations like the teachers in the past.”
- A 17 year old, Chan Srey Rou shared that studying the book ‘Walking the Straight Path’ helped her, “to think about the problems I’m facing and to try and solve them.”
- They are able to learn of their own capabilities, including the ability to make more friends, to be kind to one another and to improve their English and understand the virtues that should be practiced. They gain more knowledge, learn to make an effort and to sacrifice, and discover their talents.
- 18 teachers said that there has been notable change of character from bad to good, especially in attitudes and understanding ideas, among the participants. Parents have given feedback to the teachers that their children have become more responsible, helpful and loving in taking care of their siblings and the household. As a long time teacher of more than 6 years, Sao Sokunthear, said, “Most of them learn and then, apply what they have learnt. Of course, there are a few who don’t. But those who do, help out in the family, and are more loving towards their siblings. They even tell the stories they learnt to their younger siblings.”

The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program:

“to endow young people between the ages of 12 and 15 with the capabilities needed to effectively use ‘the word’ as an instrument of their own transformation and the transformation of their society”

The Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education

“to facilitate social transformation of communities in Cambodia through the transformation of individuals. ...The aim of CORDE is to raise the quality of human life and well-being of individuals, families and communities.... CORDE's vision is to transform Cambodia into a creative, productive and confident society through individual transformation.”

Drawing back the attention to the purpose of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program and that of Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education, the research findings in the preceding pages highlight a few striking points for conclusion.

Firstly, the program has proven its effectiveness in increasing the capabilities of the individuals and has undoubtedly affected change in the participants, through exposure to higher literacy and content matter that is rich and meaningful, where *“themes and words have relevance to their lives, motivate them, and elicit their effective participation.”*¹

However, the implementation of the program itself requires a lot of consistent and focused effort, which are the only natural requirements in any learning process, to be able to achieve the transformation of societies. Bearing in mind that, *“When implemented in a given country, the program will assume a shape, and take on characteristics, suitable to the culture and local circumstances. ...”*¹ time, purity of motives, sufficient learning experiences and guidance will reveal the positive outcome of the program in a community like Battambang. Learning of the situation and the challenges faced in the implementation of the program is a step closer to finding a pattern that will assure success.

Issues about whether the program is a class or a gathering of young people, if a teacher is an authoritative figure or a mentor for junior youth, whether the physical and psychological maturity of the individual affect the spiritual maturity of the individual, whether the program should be conducted in English or Khmer or both, are questions which will be answered in the course of time.

Practically, the guidance given by the Office of Social and Economic Development in its August 2002 document on the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Campaign should serve as a reference point throughout the implementation. On the method of teaching, it says that “*the program would be offered in study circles... ..would develop their own dynamics suitable for junior youth.*”¹ In this regard, junior youth are viewed with respect and with latent talents, waiting for its time to be discovered. The animator (and not a teacher), preferably an older youth, brings together a gathering of junior youth, where they all come together as friends to discuss on matters relevant to their lives, and to achieve a specific purpose. On the training of animators, “*The materials employed...would gradually need to be developed over time through a process of consultation, action and reflection on action.*”¹

In line with all that has been mentioned above, CORDE or any other organization implementing the program should ensure the learning posture of the human resources, especially at the grassroots and provide the opportunities for increasing their capabilities in carrying out the program.

¹ Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Campaign, Office of Social and Economic Development, Haifa, August 2002.

Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program

Breezes of Confirmation (Level 1) by William Mmutle Masetlha Foundation, Zambia

The main concepts around this book focus particularly on the junior youth, the spiritual preparation they need and an understanding of the meaning of confirmation. Some of these issues include learning about themselves and their family, recognizing their talents and strengths, identifying their purpose or goals in life and experiencing hardships and difficulties, caused by external forces like injustice, dishonesty, and disunity. It helps the junior youth to learn how to overcome challenges which they will inevitably face in their own lives. Some, but very little, aspects of service to the community is presented in this book. It does give a basic understanding that “work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship”

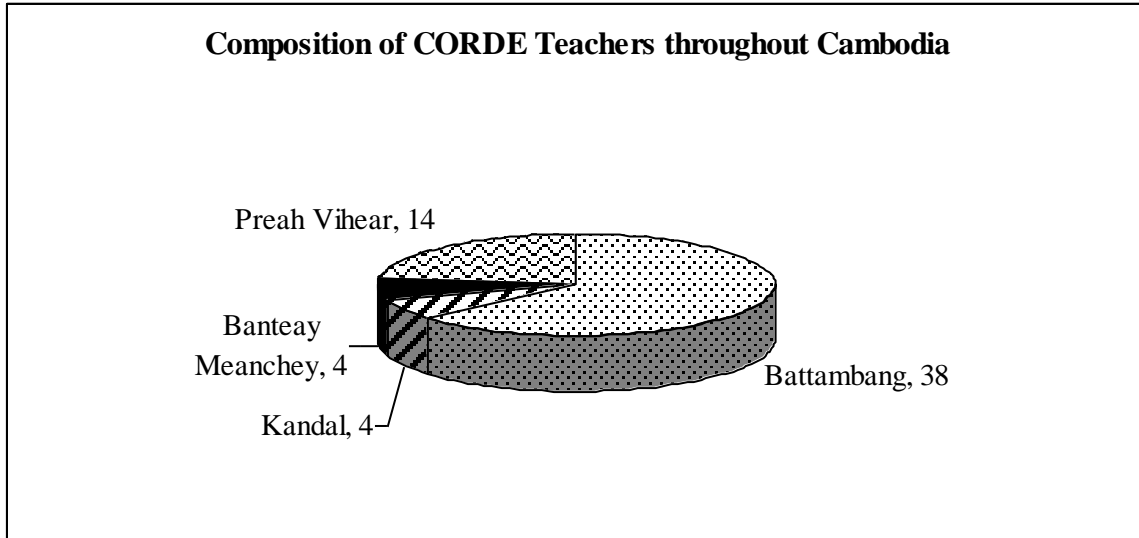
Walking the Straight Path (Level 2) by Badi Foundation, Macau

Walking the Straight Path is a compilation of 20 short stories, about the different spiritual qualities, attitudes and habits that every child or junior youth should learn to help them make the right moral choices. Some of the main themes are humility and being wary of ego flattery and arrogance), making efforts (not only for ourselves, but also for society and the next generation), perseverance and counting our blessings (especially in times of difficulties).

Drawing on the Power of the Word (Level 3) by Ruhi Foundation, Colombia

This third level book focuses on the collective efforts of ‘soon-to-be’ youths with regards to service to humanity. By this time, the junior youth would have achieved remarked progress in their personal growth and seeks to encourage the youth group to explore the moral implications of their speech and action. It was designed to equip the youths with the mental tools and the moral basis required for dealing with the complexities of life.

Appendix A



Appendix B

Interview with CORDE Teachers:

Personal Particulars

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Educational Background:

Have you completed Grade 12? Yes / No

If not, are you still studying? Yes (_____ grade) / No

Are you a UniED Student? Yes / No (_____ years)

What other trainings have you gone through or you are currently doing? If any.

Teaching Particulars:

How long have you been a CORDE teacher? _____ years _____ months

How did you know to become a CORDE Teacher?

From a friend or family member who is a CORDE teacher

From a friend or family member who is NOT a CORDE teacher

From a student of CORDE Classes

As a student of another CORDE teacher before

Others: _____

What is your understanding about the purpose of CORDE?

Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program (JYSEP)

- GENERAL

Have you used the JYSEP in your classes before? (Yes / No)

If 'Yes', are you still using it? (Yes / No)

If No, why not? _____

If you have used before but do not use it now, please tell why you stopped using it.

How long have you been using it? _____ years _____ months

- JUNIOR YOUTH

How many junior youth have you taught using this book? _____

Are there those who are youth (15 – 20 years old) or children (below 12 years old)? Yes / No (_____ children, _____ youth)

- MATERIAL

Which language do you teach the books in for CORDE classes? English / Khmer

There are three books, how much of each book have you taught?

Breezes of Confirmation	1	2	3	4	5
Walking the Straight Path	1	2	3	4	5
Drawing on the Power of the Word	1	2	3	4	5

What is your observations/opinion about the material?

Content / Concepts

Breezes of Confirmation: _____

Walking the Straight Path: _____

Drawing on the Power of the Word: _____

Relevance of the material (How much do the students like studying this book)

Breezes of Confirmation	1	2	3	4	5
Walking the Straight Path	1	2	3	4	5
Drawing on the Power of the Word	1	2	3	4	5

Language

Breezes of Confirmation: _____

Walking the Straight Path: _____

Drawing on the Power of the Word: _____

Level of difficulty for teaching (easy to teach or not?)

Breezes of Confirmation	1	2	3	4	5
Walking the Straight Path	1	2	3	4	5
Drawing on the Power of the Word	1	2	3	4	5

Lesson Methodology:

How do you conduct the lessons?

What are other activities you do with the junior youth class?

- TRAINING

What kind of training have you had before or during the time you teach this program?

Do you think the training is enough? (Yes / No)

What kind of training do you think you need to become a better animator?

- RESULTS

Effect of the lessons on the participants:

What is the learning you gained / successes while using this program?

What are the challenges you face while using this program?

In your opinion, what are the advantages of using this program?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for participants of the program:

Personal Particulars

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Educational Background:

Are you studying at the public school? Yes (Grade _____) / No

If not, have you studied at the public school before? Yes (until Grade _____) / No

Why did you stop studying?

CORDE Particulars:

How long have you been a student of CORDE classes? _____ years, _____ months

How did you know about the CORDE classes?

How many hours do you study in CORDE classes in one week? _____ hours

What have you studied/are studying with CORDE?

(Tick (☐) what they have studied before, and circle the one they are studying now)

English Literacy Program for Children

Moral Textbook 1

Moral Textbook 2

Moral Textbook 3

Moral Textbook 4

Breezes of Confirmation

Walking the Straight Path

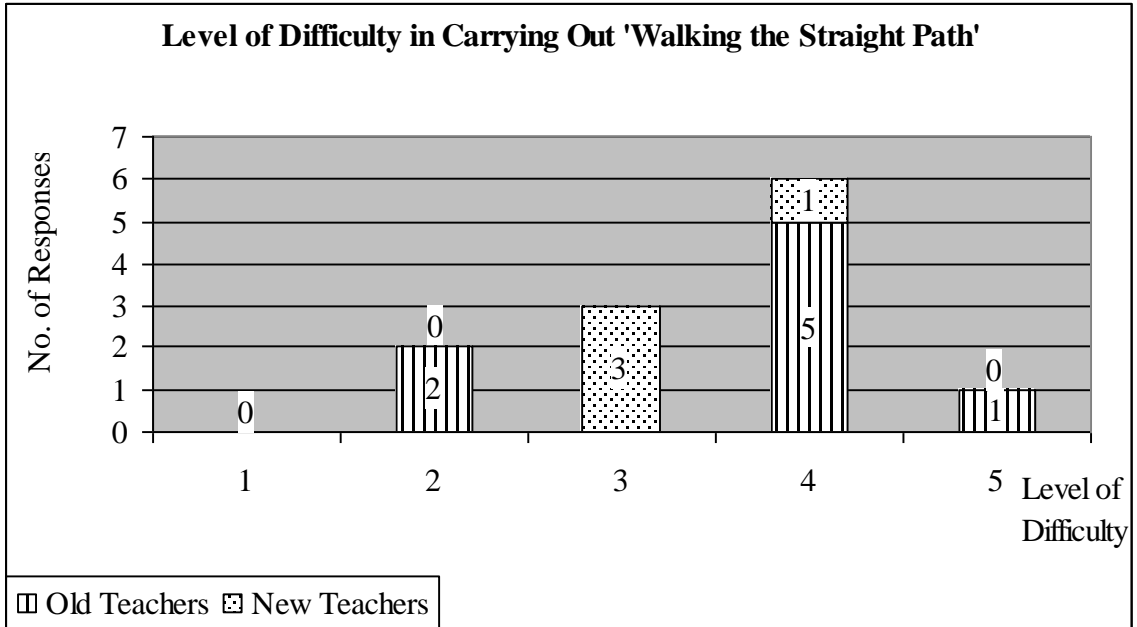
Health Classes

Environment Classes

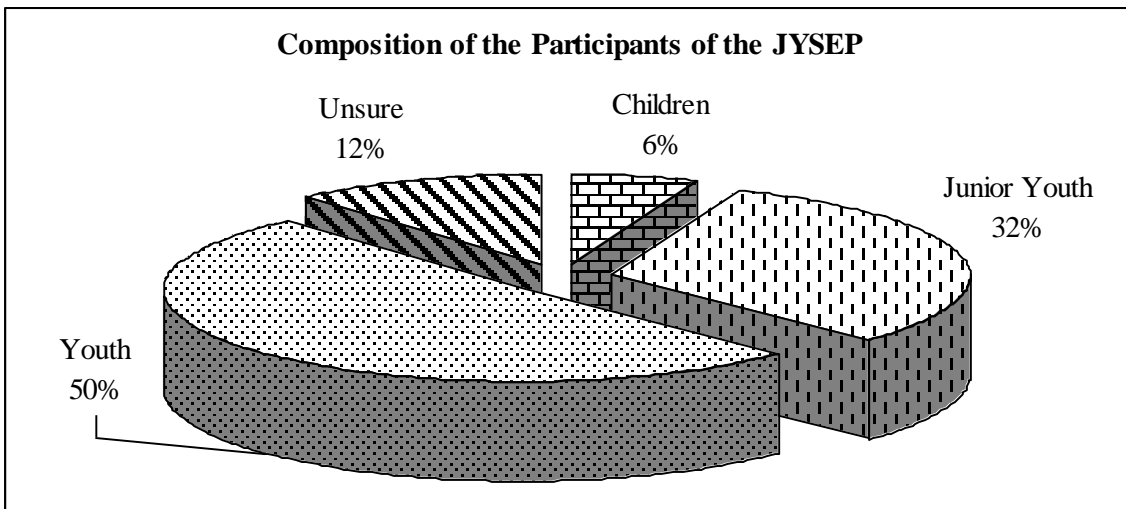
Others: _____

Who is/were your teachers? _____

Appendix E



Appendix F



Appendix G**Changes a Junior Youth Goes Through**

	Physical	Social	Psychological		Spiritual
			Emotions	Cognitions	
What is it?	Of the body. Eg: hand, leg, heart, running, eating.	Interaction with other people. Eg: parents, friends, joking.	Feelings. Eg: happy, sad, angry, and jealous.	Intelligence/ability to think. Eg: school learning, counting.	Qualities of the soul. Eg: Ability to know God & pray, virtues.
Birth – 6 years old (mostly with the family)	Most physical change body grows a lot sleeps a lot	can't speak yet, only learning to. interacts with parents and close family members, few other kids in the village	focused on the child mostly		
7 – 12 years old (just starting school)	continues to grow steadily in height and weight.	circle of friends increase		just starting school, much to learn start to think about things	
13 – 18 years old (junior youth)	Sudden, rapid growth changes. Girls – body shape, hair, menstruation Boys – voice, hair, height	choose to be with friends more often become detached from family, more attached to friends. interest in the other sex. influenced by friends a lot.	hormones increase emotions heightens, suddenly angry, happy or sad. Sometimes want to be alone, want to express their feelings but not sure if they should	Start making choices about what they want to do in life, what they like or don't like curious about many things want to learn more about themselves Irrational	Attain spiritual maturity at 15 years. much to prepare
19 – 30 years old	mature: Have the capacity to have a family and children	Mature: Able to find work, start a family (a new social unit)	Mature: Able to control their feelings better	Mature: Think rationally, able to make mature decisions	Mature: Practice and live a life with the spiritual qualities.