ភាពជាដៃគូអប់រំនៃអង្គការក្រៅរដ្ឋាភិបាល
NGO EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

School Accountability

Community Participation in Performance of Primary and Lower Secondary Schools in Cambodia

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Acronyms

CC	Commune Council
D & D	Decentralization and Deconcentration
DoE	District Office of Education
DTMT	District Training and Monitoring Team
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
NEP	NGO Education Partnership
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PB	Programme-based Budget
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLSS	Parents Learning Support System
PO	Parental Organization
PoE	Provincial Office of Education
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SSC	School Support Committee
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TPAP	Teacher Policy Action Plan

Definitions of terms used

SSCs refer to the members of School Support Committee who are selected to work with schools to ensure schools are accountable for their functions to the community and to society.

Non-SSCs refer to the parents of children who are studying at the school where data for this study were collected and who were interviewed as part of this study.

Community participation refers to the level of involvement of School Support Committees in school functioning based on the SSC guidelines developed in 2012, which are comprised of 8 roles and responsibilities. The SSC involvement is evaluated based on the perceptions of SSCs, non-SSCs and School Directors.

School performance refers to activities in the schools for which the schools are accountable to the community, as opposed to measured student learning outcomes.

School accountability is measured on the basis of community participation levels and school performance. The two measures serve as the combined input to reflect the extent to which schools are accountable for their own functions, for student learning, and to the community at large.

Executive Summary

Education is currently at the forefront of the development and political agendas of most countries around the globe. Each country is working to bring equitable and accessible education of high quality to its citizens. As far as the quality is concerned, the workable, however somewhat antiquated, model of determining education quality is the production-function model. Until recently, the process, which involves what is happening in schools and with teachers, becomes the most significant factor in producing high-performing students with the same available budget. Alongside this, in the last few decades the term *accountability* appears frequently in policy discourse and research on education quality.

In Cambodia, the concept of decentralization and accountability is very recent. It was not until the late 1990s that decentralization was introduced to Cambodia, under a strong push from aid agencies; this movement was later reinforced in 2002. The delegation of administrative power also influenced the education sector greatly. The involvement of different stakeholders in school functioning started with the *school cluster* program, which was introduced in 1992, while the other tasks of community involvement in school management and functioning were just starting at the same time as the establishment of School Support Committees (SSCs) in 2002. However, extensive evaluation of SSC functioning over several years voiced similar concerns. The anticipated roles of SSCs were far reaching, however in practice their activities were found to centre mostly on fundraising and school contributions, while the rest of the long list of their responsibilities remained unfulfilled. Understanding the challenges of low participation of communities in school accountability at a local level, MoEYS has placed a number of priority actions within the newly-developed teacher policy action plan (TPAP) to seek to improve local capacity to be involved in school-based management.

This research study on Community Participation in Performance of Primary and Lower Secondary Schools undertaken in 5 provinces and Phnom Penh municipality involving key informant interviews with 108 School Directors, 366 SSC members, 265 parents and 15 NGO staff members; and 12 focus group discussions with 72 students in 90 primary and 18 lower secondary schools. The study aimed at examining the level of functioning of SSC to identify good practice and challenges of SSC participation in promoting school accountability. Hence, results from this study, we hope, will be of assistance to MoEYS in forming strong policies for implementation.

The analysis of the data that were obtained from school directors, students, SSC and non-SSC members (parents of children at the schools studied), and NGO staff revealed a number of core findings. **First, although community participation in school performance was found to be relatively low, there are some improvements in terms of the nature of their involvement** when

compared with previous studies. Results indicate that the SSC members have become more aware of their roles and responsibilities, though not yet at a desired level, and are involved in more diverse school-related activities than was reported a decade ago. There is an increasing participation from the community in monitoring school building processes and maintaining available infrastructure. Also, SSCs have offered a more help to schools to ensure the safe and learner-friendly environment.

The extent of community participation was found to differ between areas (province/municipality), but not the school levels (primary and secondary schools). The School Directors and SSC data concurrently supported evidence that SSC members in schools outside of Phnom Penh had significantly higher levels of participation in "collecting and managing funds" and "capacity building". Data further suggested that SSCs in schools outside of Phnom Penh appeared to have significantly higher levels of participation in "monitoring of student learning", "school infrastructure development and maintenance" and "experience and life skill sharing" compared to their counterparts in the capital. Further analysis showed that SSCs participation in school activities differed significantly by province ($p < .05$). Evidence suggested that Ratanakiri, Siem Reap and Phnom Penh had the least perceived participation from SSC members in school-related activities. There was seen to be a little involvement of SSCs in schools in Kampot and Prey Veng. Kompong Cham had the highest perceived SSC involvement in school decision-making. However, results using School Directors and SSC data proved that in most cases there were no significant differences in the perceived levels of community participation in school activities between Primary and Lower Secondary schools ($p > 0.05$). The only notable differences were documented on "school enrollment enforcement" and "irregularity prevention"; nonetheless, contrasting evidence was garnered from School Directors and SSC members. The data suggested that primary schools overall witnessed a higher level of community participation in activities that promote school enrollment; whereas, there was a relatively higher participation in activities that involve irregularity prevention at lower secondary schools.

The education of school directors may play a role in determining the level of SSCs involvement in their school activities. In the provinces where more school directors of schools studied hold bachelor degrees, perceptions were of better SSC participation in school management.

Second, this study points to a conclusion that there is a significant gap between SSCs and parents who are not part of the SSC in understanding how schools are functioning, especially with regard to the roles and responsibilities of SSCs, which are intended to bridge this gap. Parents not engaged in SSCs appear to feel more detached from schools, leaving their understanding of what SSCs are doing more limited compared to their SSC member counterparts. In interviews, each group shared similar challenges with relation to community participation in

school performance. These included the following: School Directors' lack of understanding of SSC roles and responsibilities and occasionally commitment to community accountability, SSCs' lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities, low motivation/trust from community/local authority, communication and collaboration problems among School Directors, SSCs and the community, and the lack of funding to sustain the work of SSCs. The analysis also highlighted that there are a number of good practices to ensure and promote the work of SSCs and community participation. This study concludes that SSCs may not function well unless the following occur: the roles and responsibilities of SSCs are clearly communicated to School Directors and the SSC members themselves; the SSC members are selected from knowledgeable/influential/committed groups; communications between School Directors and SSCs are bridged more effectively; and issues in financing and resourcing of SSC activities are resolved.

To address some issues found in the study and to improve school accountability, this study has proposed five recommendations including re-enforcing the implementation of existing SSC guideline, enhancing capacity of school directors and SSCs, improving coordination amongst key actors, enhancing financial accountability, and last but not least, empowering the role of commune councils

1. Introduction and context

Education is currently at the forefront of development and political agendas for most countries around the globe. Each country is working diligently to bring equitable and accessible education of high quality to its citizens. As developing countries in particular make progress on the goal of *access* to education, we can see attention shifting to issues of *quality* of that education, recognizing that school attendance itself is not sufficient to ensure good learning outcomes. Though the term *quality* has been defined differently from one country to another, making a single definition elusive, the common goal that each country shares is the achievement of the students in meeting specific learning outcomes after a certain number of years of schooling. Normally, this is reflected in the student performance on national or international tests, such as PISA or TIMSS, and employability levels of its students after graduation.

As far as quality is concerned, the workable, though somewhat antiquated, model of determining education quality is the production-function model. This theory looks at education quality in relation to the input and process. The breakthrough report by Coleman et al. (1966) found that school inputs had a great impact on student learning. This finding called for more investment into inputs from every government around the world. However, more recent studies by many other scholars (e.g. Huneshek, 2010) suggest that the process of teaching and learning within educational institutions, often referred to as the 'black box', placed in the middle of inputs and outputs, plays a major role in raising the quality of student learning. These processes include those that provide for the accountability of teachers and schools in performing their tasks to ensure that students learn what they are supposed to learn. Because of this, in the last few decades the term *accountability* has become a frequently discussed aspect of approaches to ensuring education quality.

Though there was still much debate over its pros and cons, the concept of school accountability first began to enter education research and policy dialogue appeared in the 1960s (Beneniste, 1985). Since then, interventions aimed at improving school accountability have become part of policy responses to bring about school quality and, at times, meeting public demand for improved education services in a more cost-effective way (Figlio & Page, 2003). These interventions are supported by an evidence base that includes a 2011 study by the OECD, which examined links between learning outcomes in mathematics, reading and science and measures of school accountability. The study found that countries where schools account for their results by disseminating their performance cards to the public were more able to allocate their resources to more effectively raise student achievement rates; however, in the countries where there were no such accountability arrangements, the students tended to perform worse (OECD, 2011). For example, in Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Hong Kong, countries that have provided great accountability and autonomy to their schools in determining curricula and assessment practices, student achievement was quite high on the PISA test.

Besides raising the quality of student learning as the ultimate goal, research has suggested that better school accountability, where it enables greater school and teacher autonomy at a local level, is also able to attract competent candidates to teaching positions (Figlio & Page, 2003). It has also been shown to help build the trust of the local communities so that they are willing to inject more funding and make a greater contribution to schools. Better accountability can result in greater commitment and shared responsibility of teachers, students, and the community in the tasks of improving school performance.

The debate is not only with regard to the pros and cons of accountability, but also with how this term is defined. Accountability is a complicated term, though, as mentioned earlier, it is now commonplace in the public administration literature. We rarely saw this term a few decades ago (Dubnick 1998, pp. 69–70), but it now appears everywhere, in performing 'all manner of analytical and rhetorical tasks and carrying most of the major burdens of democratic governance' (Mulgan, 2000). Traditionally, the meaning was confined to the process of being called 'to account' to some authority for one's actions (Jones 1992, p. 73). This definition is similar to that defined by Stecher and Kirby (2004, p. 22), who referred to it as "the practice of holding educational systems responsible for the quality of their products—students' knowledge, skills, and behaviors." However, the concept of accountability lost some of its former straightforwardness and has come to require constant clarification and increasingly complex categorization (Day and Klein 1987; Sinclair 1995).

The purpose or goals of accountability programs have shifted over time from system *efficiency,* to educational *quality,* to organizational *productivity,* and to external *responsiveness* to public priorities or market demands (Burke, 2005). No matter how much its purpose has changed, Burke (2005), who agreed with the model of school accountability of Mayston and Jesson (1988), continued to argue that school accountability allows the relevant stakeholders to clearly know whether or not schools (1) have used their powers properly, (2) are working to realize their mission or priorities, (3) report their performance to the public, (4) have used the available resources efficiently and effectively to produce impact, (5) produce products and services of acceptable quality, and (6) serve public needs. In such regards, accountability systems then become the system with much power to reward and punish schools by increasing funding to high performing schools and punishing low-performing schools (Figlio & Page, 2003). Accountability thus enables schools to offer high-quality education, reduce the likelihood of harmful or inequitable practices, and have means to identify and correct problems that may occur (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2015).

School accountability in Cambodia

Review of the policy and research documents from government and international agencies reveals increasing advocacy of community participation in education. This advocacy has partly been based on a desire to spread the responsibility of resourcing education systems,

but has also aimed to increase the volume, relevance and impact of schooling. Much of the policy framework surrounding these moves has been associated with shifts toward decentralization of responsibility for education (Bray, 2003). In this regard, educating the next generation is believed to be the responsibility of everyone, so that high accountability can be obtained. School-community accountability approaches have become wide-spread around the world (Figlio & Loeb, 2011), and many educational research studies reveal that participation from relevant stakeholders, i.e. parents, School Support Committees (SSCs), and commune councils (CCs), in the management of school resources and personnel is critical to learners' achievement (Hanushek & Raymond, 2004, 2005). In this sense, accountability is viewed as one of many mechanisms that encourage officials to act in the interest of the public. Without public access to records of governance and other information, already-scarce resources may be squandered or used in the incorrect way.

In Cambodia, the concept of decentralization and accountability is very recent. Historically, the system in Cambodia was very centralized with central government involvement in almost all operational decisions; the public bodies at sub-national levels had very little autonomy or independent authority. It was not until the late 1990s that decentralization was introduced to Cambodia, under a strong push from aid agencies. The aid agencies saw that the highly structured system at the local level did not necessarily represent the community and respond to local needs. Additionally, spending, decision making and understanding of impact were not transparent at a local level. Understanding the importance of accountability through decentralization, the Royal Government of Cambodia has committed to a wide-ranging reform programme to establish local democratic institutions and decentralize power. In 2002, Cambodia held elections for independent commune councils. Those living in rural areas had a voice to select their local leaders, though district and provincial governors are still appointed by the central government (Sendara & Ojendal, 2007).

In the education sector, involving different stakeholders in school functioning started with the *school cluster* program, which was introduced in 1992. While the program was evaluated as successful in terms of technical assistance to teachers and School Directors (Turner, 2002), the other tasks of community involvement in school management and functioning were just starting at the same time as the creation of School Support Committees (SSCs) in 2002. By regulation, each school must have a School Support Committee, and its members consist of local authorities and prominent figures, including monks, parents, in order to involve communities and other stakeholders in school-related tasks ranging from school budget management to ensuring the quality of education. The existence of SSCs marks a fundamental move of the government in involving the wider community in school management and functioning. Based on the 2012 guidelines on the establishment of SSCs, all members are expected to take part in eight core activities; (1) designing the school development plan, (2) enforcing school enrollment, (3) monitoring student learning, (4) collecting and managing funds, (5) developing and maintaining school

infrastructure, (6) experience and life skills sharing, (7) irregularity prevention, and (8) capacity building.

Table 1: *Guideline on SSC participation in school activities*

A.	**School development planning**
	1. Participate in the discussion about school improvement planning.
	2. Discuss school issues to set planning objectives, activities, sources of income and time frame.
	3. Participate in monitoring and evaluation of school plan implementation.
	4. Cooperate with school to integrate the school plan into community development plan.
B.	**School enrollment enforcement**
	1. Support poorest family that cannot send children to school.
	2. Promote awareness to the importance of schooling to the community.
C.	**Monitoring of student learning**
	1. Help advise parents to monitor their children's learning.
	2. Contact a School Director and teacher to share student-monitoring information in order to improve student learning.
	3. Attend monthly monitoring meetings with School Directors and other school personnel.
	4. Participate in promoting health work at school.
D.	**Collect and manage funds**
	1. Involve in fund-raising activities for school improvement.
	2. Managing and using school funds.
E.	**School infrastructure development and maintenance**
	1. Involve in fund-raising for school facilities improvement.
	2. Monitor school construction and maintenance activities.
F.	**Experience and life skills sharing**
	1. Involve in sharing life skills knowledge to community.
	2. Compile knowledge and experience that promotes life skills into a learning document for students.
G.	**Irregularities prevention**
	1. Providing community with necessary information to avoid actions against schools or student learning.
	2. Providing support to misbehavior students.
	3. Solve in- and out-of-school problems caused by students.
H.	**SSC capacity building**
	1. Improve communication between schools and community.
	2. Work with DTMT on student learning assessment and teacher performance.
	3. Participate in capacity building training.
	4. Involve in field work in order to improve school performance.

This initiative was reinforced by the later policies of Child Friendly School, Education Strategic Plan 2005-2009, Education Strategic Plan 2010-2014, and the 2012 Teacher Policy to attempt to ensure strong school leadership and accountability by involving different

stakeholders in school decision-making processes. This is a good sign in terms of regulation framework and design, since it theoretically empowers communities and leads to participatory and locally grounded decision-making in primary schools. However previous studies on School Support Committee practice found that, SSCs were not yet employed as an effective mechanism to complete the responsibilities and roles stated in the guidelines. Failure to follow the guidelines potentially leads to weak governance of schools and suggests limited power or participation of local communities in public education services. Evaluations of SSC functioning recognized that they were playing an important role in fundraising and securing community resource contributions to schools, but concluded that the range of other roles envisaged for SCCs were not typically fulfilled. Their voice remained unheard in school management, and School Directors still retained a tight grip on schools' finances and decision-making (Nguon, 2011; Pellini, 2005, 2007). Parents involved in these studies tended to believe that teachers held total responsibility for ensuring their children receive good quality schooling. They understood their own roles and that of teachers in a different context. To parents, a major role of teachers is to equip children with academic skills, and it is not appropriate for parents to 'interfere' with this role (Shoraku, 2008). Cambodian parents typically only participated in contributing money to schools, providing labor to repair schools, and joining school meetings; however, they normally did not get involved in school decision making or budgeting, or other activities that help promote quality education for their children.

Understanding the aforementioned issues of poor participation of communities in school accountability in both rural and urban schools, MoEYS placed a number of relevant priority actions in the Teacher Policy Action Plan agreed in 2015. In the TPAP MoEYS aims to develop the evidence base about the true capacity and functioning of SSCs in order to create a strong, yet feasible, policy that results in the effective workflow and performance of School Accountability at a local level. The TPAP also lays out plans to improve local capacity on school-based management, seen as required to be able to implement the Decentralization and Deconcentration Policy (D&D Policy) of the Royal Government of Cambodia. The D&D policy reform strengthens the roles and responsibilities of the subnational bodies to perform their own jobs with support from the central or national body, but without direct control (Niazi, 2011). In this context, this research study aims to inform a set of important policy actions to be taken at a national level, and add to the evidence base to support Government and community activity to improve education services.

Research questions

In an attempt to examine the realities of school accountability in Cambodia, this research study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the levels of community participation in school performance at the primary and secondary school levels in Cambodia?

2. What factors prevent all the stakeholders from fully participating in school performance?
3. Do SSC members and those who are not members of SSCs have different perceptions on the practices and challenges of SSC?
4. What are the good practices of community participation to enhance school accountability in Cambodia?

2. Literature review

The concept of school accountability first appeared in the 1960s (Beneniste, 1985). Its purpose and meanings are still being explored in practice and in the literature and therefore there is no single clear understanding of the concept. However, the goals and definitions of accountability in education include trust in local education services, self-regulation, bureaucratic rules and stipulations, performance goals and results, policy initiatives and political intrusions, and, finally, private markets and government incentives (Burke, 2005).

International models of school accountability for performance

School accountability has been implemented differently from one country to another, and scholars, even in the same context, have conflicting perspectives.. The concept of accountability is quite broad, and it can be addressed in many ways. For example, it can include using political processes to assure democratic accountability, introducing market-based reforms to increase accountability to parents and children, or developing peer-based accountability systems to increase the professional accountability of teachers (Figlio & Loeb, 2011). The most commonly considered definition of accountability involves using administrative data-based mechanisms aimed at increasing student achievement by highlighting the performance of individual schools or educational institutions.

Typically, many countries use high-stakes, standardized testing to measure school performance and ensure accountability of school activities (Figlio & Loeb, 2011). This act of measuring school accountability was first introduced in the United States in the 1990s, though long practiced in the United Kingdom since 1980s (Burgess, Propper, Slatter, & Wilson, 2005). Such a model of measurement puts schools in reward and sanction positions. Simply described, schools whose students perform well on the national achievement exams, receive rewards in terms of increases in budget share, salary raises for their staff members, and/or more school autonomy, while low-achieving schools receive sanctions from the state. The national achievement exams aim to include important learning outcomes and standards reflective of the curriculum set forth by the government.

Reeves (1998) argued that school accountability should not solely include achievement test scores as such scores are not entirely reflective of student learning. Reeves further emphasized the roles and responsibilities of teachers, schools and communities. He thus

gave out five main principles that are used to measure the level of school accountability: congruence, specificity, relevance, respect for diversity, and continuous improvement.

Schools are accountable for student learning, which is normally measured by standardized test scores. It has been largely assumed by policy makers that external tests do, in fact, adequately measure student learning. Jones, 2004, argues that these and other assumptions about school accountability must be questioned if we are to develop a more successful accountability model. Schools should also be accountable for the physical and emotional well-being of students, student learning, teacher learning, equity and access, and improvement. In this regard, schools should be held accountable to their primary stakeholders: students, parents, and the local community. Thus the accountability system set within a national education system should help schools perform their proper roles, be able to improve student learning and school practices, provide guidance and information for local decision making, and give a balance of responsibility and power among different levels in the government.

Beneniste (1985) introduced the main purpose of school accountability in a very simplified way--to monitor and evaluate how well schools perform so that awards could be given to high-performing schools while sanctions could be placed on low-performing schools. This model has been used widely since then. According to Beneniste, school accountability has three main functions: to inform, to reorient action, and to justify what is done. Accountability mechanisms provide information to the public about what schools are doing and transmits information to the schools about what the public wants. The information is used to assist schools, teachers, pupils, and the public in better understanding each other. The second stage was to ask teachers or schools to improve on certain tasks and performance. This stage is when positive rewards and penalties were introduced if schools were still not performing well after additional resources or assistances have been in place. Beneniste warns that accountability systems have sometimes been misused to justify undesirable practices, and that some governments have used it to measure what they had already achieved. In this regard, Beneniste believed that accountability systems can be a double-edged sword.

Interestingly, Finn (2002) compared educational accountability systems to the four main characters: Bob, the character that complies to the rules and procedures; Carol, the character that trusts professionals and experts; Ted, the character that trusts set standards and verification against these standards; and, Alice, the character who trusts the customers to demand and choose what they need from a market of services. Finn assessed that many countries around the world are using Ted, a top-down system where national standards and nation-wide tests are administered to regularly monitor student achievement. He argued that in order to make educational accountability systems work, each of the four components needs to be inter-related. In this regard, the national standard established through rules and regulations must be set for each local authority to be clear what needs to be achieved. Within this, the assessment and evaluation of education outcomes are not only

focused on test scores, but also on the skills and knowledge that the labor market needs. The local authorities and schools need to welcome visits from community members, professionals and experts to support better functioning in the future.

A number of governments or local education authorities include some subset of indicators, such as attendance rates of students and/or teachers, dropout rates, and retention rates, in addition to student test results in computing indices used for school accountability. Generally, the non-test indicators are given less weight than student test results in overall performance indices. The effective weights are usually even less than those officially assigned for non-test data, because the effective weight of a component of an accountability index depends on the variability of the component from school to school, and indicators such as average daily attendance tend to be less variable across schools than test results are. Nonetheless, inclusion of non-test indicators can send the message that characteristics such as on-time promotion in grade, graduation rates, and attendance of both teachers and students are valued (Linn, 2004).

Another powerful and well-known model regarding education accountability systems was introduced by Levin (1974). Levin set a strong theoretical framework of school accountability as a performance reporting process, as a technical process, as a political process, and as an institutional process. Reporting the performance of schools is usually based on examination and other key student results to the education stakeholders so that they can appraise school performance.

A technical process is the goal achieving system of schooling. Schooling has its clear goals, and the technical process captures the success of achieving goals within financial constraints, human resources and other factors. In doing so, the quality assurance models are normally used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of schools as an operating system. A political process tries to answer the question of to whom are schools accountable, even if the shared goals of education, and schools specifically, are already set. Normally, a school represents the needs of different stakeholders each of whom possesses different goals of education. The political process seeks the favor of one group over another. In the concept of accountability as an institutional process, the legitimacy of the education process that helps lead to a better society needs to be defined and delivered. Using Levin's model, Ng (2010) was able to define the evolution of the school accountability system in Singapore. He found that Singapore used reporting and technical processes during the 'phase of standardization' (mid 1960s to mid-1980s), political process during the 'phase of local accountability' (mid 1980s to mid-1990s), and institutional process during the 'phase of diversity and innovation' (mid 1990s to today).

Though different models have been used extensively to explain and measure levels of school accountability, a consensus on explanations and suitable performance measurements is not available. However, in reviewing the breadth of literature on school performance and accountability models, we can see commonalities. There is a common view that schools need to perform in such a way as to secure approval from the public to

produce high-valued outcomes within the constraints of a given budget. Controversy arises, however, from defining the desired outcomes of schooling.

School-based management

Models of school-based management have been practiced in many developed countries, such as England, New Zealand or Victoria, Australia, Canada and the United States for a few decades. Mainly, school-based management involves some sort of transfer of responsibility and decision making—usually the responsibility for school operations—to a combination of principals, teachers, parents, and other school community members (Barrera-Osorio, Fasih, & Patrinos, 2009). Caldwell (n.d) defined it as 'the systematic decentralization to the school level of authority and responsibility to make decisions on significant matters related to school operations within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards, and accountability.'

Although many countries have historically practiced a centralized system in education which gave all power and decision-making processes to the central government, by the start of the 21st century, there can be seen to be movements all over the world in reshaping the public administration work to a decentralized system. In the education sector, there were three major system reforms identified by Caldwell and Spinks (1998): the building of systems of self-managing schools (school-based management), an unrelenting focus on learning outcomes, and the creation of schools for a knowledge society and global economy. Their conclusion was that school-based management had become very common amongst national education policies and that significant funds had been allocated implement such systems in developing countries.

A core concept of school-based management is to ensure that individual schools and local education offices are accountable to parents, pupils, the local electorate and local politicians. High levels of autonomy are given to schools so that they may operate independently. The final outcomes of 'high and desired quality of education' must be produced by each school. Generally, the school and local community have greater decision-making powers in relation to the learning contents, planning the expenditure, planning for school development and improvement and carrying out many other tasks on their own. However, in return, the school needs to be accountable for their decisions to utilize available resources by producing desirable outcomes from the educational process (Mayston & Jesson, 1988). That is where the concept of school accountability becomes important to school-based management approaches.

Though school-based management was found a successful model of educational management in developed countries by increasing student achievement, studies on its impact in developing countries showed minimal improvement of education quality (e.g., Fullan & Watson, 2000; Ouchi & Segal, 2003; Volansky & Friedman, 2003). This lack of success was attributed to low budgets in developing countries, the low capacity of School

Directors in operating their own schools and securing the engagement of the wider community in school development and functioning.

Community participation and school accountability

As explained in the previous section, the participation of local communities has been shown to be of much assistance to schools in operating their functions to the fullest. The shared responsibility of local communities in school development helps shape the true meaning of school accountability (Linn, 2003). Participation from the public--not only among educators and students--but also administrators, policymakers, parents, and educational researchers can improve education through shared responsibility. In this regard, an effective accountability system would involve all parties in the shared or public work of education. The participation does not only improve accountability but also other inseparable elements of accountability, such as autonomy, transparency and trust (Burke, 2005; Cornwall, Lucas & Pasteur, 2000).

Communities can get involved in a number of activities to ensure that schools are bringing out the desired outcomes from their children. For example, with the right information and support, communities can monitor and evaluate the work of schools and teachers. At this point they can check how schools and teachers implement the national curriculum for the full learning of students and find out the obstacles that schools and teachers have and seek out possible solutions. Second, schools also need assistance from communities in developing the school improvement and budget plans. This is arguably far more important in developing countries where evidence suggests that principals and school staff have low capacities in educational planning. Community involvement is also a mechanism to ensure the transparency of school roles and responsibilities. Communities can work with schools in promoting a good environment for learning and teaching – including aspects sometimes described as schools being 'learning-friendly' that include safety, cleanliness, and the physical environment of the school.

Accountability, school performance and student learning

International evidence suggests that accountability helps produce high school performance, which finally improves student learning. Prominent research on recent accountability reforms has found positive effects on student academic performance on national exams (e.g. Burgess, et al., 2005; Carnoy and Loeb 2003; Hanushek and Raymond 2004). According to the theory of action of accountability (Amo, 2015; Figlio & Ladd, 2007; Jacob, 2005; Smith & O'Day, 1990), holding educators and school leaders accountable for student achievement (i.e. performance-based accountability) will motivate them to align behaviors and instructional practices to increase student achievement. In Texas in the studies of Deere and Strayer (2001) and Cullen and Reback (2006), greater accountability was linked to

substantial increases in grade retention. Some studies have found that accountability policies were substantially more effective in states where there was greater delegation of decision-making to the local level. For example, Loeb and Strunk (2007) conclude that without some local control, even well-thought-out accountability policies will be less effective, and sometimes ineffective and harmful.

School accountability does not only improve student test scores. Some accountability scholars who argued against the use of test scores in determining school accountability conducted studies to check how accountability plays an important role in student learning. The studies found that school accountability mechanisms could also improve learning ability, problem-solving skills, collaboration, communication, resourcefulness, and resilience (Turnipseed & Darling-Hammond, 2015). They argued that these skills are far more important than the test scores that students achieve because they help graduates prepare for employment opportunities that require transferrable skills and which may not have been anticipated by students when choosing specific subjects to study or technical training. .

International approaches to school community accountability

Various strategies to increase school accountability have been undertaken in both developed and developing countries with both success and failure in different contexts. To ensure best practices, most OECD countries have employed a combination of mechanisms to hold schools accountable. These mechanisms are clustered into three broad types of accountability: performance accountability, regulatory accountability and market accountability (OECD, 2011). Under this accountability framework, local schools are subject to reporting their performance, particularly student learning, to the governing body and to the public, an external inspection, a planned and regular practice of self-evaluation and the competition for funding. Underperformance in these systems could result in a decrease in school budget. The OECD's model emphasizes as important the existence of a well-established and active monitoring system to coordinate school performance at the local level.

In Asia, a common approach to school accountability is in the implementation of school clustering and community participation in school governance, although the names used and practices may differ across countries (Wheeler et al., 1994, as cited in Pellini, 2007). In Thailand, school clusters serve as a mechanism to enhance school-community relationships and to hold schools accountable for school governance. India introduced a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) to work closely with school management. The Philippines developed a Parents Learning Support System (PLSS). Indonesia established a Parent Organization (PO). These countries, however, shared similar problems, the most marked of which was the lack of community participation in decision-making processes. Academic assessment suggested that decision-making power remained in the hands of School Directors. Indonesia's model was judged not to be successful as teachers were not included in the mechanisms

established, relying too heavily on community members. Nepal's school cluster model was also not seen to be functioning well, either, since the school management model remained hierarchically structured. Schools failed to involve communities in decision-making processes, thereby creating pseudo-participation from communities in school governance.

In Cambodia, the School Cluster Program was introduced in 1992 with one aim to promote community participation to help schools perform their tasks accountably (Pellini, 2007). School Support Committees (SSCs) were thereafter founded as an intermediary force to bridge school-community relations. These two mechanisms were intended to provide a supportive platform for the community in helping schools to perform their tasks both effectively and accountably. But, evidence showed that these mechanisms have not been rated successful due to the lack of human and financial resources (e.g., Shoraku, 2008; Thida & Joy, 2012). To hold schools accountable through community participation is a significant challenge. Shoraku (2008), however, recommended a holistic approach to this: (1) train teachers and School Directors in basic leadership techniques and community organizational skills (e.g., the use of school budgets, financing and community organization); (2) train local government staff in monitoring, supervising and assessing school operations, in this case DTMTs; (3) establish separate school-based autonomous organizations for vested-interest groups and other ordinary people (e.g., parental and school-based organizations) to have conformable spaces for open discussion about the education of their children. Thida and Joy[1] (2012) stressed preconditions for the success of school-based management in Cambodia which included leadership and management preparation for school staff, especially School Directors, and a more participatory decision-making approach in school management, particularly from teachers and SSCs. In 2014, CARE implemented a model of strengthening School Support Committees in the North East of Cambodia that sought to address these factors in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. This model mainly emphasized the training of DTMTs and SSCs to promote their participation, capacity and the awareness of their roles and responsibilities. Evaluation showed that the training proved effective and useful in increasing their participation, capacity and the awareness of their roles and responsibilities, despite the fact that the study was conducted in a remote area of Cambodia where human and financial resources are limited.

Africa shares similar models for school accountability through involving the community in school governance. Benin, for example, tried out a model that transferred decision making from the central level to the local level. Schools were entitled to manage funds allocated from the central government and use them for educational purposes (e.g., hiring community teachers). In addition, PTAs were introduced to engage communities in the system. However, there were mixed results from this effort. Community participation was found to be both genuine and artificial because only a few local leaders made the final decisions. In Malawi, community participation was supported by a community empowerment initiative in which the communities had the ownership of 20% of the

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[1] A paper published in the Proceedings of The Asian Conference on Education 2012, Osaka, Japan

resources in the government-funded project. This mechanism was somewhat successful, but this was specifically in terms of school construction (Rose, 2003, as cited in Pellini, 2007). Decision making and planning remained directed by local leaders, central officials or policy makers. In Ghana, school accountability was also promoted through the decentralization process and community participation. School-community relationships were founded but it has been claimed were not as successful as expected. Apart from the lack of interest from the communities due to poverty, communities reportedly had little experience with the decentralized decision-making processes. To improve community involvement, Chapman et al. (2002) pointed out that communities need adequate training on how to participate effectively in decision-making processes (as cited in Pellini, 2007). In this regard, capacity building for communities to engage in school governance is needed to make formal mechanisms successful.

3. Research Methodology

In order to provide answers to the set research questions, collection of a large amount of quantitative data and insightful and detailed qualitative data was targeted. This study thus employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study employed a survey research design to allow for an understanding of current practices of community participation and the public opinions of local school performance. The phenomenological design in qualitative research was used to identify issues and challenges in promoting school accountability at sub-national levels.

Sample

This research project was conducted in five provinces and one city - Phnom Penh - in Cambodia. The sample provinces and capital were selected by the means of purposive sampling as the study wanted to see the variation among different areas. In each province, three different districts (one urban, one rural but closer to the town, and one rural but further from the town) were chosen. One hundred and eight schools were selected as the sample of this study with the use of stratified random sampling in order to account for school number differences observed at the primary and secondary levels. The ratio 5:1 was used as a basis for selection of primary and secondary schools in this study, respectively, matching the proportions of such schools observed nationally according to MoEYS data. Based on this ratio, 15 primary schools and 3 secondary schools were chosen randomly from each province to enhance the generalizability of the research results. Therefore, in each district, five primary schools and one lower-secondary school were chosen as the research sample schools. This study also included 15 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which have been extensively working on school and social accountability issues in the selected provinces and throughout the country.

In total, there were 811 research participants selected from the five provinces and Phnom Penh City, and 15 NGO staff members were interviewed. Initially, five SSC members - including parents, religious members, commune council members, private sector representatives and teachers from each school - were intended to be included in structured interviews to examine their levels of participation in school accountability tasks and to explore challenges which prevent them from fully participating in the school performance process. However, in reality, the number of SSC members reached was lower than the expected number. To identify research participants, School Directors were asked to identify the SSC members of their school. However some School Directors could not identify any SSC members, and some identified only one or two members, making it difficult to reach the intended sample. In a small number of schools enough SSC members were identified but it was not possible to reach the target 5 SSC members due to their schedules and availability. In the plan, 440 SSC members were to be included, but the number reached was 366 (as shown in Table 2). However, the number of parents who were not SSC members interviewed was increased from the planned number of 220 participants to 265. The number of principals remained as planned.

Table 2: *The number of sample in each province by their statuses in school*

Province	Number of schools	Number of principals	Number of students	Number of SSCs	Number of non-SSCs	Sub-total
Phnom Penh	18	18	12	68	40	138
Kampong Cham	18	18	12	65	37	132
Siem Reap	18	18	12	64	47	141
Kampot	18	18	12	63	45	138
Prey Veng	18	18	12	60	46	136
Ratanakiri	18	18	12	46	50	126
Total	108	108	72	366	265	811

Note: In Ratanakiri, a community translator who was fluent in ethnic minority languages and Khmer language was used to assist in interviews and focus group discussions.

To identify the research sample, the researchers first identified the target schools. When the schools were already selected, a team was sent to schools to identify the number of SSC members in each school, the members' statuses in school, and their current jobs, based on information from School Directors. As the study sought to capture the social and school accountability situation at the same time, participants with different backgrounds were preferred. Hence, selection of SSC members to interview was selective and attempted to ensure interviews were conducted with SSC members with different backgrounds. Community members with different job backgrounds who were not part of the SSC membership were identified by School Directors. The same principle of selecting those with different backgrounds was also applied when selecting the non-SSC members, whose first and most important selection criterion was that they had to have their children in the school in question at the time of interview. The selection of NGO representatives was based on their level of activeness in working at the school level, especially in the field of school accountability. Finally, in each area, six students studying in primary school and six lower-secondary school students attended two different focus group discussions (See Appendix F for the prepared questions for the focus group discussion). The selection of students was on a voluntary basis. In total, 72 students participated in this study. Before the research team collected information from the participants, the research team read the consent form to every participant and asked them to sign the form. For young students, the consent form was sent to their parents and was signed by their parents or guardians. Participants were guaranteed anonymity.

Instrumentation

There were two different types of data collection methods employed in this study. To obtain the quantitative data for analysis to understand the current practice of SSCs in promoting

school accountability, structured interviews were conducted with School Directors, SSC members, and non-SSC members. Three different sets of interview questionnaires were developed to fit each group of stakeholders (attached as Appendices A, B and C. The protocols included both latent variables to examine the levels of participation in school performance as the input and open-ended questions to unpack concurrent challenges and to probe into possible suggestions to improve the practices and policies of school accountability in Cambodia. Individual interviews were conducted with each stakeholder to obtain unbiased perspectives from them. The interview questionnaires were developed by using the SSC guidelines created by MoEYS in 2012, which include 8 components of SSC roles and responsibilities: (1) designing school development plan, (2) school enrollment enforcement, (3) monitoring of student learning, (4) collecting and managing fund, (5) school infrastructure development and maintenance, (6) experience and life sharing, (7) irregularity prevention, and (8) capacity building (see Table 2). The reasons behind the inclusion of the guidelines in the questionnaire was that the guidelines allowed researchers to check which activities the community was most involved and what areas needed improvement against the official policy as a benchmark. The guidelines were established to promote the transparency and accountability of school functions. They lay out clear roles and responsibilities for the communities in assisting, monitoring, and evaluating the performance of schools. The next sections of the interview questionnaires were designed to measure the perception of the performance of schools from the perspective of the participant. In the case of School Directors, more questions were asked in these sections assuming that they had greater knowledge of performance measures.

In regards to qualitative data, this study used focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The focus group discussions were run with primary and lower-secondary school students. The main purpose of the discussions was to explore the students' perceptions of the levels of performance of their school and to check how communities participated in school activities based on their experience and knowledge. Focus group discussions had been planned to take place with the NGO staff members to seek a better understanding of school and social accountability at the local level. However, the researchers were not able to bring those NGO staff together for the discussion session. The researchers thus conducted individual separate interviews with identified NGO staff members instead. The interviews were about one-hour long. The researchers interviewed ten representatives and found that the saturation point was achieved, as each NGO staff member voiced identical concerns and challenges in promoting the work of SSCs and school accountability at the grassroots level.

Data analysis

This research project employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the current practice of community participation in school performance, to identify challenges preventing them from fully participating in school performance, and to provide recommendations that would fit the current context of education in Cambodia. Data from

each stakeholder were first analyzed separately and sequentially synthesized to draw a bigger picture of how school community accountability in Cambodia was functioning. In doing so, first the analysis on the current practices of community participation in promoting school accountability was carried out by the use of data from School Directors, SSC members, and non-SSC community members. Frequency and mean score analyses were used to capture what was perceived to be working well and what aspects of SSC activity needed to be improved. At this stage, the analyses on school performance and satisfaction and expectations of the public and community towards schools were also conducted.

The main themes from responses to open-ended questions were recorded during interviews. The researchers carefully read through the contents of all the interviews and grouped these in to a number of themes. Content analysis was used to analyze the data from the in-depth interviews with NGO staff and student focus group discussions. The researchers listened to the recorded interviews and focus group discussions twice, analyzed the contents of each interview and built themes based on participant responses.

Limitations

Data were rich in this study. Notwithstanding this, there are a number of limitations that should be attended to in understanding this research project. For example, while participants with different profiles such as School Directors, SSCs and non-SSC community members were included in this study to ensure rigor and richness of responses concerning the community participation and school performance, principally this was a perception-based study. Each participant was asked to evaluate the extent to which SSCs performed their roles and responsibilities as a mechanism to reflect on the level of community participation in school-related activities. This perception-based method was also applied to the data collection on school performance. The extent to which schools are accountable for their functions to the students and to the community was mainly viewed through the perception of School Directors, SSCs and non-SSCs who participated in this study. In addition, school accountability in this study was viewed through the lens of school management and a limited range of measurable school performance indicators rather than through learning outcomes – in part because there is no nationally comparable measure of learning outcomes. In that sense, school accountability in this study refers to the accountability of education processes rather than that of education outputs, and will be affected by what respondents felt was the optimum level of community engagement and school performance. Furthermore, assertions on policy adherence – such as publishing school development plans, or election of SSC members, are reported unsubstantiated; it was not within the design of this study to verify such assertions with secondary evidence given the scale of the sample. As the study used the national policy guidance on School Support Committee functioning it was also the case that a lack of understanding of the terms used or the expectations of that guidance may have led to non-response. Indeed many individual expectations of SCCs discussed with participants who were not SSC members were not easily understood and therefore led to participants being unable to comment. This is reflected in the findings

where relevant, with responses from non-SSC community members excluded from some analysis because insufficient numbers felt able to comment.

4. Research Findings

This research study examined school accountability in Cambodia through community participation in school performance at primary and lower secondary school levels. To realize this overarching objective, the research team developed four research questions that look into (1) the status of community participation and school performance, (2) challenges to community participation in school performance, (3) differing perceptions between SSC members and non-SSC community members towards the practices of and challenges to community participation in school activities, and (4) good practices of community participation to enhance school and social accountability. The research findings are thus structured to respond to the four questions accordingly. The findings also discuss the characteristics and composition of School Support Committees and other subsample analyses as an additional input to improve our understanding of school accountability practices by geographical location, school level and school area.

Characteristics and composition of School Support Committee

Premised on the field data of this study, results highlighted various characteristics and a composition of SSCs that showed some deviation from what is stipulated in the national SSC guideline.

The guidelines for Primary Schools, issued dated 26 September, 2012, stipulate the SSC membership to be 6 or more depending on the size of the school.

The regular composition and individual roles on the SSC are as follows:

1. **Honorary Chair:** Representative of local authorities (commune/sangkat chief, commune/sangkat councilors) or head monk or a private donor (1 person).

2. **Advisor:** School director, retired education official, elder, community representative, local authority (1-3 persons)

3. **Chair:** Retired education official, pagoda committee, layman, private donor, community representative, students' parents' representative, who is a popular person.

4. **Deputy Chairs:** Retired education official, pagoda committee, layman, private donor, community representative, students' parents' representative, who is a popular person. (1-3 persons)

5. **Members:** Retired education official, pagoda committee, layman, private donor, community representative, students' parents' representative, who is a popular person. (2-4 persons)

The SSC guidelines state that the SSC chair, deputy chair and members are selected through election, with the chair being the person with the most votes, the deputy chair the next highest number of votes, and other candidates being elected as members.

The guidelines suggest that existing members of a class support committee, popular people in community, generous people, and old (existing) SSC members should be given priority in these elections. However the guidelines do not explain how possible SSC members should be nominated; the inference is that someone in the school or the existing SSC compiles a list of possible members.

School Directors are responsible for forming a School Support Committee Election Committee which includes teachers and current SSC members. The guidance indicates that those eligible to vote in the election of the new SSC are the current SSC members, previous SSC members, and private donors in the community.

The selection of SSC members takes place by vote one month before school year start in each school with one year mandate. Therefore the election should take place annually.

The SSC member respondents reported that on average there were 8 members within each School Support Committee, which closely aligns with the SSC guideline (i.e., 6 members or more depending on the school size). Most members, however, appeared to have little knowledge about the composition of the SSCs which they joined. This may reflect some challenges of whether or not the group was functioning well and whether or not it was the right group to support their school. Most SSC members reported different numbers of the members they thought they had to work with (as indicated by a range of 1-20 SSC members reported), an issue that indicates a critical lack of clear information sharing on the part of the school, and suggests a lack of sustained communication or regular meetings among SSCs. What is more surprising is that some School Directors, particularly in Phnom Penh, were not even aware of the existence of the SSC body and/or the exact number of their own SSC members.

The SSC Guidance includes encouragement for women to be elected as SSC members. In this study, most of the SSC participants in this study were females, constituting about 74% of the SSC sample. Male SSCs could not be reached or appeared outnumbered by their female counterparts.

About 60% of SSC member participants in this study were senior people aged above 50 years old, and almost two-thirds of them reported to have education lower than the high school level. Involvement from young people and those with a university degree within the SSCs was highly limited based on the sample reached. This is perhaps not surprising considering the stipulated composition of the SSCs is mainly retired education officials, pagoda committee, clergymen/nuns, parent representatives and community representatives, who would tend to be older. These people represent the community so

that they can bring the issues to the school agenda and work with schools to improve school and community relations and development.

In the SSC guideline, all members are selected based on vote, which is held before the new academic year starts. Yet, data provided a different story. Almost half of the SSC members reported that the members were selected through voting; while 42% of them claimed School Directors appointed them without vote. A small portion of the members suggested that SSC members volunteered to be the members.

When asked about the frequency of SSC member selection, views were divided, with 30% reporting that the selection takes place every year and 36% claiming that the selection takes place whenever the old members leave the SSC. The rest said that the selection of SSC members is undertaken every two or three years, or does not take place at all. These variant views showed contradicting practices of how SSC members were selected against the stipulation in the SSC guideline.

Despite the requirements for voting and reselection of SSC members, most of the SSC participants reported that schools rarely changed or never changed the composition of SSC members over the last five years; only 17% said there were some changes in the members of the SSC. This result may either suggest a lack of interest from the wider community or question the commitment of schools to renew interest among SSC members and to involve a more diverse composition of SSC members from the wider community. Again the inactive reselection of the composition of SSCs is potentially a sign of low value placed on the role of this group and raises a concern that the school may not be able to make best use of the SSC in improving school performance.

When asked about decision-making, the SSC members generally reported that a vote-based system was a common practice. Twenty-five percent of the SSC respondents, however, pointed to the chairperson of the SSC who had the final decision. In line with international evidence, this result seems to suggest that in a large proportion of schools ultimate decision-making rests with relatively few individuals.

Overall community participation in school management

In Cambodia, promoting community participation in school activities has long been at the center of attention of policy makers and School Directors in order to improve school performance and accountability. Several efforts have been made over the last decade through the strengthening of roles and functions of the School Support Committee (SSC). The committee was established as a channel for broader involvement from the community in understanding and contributing to what is happening at schools, from planning to implementation, to evaluation and to reporting. This study fills a gap in the research which focuses more attention on the functioning of SSCs. All the three data sources from School Directors, SSC members and non-SSC community members showed that community

participation in school activities at primary and lower secondary schools in Cambodia generally remains relatively low. School Support Committees, which are expected to play a vital role in promoting community participation, were not found to be functioning at a desired level; the results highlight a critical lack of collaboration and close proximity between schools and communities in improving school performance. As can be seen in Figure 1, School Directors, SSC members and non-SSC members reported that schools tended to function independently with little engagement from their communities. Despite some indication of increasing involvement from the SSCs in some crucial school activities, compared with previous studies their involvement was commonly described as "low."

Notwithstanding these results, critical evidence was documented with respect to the patterns of school activities that were attended to by SSC members. Figure 1 demonstrates that some school activities were more likely to be attended to in the view of the respondents, while other activities were paid less attention. Although the levels of participation by SSC members is yet to be desirable, SSCs reportedly participated more in activities such as "designing school development plan" and "school infrastructure development and maintenance" than has previously been found. This evidence suggested a growing interest from the community in school planning and infrastructure development. But, at the same time, the evidence reflected a more passive collaboration between schools and the community in other school-related activities. This study found that the majority of SSC members had little involvement in such school activities such as "school enrollment enforcement", "monitoring of student learning", "collecting and managing funds", and "irregularities prevention". Only a small portion of SSC members reportedly had active engagement in school enrollment enforcement, monitoring of student learning and collecting and managing funds. Worse was their lack of involvement in "experience and life skills sharing" and "capacity building at school". SSC members reportedly almost had no participation in these two activities. Taken together, School Directors, SSC members and non-SSC members all held relatively similar views on the levels and nature of community participation in school performance among the six regions in this study. Whilst non-SSC members were not as close to schools as School Directors and their SSC counterparts, they commonly perceived there to be more participation of the SSC activities than the SSC members themselves. Nonetheless, it should be noted that more than half of non-SSC members reported to have no knowledge about the SSC activities and involvement in school management and functions and therefore were not able to give a view on particular activities. This study thus adds important evidence that although School Directors, SSC member and non-SSC members appeared to share views on the level and nature of community participation in school performance, the practice of school accountability has yet to reach the larger community, in this case, the non-SSCs.
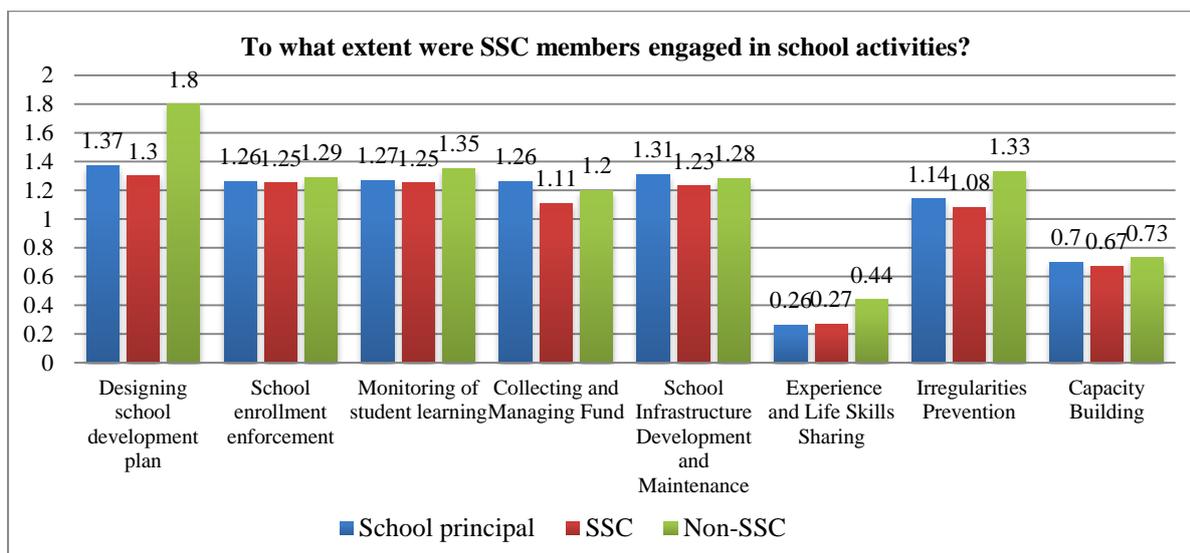
Figure 1: *SSC participation in school activities*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation.

The findings from the structured interviews were consistent with the results from the twelve student focus group discussions and the NGO representative interviews. More than 50% of student participants had no idea of who was involved in school activities and functions, or the role of the SCCs. Some student participants knew that there were some delegates or community members coming to their schools, but they generally could not identify who they were or what their roles were. Around 40% of them knew some of the groups that occasionally came to work with schools. Those people included NGO staff, parents, pagoda council members, local authority (Village chief, commune councils, policemen), and Provincial Office of Education and MoEYS staff. Normally, these groups of people came on different occasions. Parents came to school when there were problems with their children's learning, or when they wanted to know their children's progress from the teachers or schools. Sometimes, it was reported that parents preferred making phone calls rather than coming to schools. The NGO staff came to schools to check the student learning conditions or to check the learning of the students who received their scholarships. Local religious councils, community, and local authorities were felt to visit schools when the school needed them to collect money for the school development plan, such as physical infrastructure. The staff from POE and MoEYS were understood to visit schools for the purposes of school inspection. The police, on the other hand, came when there was fighting or any security-related issues. The only time that most of the group members came along together was in the orientation day at school, outstanding student award ceremony, or annual school meetings.

Through the NGO representative interviews, very similar issues were reported. Fourteen out of the fifteen respondents stated that the community only participated in fund-raising activities to build or maintain new classrooms, gates, or fences; buying new equipment or

stationery for school; and improve school infrastructure. In some schools where their NGOs worked, they also promoted the enrolment campaign by going to the homes where the school-aged children resided and asking the parents to enroll their children in school. However, the community was not perceived to participate in many important tasks of the schools, such as establishing school development plans, overseeing the school budget, monitoring teaching and learning processes, holding regular meetings with schools, identifying school problems and recommending solutions, and providing feedback to schools for their further improvement.

Community participation by location

Analyzing the results of data collection based on location provided some evidence that community participation was likely to be perceived and/or functioning differently within different geographical areas. Significance testing using a *t*-test on the datasets from School Directors and SSCs[2] showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the levels of perceived community participation in school management and functioning between schools in Phnom Penh and schools outside of the capital ($p < 0.05$). The findings revealed that, overall, perceived community participation was significantly lower within the capital. The School Director and SSC member response data concurrently supported evidence that SSC members in other provinces had significantly higher levels of participation in "collecting and managing funds" and "capacity building". SSC member response data further suggested that SSCs in rural schools appeared to have significantly higher levels of participation in "monitoring of student learning", "school infrastructure development and maintenance" and "experience and life skill sharing" compared to their urban counterparts. However no significant difference was found in relation to levels of community participation in school management and activities ($p > 0.05$), which include "designing the school development plan", "school enrollment enforcement" and "irregularity prevention". These differentials potentially suggest a greater attachment of the community to schools in rural areas and a weaker relationship in the city.

To examine other differences between geographical areas, the research team aggregated all the roles and responsibilities of SSC members enquired about in this study and conducted significance testing by area using an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The analysis showed that perceived SSC participation in school activities differed significantly by area ($p < .05$). Evidence suggested that Ratanakiri, Siem Reap and Phnom Penh had the least perceived participation from SSC members in school-related activities (see Figure 2). There was little involvement of SSCs in schools in Kampot and Prey Veng. Kompong Cham had the highest perceived SSC involvement in school decision-making. These findings provide some

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[2] Non-SSC data were not used for this analysis due to non-SSCs' lack of knowledge about SSC involvement in school management and activities, which resulted in substantial missing data on their evaluation of SSC participation in the 8 components of community participation stipulated in 2012 guideline on the SSC establishment.

evidence that the practices of community participation appeared to be not strongly related to the urban-rural divide, as perceptions and experiences were similar in Phnom Penh and Ratanakiri, the latter a more rural province. Despite a marked socio-economic difference, the two areas did not see a huge variation in SSC involvement in their stated roles. This finding provided a more elaborate picture of community participation that contrasts with the broader result of comparing the Capital and provinces.
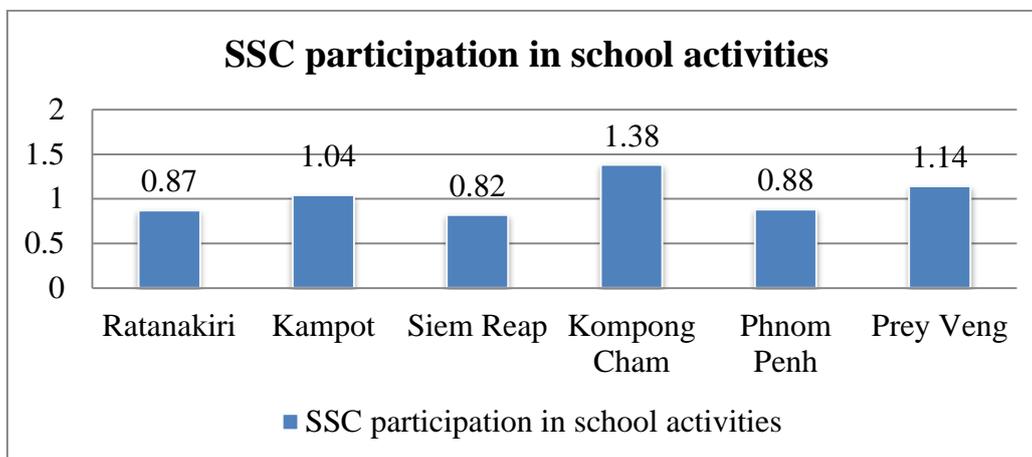
Figure 2: *SSC participation in school activities by area*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation. SSC data were used for this analysis

School Directors data were examined to explore whether there was any major difference between the samples in each area. One area that may play a role is the level of education of School Directors. The data indicated that schools in Kampong Cham appeared to have a significant number of School Directors who had a university degree, followed by Kampot. In other areas, including Phnom Penh City, the majority of School Directors had education at the high school level or below. Surprisingly, among the 18 School Directors in Phnom Penh selected for this study, only 4 reportedly had a university degree.
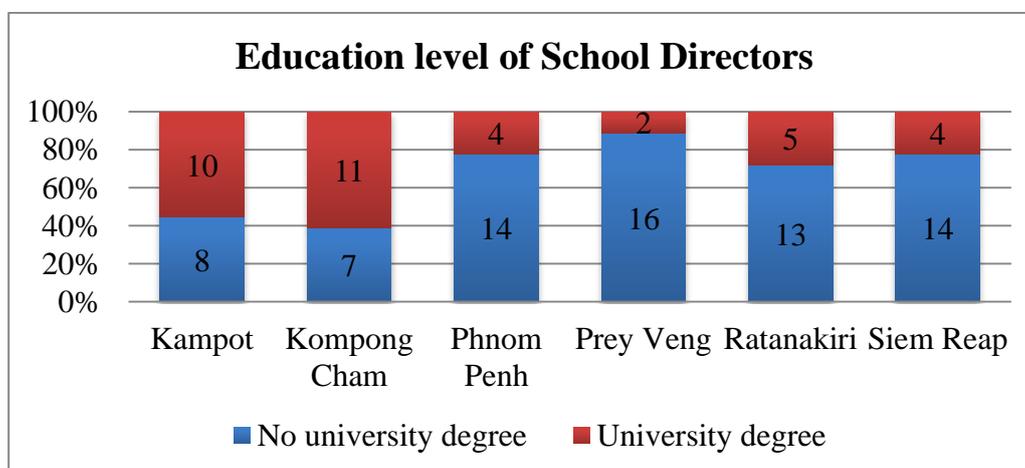
Figure 3: *Education level of School Directors by area*

In further analyzing qualitative data, other factors were found that may explain the wide difference of participation of SSCs in Kampong Cham. These centered on the composition of SSC membership, the leadership of the principal and the motivation that the principals provided to the SSC members. The analysis of the composition of the SSC members revealed that many of the sample schools in Kampong Cham had current teachers, deputy directors, and directors serving as members or chairs of the SSCs. In one school, for example, there were two teachers serving as SSC members in charge of technical assistance and finance, while the principal himself undertook the role of the chair. As these members are already inside schools, they are ready to participate in school work and are well-informed of what is going on in the school. However the design of the SSC set out in the national guidance does not allow for this model and emphasizes that the SSC chair should be another community member, with teaching staff chosen as advisors. Second, most SSC members in Kampong Cham reported that the principals generally led the SSCs and invited the SSCs to meetings or school events. In this regard, the directors played a more active role in allowing the SSCs to participate in school development work. Lastly, it was noted that the principals provided incentives to the SSC members by nominating them to participate in various workshops and trainings. Some SSC members welcomed such opportunities as incentives and professional development for their work and recognition of their work.

Community participation by school level

Analysis of disaggregated data was conducted to see whether perceived community participation differed between primary schools and lower secondary schools. Results using School Directors and SSC data proved that in most cases there were no significant differences in the perceived levels of community participation in school activities between the two school levels ($p > 0.05$). The two datasets showed almost the same assessment by participants. The only notable differences were documented on "school enrollment enforcement" and "irregularity prevention"; The data suggested that primary schools overall witnessed a higher level of community participation in activities that promote school enrollment; whereas, there was a relatively higher participation in activities that involve irregularity prevention at lower secondary schools ($p < 0.05$). These results point to different prioritization between the issues in primary schools and lower secondary schools, suggesting that the community seems to view access at the early schooling more crucial. At the same time, more attention is given to irregularity prevention in secondary schools.

Community participation: A detailed analysis

To provide a detail of SSC involvement in school activities, an item-by-item analysis was conducted based on responses to each of the stated roles of SSCs. The results of this analysis are presented here against the overall category of activity for the SSC.

Designing the school development plan

Analysis indicated that SSC members generally participated in two core activities when asked about activities that involved designing school development plans: (1) designing and developing school development plan, and (2) monitoring the plan implementation (see Figure 4). Other activities that involved forming school visions and missions, evaluating the plan implementation, and helping put the school development plan into the commune development plan were the least attended to by the SSC members. This may suggest that the depth of the school development plan was not broadly communicated to the community.

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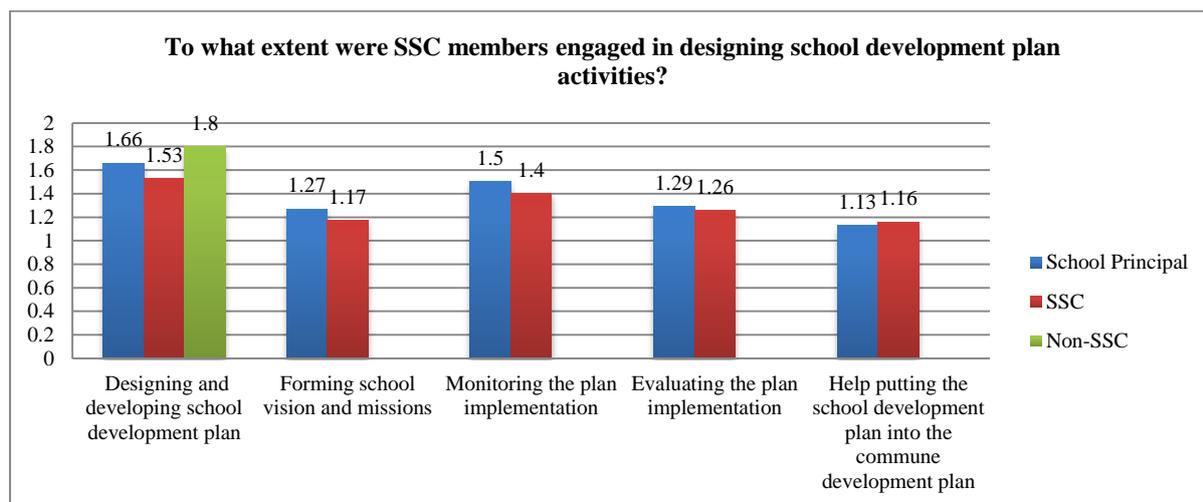
Figure 4: *SSC participation in designing school development plan*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation.

School enrollment enforcement

In general, School Directors, SSC members and non-SSC members reported that the SSC members had little participation in school enrollment enforcement, particularly in creating strong programs to assist students to have access to education regardless of financial impediments, physical difficulties, or minority status (see Figure 5). However, the data suggested that they had helped schools to a large extent in such activities as practically supporting enrolment of school-age children ('collecting the school-aged children for school') and educating local people to send their children to school at the right age. In addition, results indicated they had relatively high participation rates in a new academic year orientation every year. This study thus suggested that schools appeared to work closely with the community in attracting students to enroll in school. Nevertheless, they have yet to be active enough in promoting education for all, and engaging the community in reaching the most vulnerable children. This is an area of the SSC role that non-SCC community members felt more able to comment on – perhaps because supporting the school in these ways was more visible and therefore likely to be recognized by parents in the community.
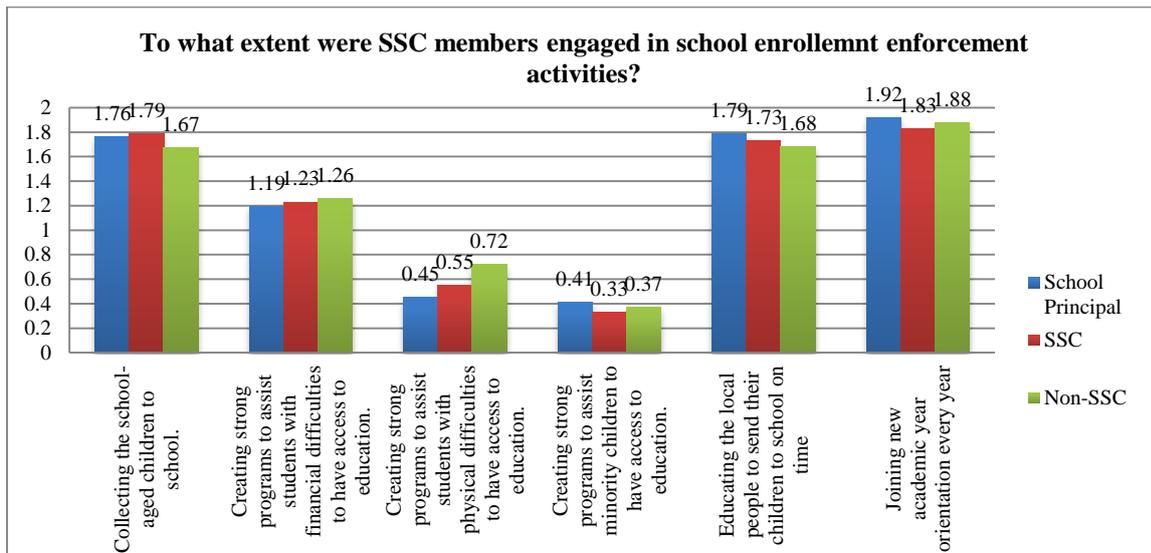
Figure 5: *SSC participation in school enrollment enforcement*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation.

Monitoring of student learning

As reported earlier, SSC participation in the monitoring of student learning was generally reported as low in this study. A separate analysis, as shown in Figure 6, showed that SSCs had particularly little involvement in monitoring the teaching processes inside schools; finding strategies to reduce repetition and dropout rates; discussing the issues of absences of principals, teachers or students; and forming strategies to prevent epidemic diseases or disasters. These results highlighted a limited engagement with school monitoring processes as well as school performance improvement strategies among SSC members. The effectiveness of school accountability mechanisms thus might be called in to question in relation to student learning. However, promising results were documented on their participation in school visits to monitor student learning. Results further pointed out that schools and SSCs collaborated relatively closely on educating parents to invest more in their children's education and on promoting the healthy environment of the school. Such findings illustrated the fact that community participation was much more concerned with general issues of student learning and school environments that need urgent attention and solutions, rather than with the technical aspects of the monitoring of teaching and learning.
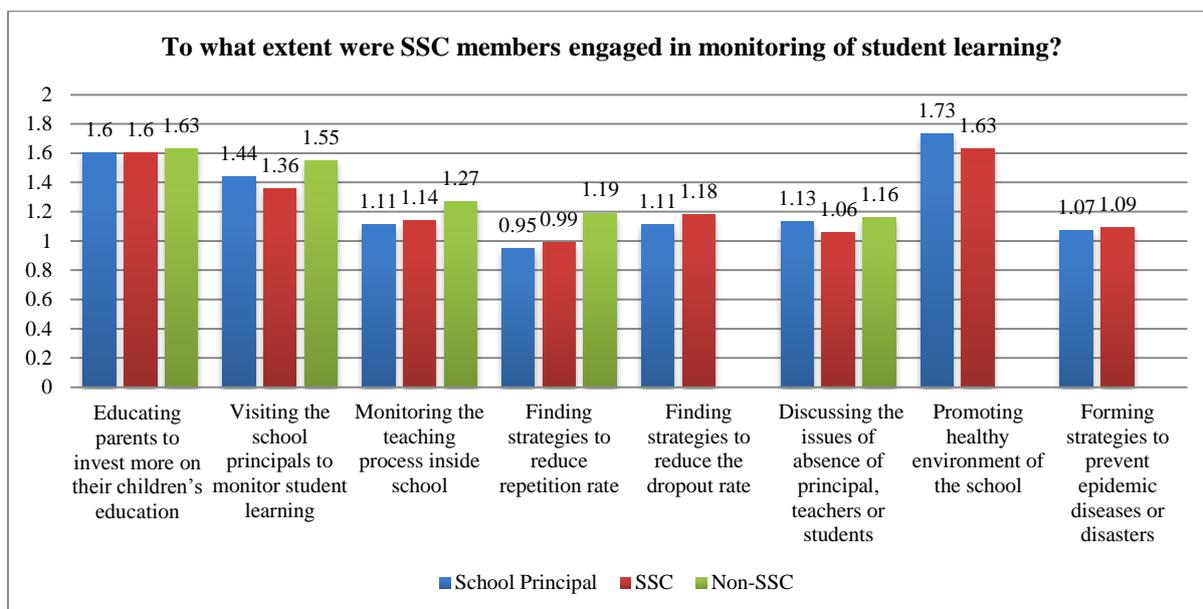
Figure 6: *SSC participation in monitoring of student learning*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation.

Collecting and managing funds

When asked about collecting and managing funds, all the three groups of stakeholders agreed that SSC members had limited functions for that cause. Raising funds for the school development plan, informing the school whether or not they are on the right track, and reorienting their actions based on suggestions were the prime examples (see Figure 7). SSC members appeared to have little knowledge about or involvement in those activities, leaving financial operations or fund-seeking activities unknown to the community. The only exceptions were their involvement in school dissemination of the needed budget with the local community, donors or local NGOs, with an aim of raising more funds locally. Additionally, School Directors reported a relatively high level of involvement in monitoring how the school spends the limited available funds (most likely the funds raised from the community). However this view was not shared by SSC members themselves. Overall, SSC members appeared to be sidelined on fundraising for school development plans and discussing whether schools were on the right track in managing funds.
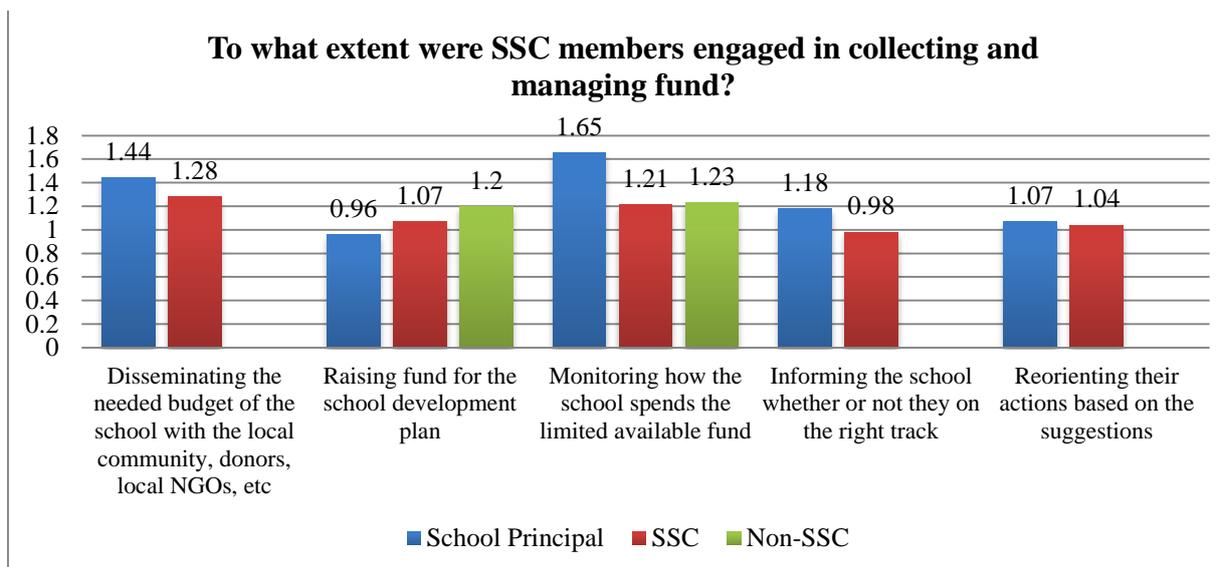
Figure 7: *SSC participation in collecting and managing fund*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation.

School infrastructure development and maintenance

According to Figure 8, SSC members had little participation in fundraising to build more rooms to facilitate the student learning and collecting free local manual labor for the school building or maintenance. But data suggested that they showed some assistance to schools in terms of monitoring school building processes to ensure the work is being carried out properly and maintaining the available infrastructure. Such evidence revealed the fact that communities did not play a vital role in school infrastructure development, but only in school infrastructure maintenance. These findings implied that school and community linkage in that regard was not well established.
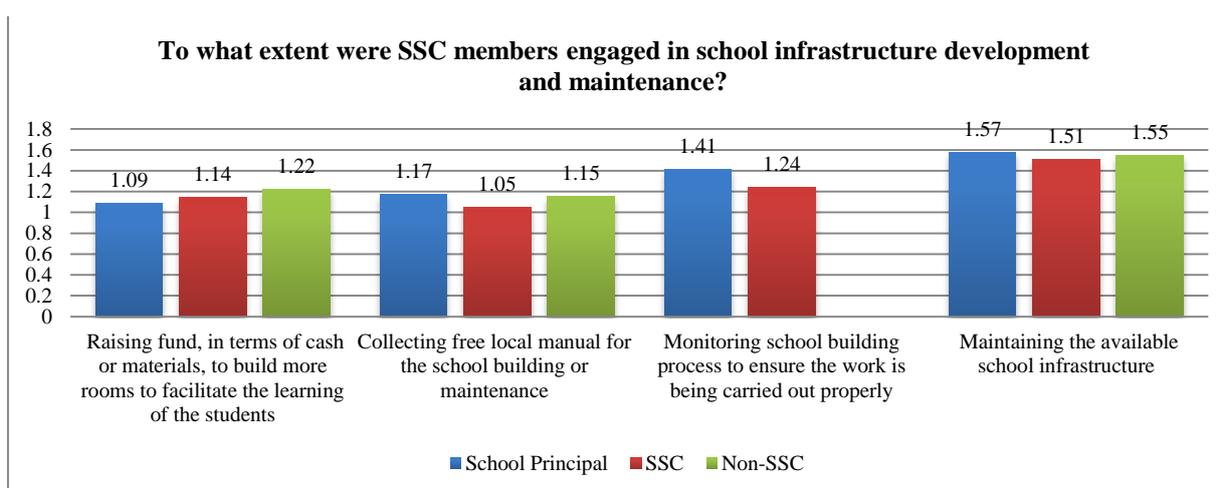
Figure 8: *SSC participation in school infrastructure development and maintenance*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation.

Experience and life skill sharing

When asked about their participation in experience and life skill sharing, all three groups of participants voiced the same answer that schools and SSC members appeared to be negligent to these knowledge empowerment activities. Based on Figure 9, the results revealed that SSC members almost had no participation in such school activities. Finding relevant stakeholders for the life and technical skills program in schools, providing life skills training to students, and compiling good practices of the local life and technical skills for schools were not commonly practiced and highly participated in by communities. This lack of practice implied that these core activities appeared to be a new concept or a less understood role of the SSC both among School Directors and the wider community. The interviews with NGO representatives who have been working at school levels revealed that though the community was given roles in sharing life skills experience to the students and school staff, almost all the schools did not receive any experience and life skill sharing support from the community. One NGO respondent commented as follows:

> *Normally, the community sees the experience and life skill sharing program as their burden, for they need to invest time coming to school and give some experience-sharing talks or lectures, and they believe that such acts are solely the roles and responsibilities of schools and teachers. So their investment is not needed.*
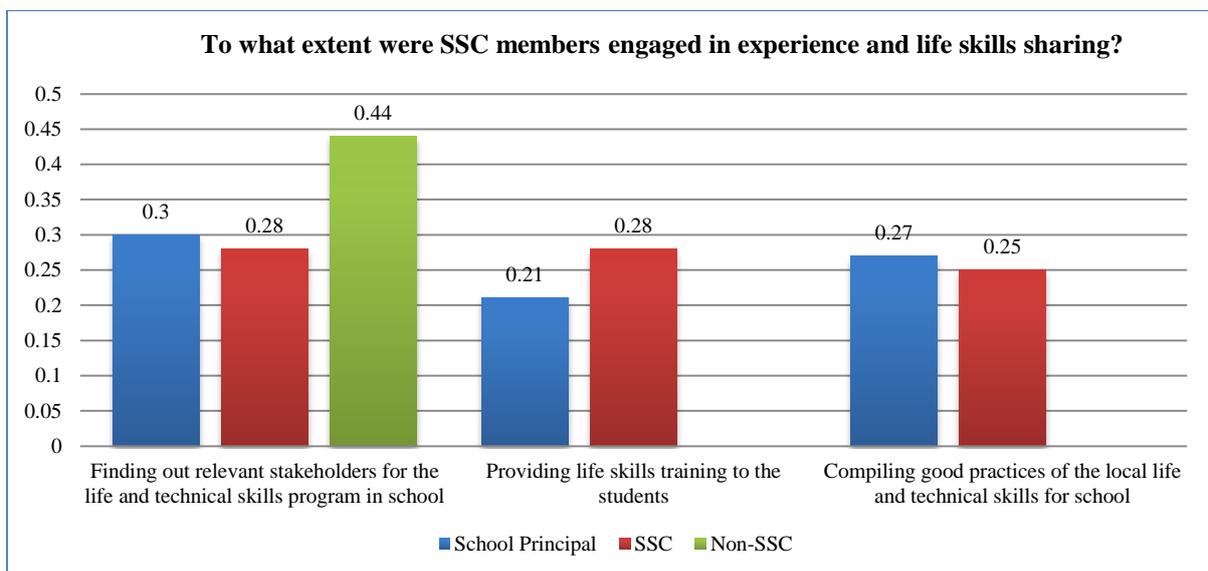
Figure 9: *SSC participation in experience and life skills sharing*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation.

In general, communities reported little involvement in irregularity preventions at schools. The results presented earlier proved that SSC members, the core team representing the community, did not participate actively to improve irregularity preventions at schools. But it should be noted that SSC members were likely to contribute to school irregularity prevention in a certain respect. Figure 10 points out that SSC members had little participation in irregularity prevention activities such as dealing with ill-disciplined students and solving the problems inside and outside schools like bullying, violence, etc. Yet, when it comes to ensuring safe and learner-friendly environments, their participation was relatively high, suggesting that, to some extent, SSC members tended to be more aware of the general aspect of the learning environment than helping school to deal with socially undesired problems such as bullying, crime, video game playing, etc.
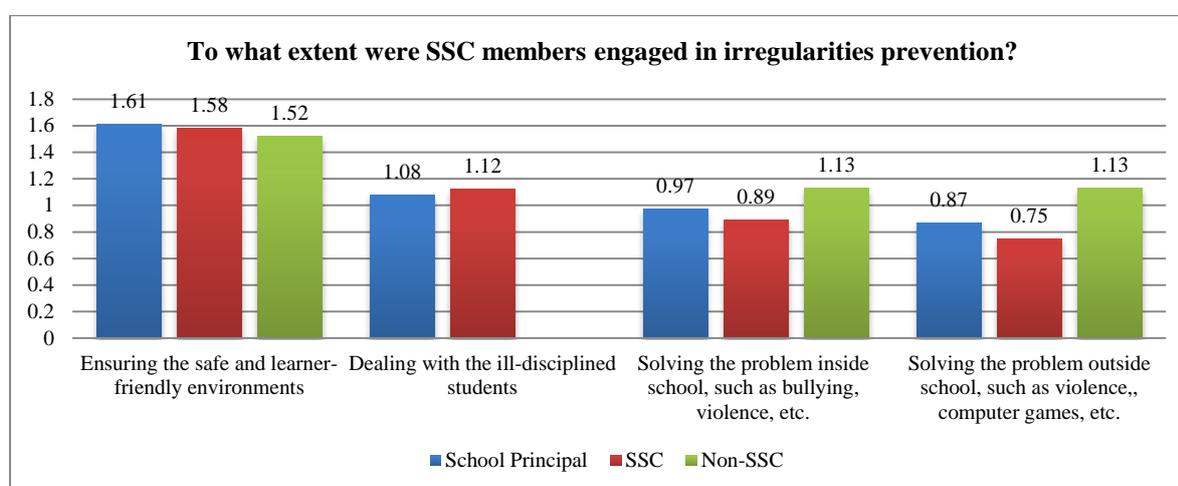
Figure 10: *SSC participation in irregularities prevention*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation.

Capacity building

The current research study found that community participation in capacity building is extremely low. The item-by-item analysis consistently supported these results. As Figure 11 demonstrates, SSC members had very little involvement in schools in creating a platform for schools and communities to share experiences with each other, and in evaluating learning and teaching in schools to find ways to improve them. This finding implied that collaboration between schools and communities that aims to build capacity is not highly practiced in Cambodia currently.
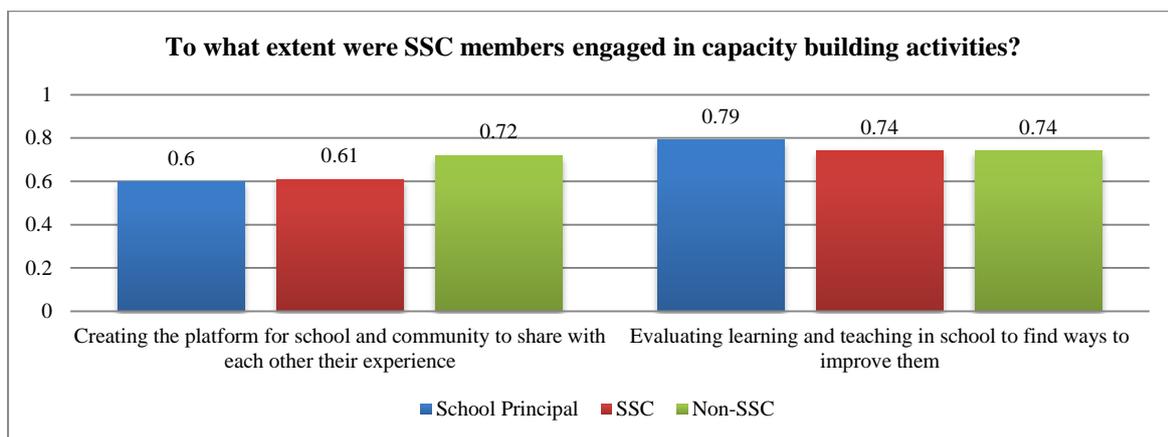
Figure 11: *SSC participation in capacity building*

Note: SSC participation was measured based on a 3-point Likert Scale, with 0 = no participation, 1 = little participation, and 2 = a lot of participation.

School performance

As part of this school accountability research, data on school performance were also collected to serve as inputs to examine the extent to which primary and secondary schools stakeholders in the current study felt they were accountable for their school performance and student learning. Currently there is no overall ranking of school performance within Cambodia, and therefore a range of proxy measures were used to discuss school performance with those who participated in the study. Rankings exist at a Provincial level; however, these are not a reliable or readily available source.

This section presents the situations/status of school performance from three perspectives: School Directors, SSC members and non-SSC community members.

School-age children data collection and use

According to School Directors, schools appeared to attend to school-age children data collection quite closely. This is an important activity in terms of promoting school enrolment and attendance. As Figure 12 indicates, almost 80% of the School Directors stated that their schools collected information about school-age students every year. Only 12% reported they had never conducted any data collection on the number of students who are supposed to be in school. Moreover, they also used those data to look for school-aged children to enroll in school, while only 13% of the schools reportedly had not used the data available to get students to enroll in school.
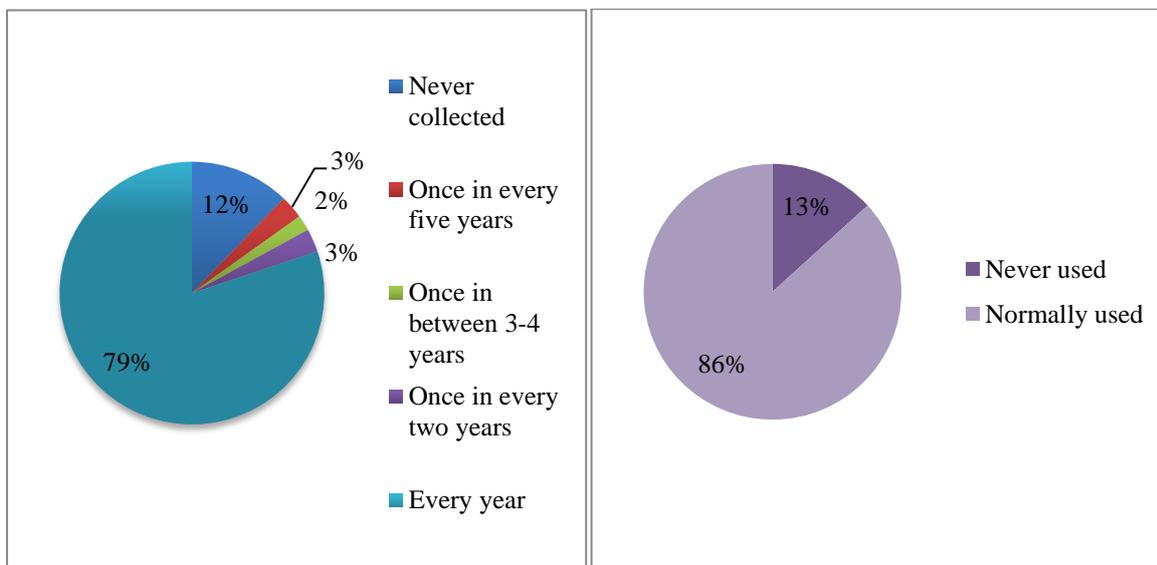
Figure 12: *School-age children data collection* **Figure 13:** *School data use*

Dropout and promotion rates

When asked about dropout, repetition and promotion rates, 29 School Directors reportedly were not aware of the data for their school. This is surprising given the critical role of School Directors in managing student learning and in ensuring students stay in school. Other School Directors appeared to have knowledge about student dropouts, repetitions, and promotions, with data suggesting the overall rates of 5.76%, 6.46%, and 88.37%, respectively. However, it was not clear how they used this information for school management or other educational purposes. This finding suggests sub-standard practices among School Directors in terms of student data management.

Time spent on school management tasks

Time spent on school management tasks was also collected to highlight how School Directors used their time on performing their roles and responsibilities. The results suggested that School Directors spent most of their time on administrative work and curriculum and teaching matters. Figure 14 shows that much of the time was allocated on these two main tasks. Otherwise, they spent time working on responses to requests or commands from DoE, PoE and MoEYS, a practice that reflected a hierarchical nature of school management and leadership and School Directors' responsibilities to the governing body in Cambodia. School Directors appeared to devote less time to meeting the community and building school networks or attending other social events that link communities to schools; therefore, leaving the issue of school community accountability in question.
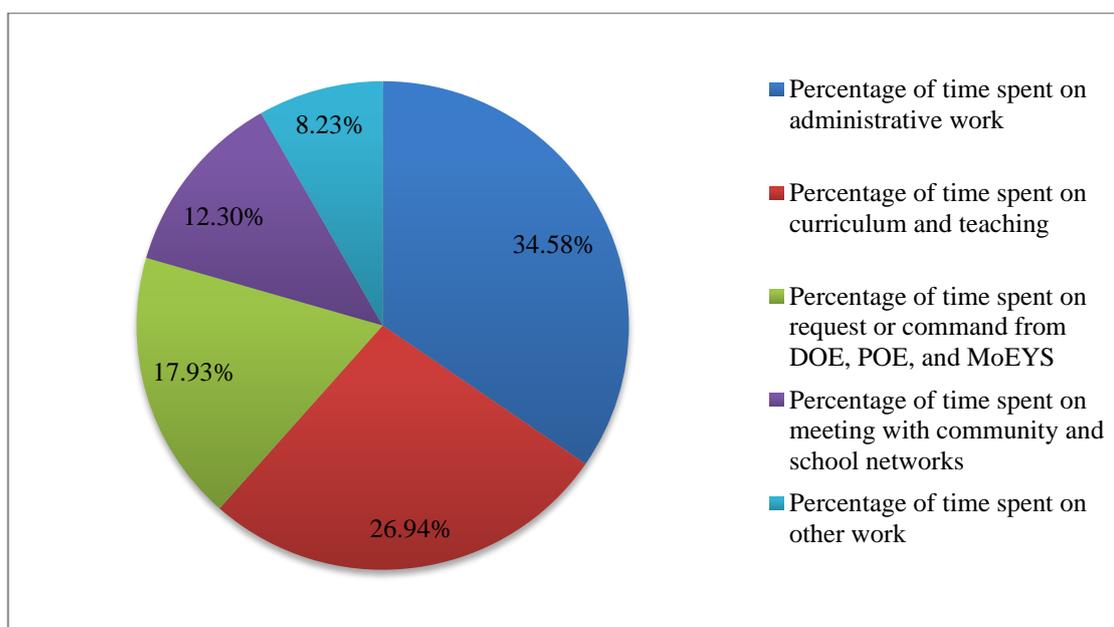
Figure 14: *Time spent on school management tasks*

Perceived school accountability

When asked about school responsibility, School Directors in this research project seemed to be fully aware of the functions of the school towards different stakeholders. Almost all School Directors pointed out that their schools played a key role in promoting teaching and learning. This response, however, contradicted what had been reported earlier in relation to time spent on school management tasks. While they had attended to the functions of schools to communities and society, their work was disproportionately more accountable to their governing bodies than the communities and society. This finding, thus, seemed to suggest a substantial gap between the understanding of school functions/responsibilities among School Directors and their real practices.

Table 3: *School accountability*

Who is your school accountable to?	No	Yes
For MOEYS	7%	93%
For DOE/POE	7%	93%
For teachers	7%	93%
For learning	2%	98%
For capacity development	6%	94%
For parents and community	5%	95%

Note: In this question, more than one answer is allowed.

The results from NGO representative interviews showed that twelve out of the fifteen interviewees ascertained that the school directors clearly understood the meaning of school accountability and know their roles and responsibilities, while another representative stated that only those schools who work with NGOs well comprehend the meaning and aspects of school accountability. According to the other two interviewees, the School Directors did not know what school accountability is, and mostly practiced the routines and activities that were convenient to them, and the School Support Committee and community whose roles were to hold the schools accountable for the assigned tasks did not play their roles at all. The view expressed was that they believed that engaging in activities to support schools interfered with the function of school. The SSC only did the tasks that the School Directors wanted them to do, and they never took initiatives beyond this boundary to fully perform their roles.

School evaluation activities

Concerning school evaluation activities, the data, as presented in Figure 15, revealed that schools were less involved in school evaluation processes or publication of reports to the public than might be expected. 32% of School Directors reported to have never made any self-evaluation report. An external evaluation was not often conducted, either, as only 30% of the schools received some sort of an external evaluation every year. Almost 70% reported to have never published any school evaluation report. This lack of self-evaluation (report) might be linked to the lack of feedback received on school performance on a regular basis.
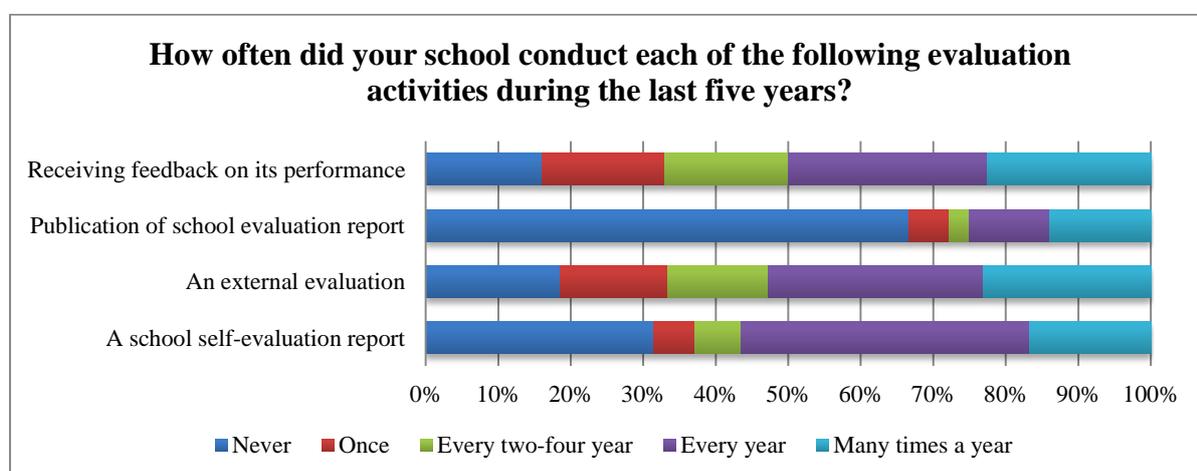
Figure 15: *School evaluation activities*

School Problems: Perceptions of School Directors

On students' problems at school, School Directors generally stated that the most frequent problems were related to student lateness and absenteeism. Other problems included students cheating on exams, scolding each other in class and disturbances in class, although

these issues were not considered major problems that occurred regularly in schools. Based on Figure 16, other problems caused by students such as vandalism, verbal offense, violence or drug use were not common at school.
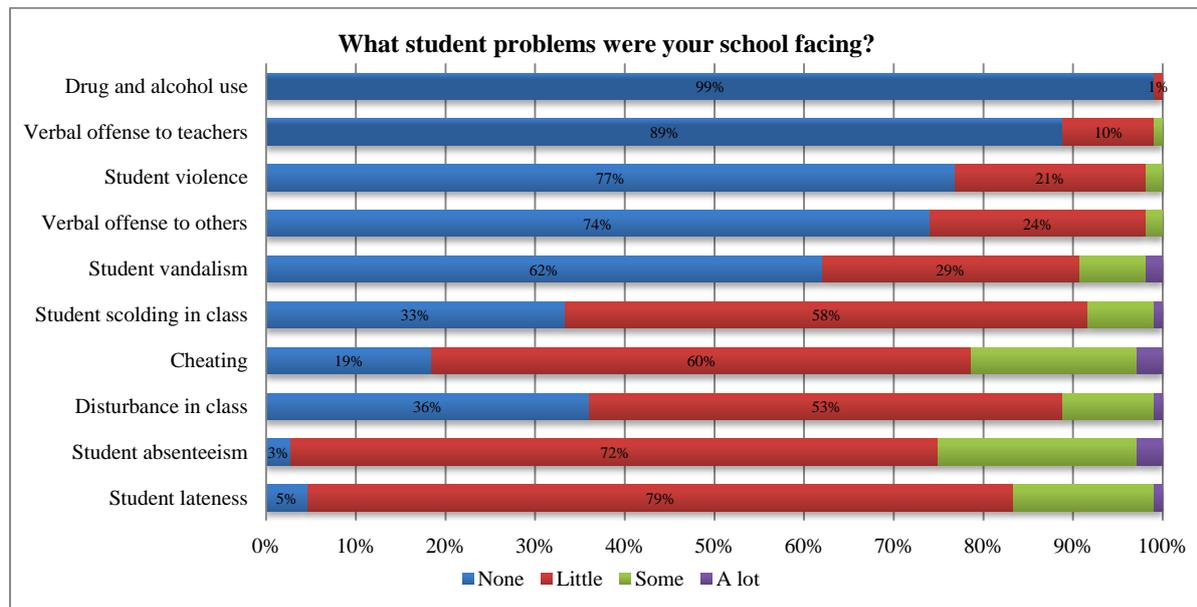
Figure 16: *Students' problems at school*

School Directors in this study tended to agree that their schools were facing problems with teacher lateness and absenteeism. According to Figure 17, teacher absenteeism is the most recurrent problem albeit with few cases reportedly occurring at school. This finding reflected the findings of other studies on the current situation of schooling in Cambodia, which identify that teacher absence is a critical issue that results in loss of teaching hours. The lack of appropriate teaching methods was also considered a problem according to School Directors. The data showed that 61% of the School Directors witnessed a lack of good teaching methods among teachers, and 12% of the schools saw this as a relatively common problem at their schools, suggesting that to some extent School Directors were aware of deficient teaching methods.
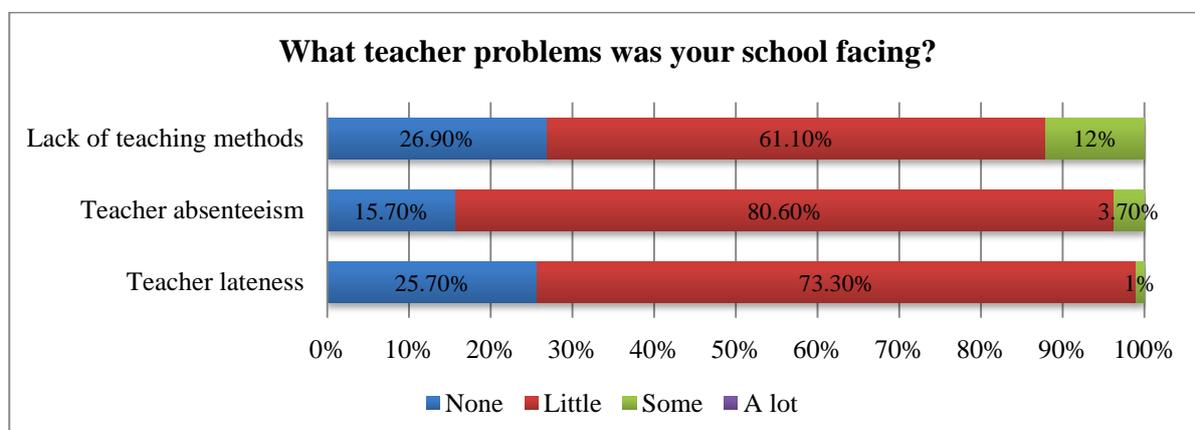
Figure 17: *Teacher problems at school*

School Problems: Perceptions of Students

Students also identified a number of problems inside their schools. The problems were classified as high (mentioned by more 8 groups), medium (mentioned by between 5 and 8 groups) and low (mentioned by four groups or fewer) based on the frequency that they were mentioned. The biggest concerns to them were high absenteeism of teachers and students in school and poor teaching and learning material supplies. High dropout and repetition rates, bullying and fighting, scattered rubbish and unclean toilets were considered the medium level problems in their schools. They sometimes felt concerned about cheating during exams, public vandalism, stealing and drinking in the school compound. Drinking alcohol, however, was reported as a problem by only one group of students. According to them, they sometimes saw people drinking alcohol in school during public holidays, and they said such behavior should not be allowed in the school compound at all.

Table 4: *School problems based on 12 student focus group discussions from five provinces and Phnom Penh City*

School problems	Frequency mentioned
a. Student and teacher's high absenteeism	High
b. Poor teaching and learning material supply	High
c. High dropout and repetition rates	Medium
d. Fighting and bullying inside school	Medium
e. Rubbish	Medium
f. Unclean toilet	Medium
g. Lack of classroom (multi-grade classes)	Low
h. Cheating during the tests or exam	Low
i. Public vandalism	Low
j. Stealing each other's property (stationery normally)	Low
k. Drinking	Low

School Problems: Experience of NGO Representatives

Based on their experience working with schools, the NGO interviewees reported that there were many problems inside schools that school leaders should have power to solve, but there is often a failure to do so. The first and foremost problem mentioned was the teaching time lost through teacher and student absence. Respondents felt that schools should be more accountable for solving this critical problem. Teaching time loss results in shorter learning time for the students, which later adversely affects their academic performance. Participants did not observe academic or professional disciplinary actions against teacher absences, however. They also reported that some teachers did not pay attention to public school teaching hours but focus on running private tutoring classes to gain additional incomes. Because of low salaries, some teachers had part-time jobs or charged unofficial fees from students. As for students' problems, the NGO representatives reported that a

number of students were absent or truant because some students needed to help their families earn more for a living. Educational quality was another common concern of NGO respondents, who felt that many students did not read or perform well on simple mathematics tasks. Furthermore, respondents often mentioned that schools were not transparent in their tasks; they did not engage the community to assist in planning school activities and monitoring the school expenditures. The community had thus lost communication with schools.

School performance tasks responsibilities

When asked about their views on who would be the key stakeholders responsible for certain school performance tasks, School Directors provided various insights. School Directors, as shown in Figure 18, reported that the provincial office of education (PoE) and the district office of education (DoE) were mainly responsible for such tasks as recruitment of new teachers, firing teachers, setting teacher salaries and setting the teacher salary scheme. Schools were not held accountable for those tasks. The data indicated that School Directors and SSC members were accountable for developing a financial plan, deciding on school expenditures, setting school vision and missions and creating the school annual action plan. The main tasks that School Directors had to bear more responsibility with were associated with student registration and making school performance reports. When asked about tasks involving developing school regulations, school evaluation policy, and monitoring of student learning, the School Directors pointed to their role with the support from teachers in discussing what needs to be done to assist in student learning. The MOEYS was reportedly held accountable for selecting basic teaching books, developing teaching contents for each class, deciding on subjects to be taught, and setting a budget for teacher capacity development. Overall, the fact that different stakeholders were viewed as responsible entities in school performance appeared to indicate that schools were merely accountable for limited tasks. Based on the nature of their responsibilities, schools played more roles in implementation rather than serving as the architects of their own performance.
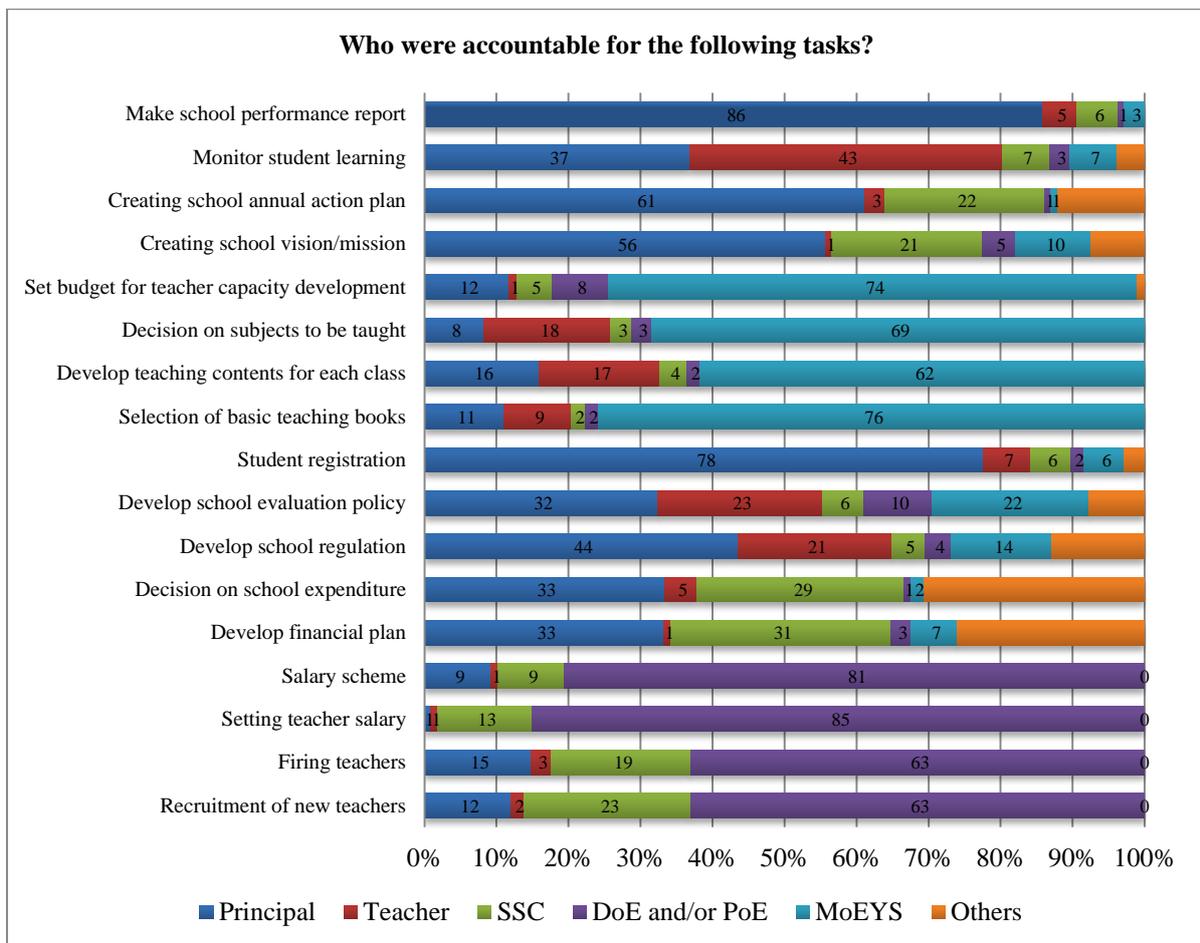
Figure 18: *School performance task responsibility*

Publication of school report

Several questions were asked to the SSC members to explore how schools performed to ensure school and social accountability. Results from the interview showed that schools reportedly published the school performance report to the public, while about 20% of the SSC members appeared to have no knowledge about the school report, pointing out that schools did not release the school performance report to the public. This implies that school-community relationships at some schools may have been called into question. This is consistent with the results from the interviews with NGO representatives and student group discussions. The NGO representatives further explained that the report was generally done for the PoE and DoE, who require schools to send the reports on a specific date. The parents and communities never knew what is going on in schools, especially whether the schools achieved its target plans and what challenges existed in carrying out the plan.
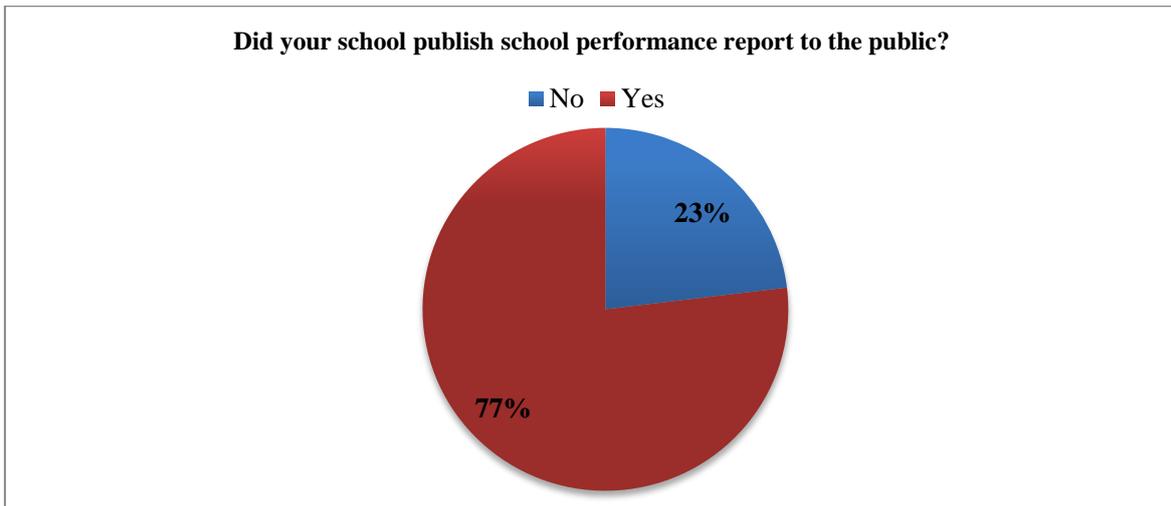
Figure 19: *Publication of school performance report by SSCs*

Some participants outside the SSC group were also included in this study. Results provided somewhat interesting experiences and insights with respect to their knowledge about school performance. Almost half of the community participants included in this research project reported that they had no information about school activities (see Figure 20). Reportedly, schools did not extensively report to their communities. This finding appeared to contradict with what was described by the SSC members, 77% of whom reported that schools were accountable for their work through releasing school performance reports to the public (see Figure 19). Such a variance implied that there was an information and communication gap between schools and communities as a whole, whereas the communication appeared to be limited within the school and SSC communication zone.
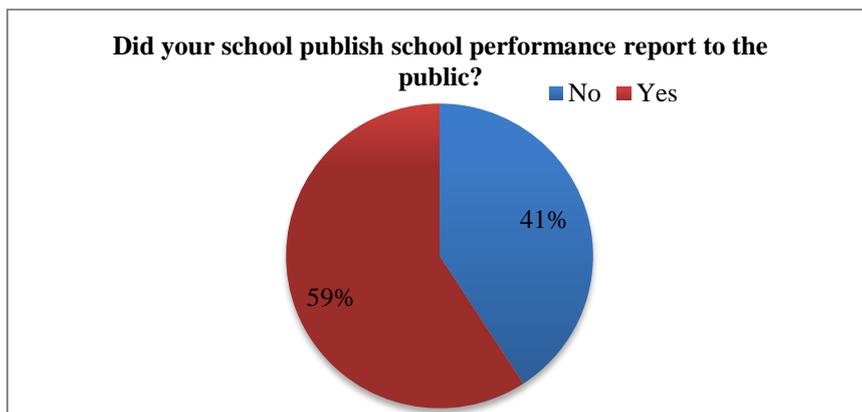
Figure 20: *Publication of school performance report to the public by non-SSC*

School performance perceived by SSCs and non-SSCs

When asked about school performance, SSC members witnessed positive performance among the schools and School Directors. As shown in Figure 21, it was reported that School Directors and management often, if not always, understood their roles and duties to

function in their communities and society. SSC members also stated that schools often developed strategies to help poor/low-performing students and put efforts to improve student learning. They also reported that schools were delighted to work with and get suggestions from the community, especially from children's parents. This is a good indication that school-community linkage would help improve school performance to a great degree.

To what extent does school emphasize the following acitvities?

- Receive suggestions from community: Often 32.40%, Always 50.60%
- Effort to improve student learning: Often 18.90%, Always 74.90%
- Strategies to help poor students: Often 26.80%, Always 55.20%
- Knowledge of school responsibilities: Sometimes 20.80%, Always 73.50%

Legend: ■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Always
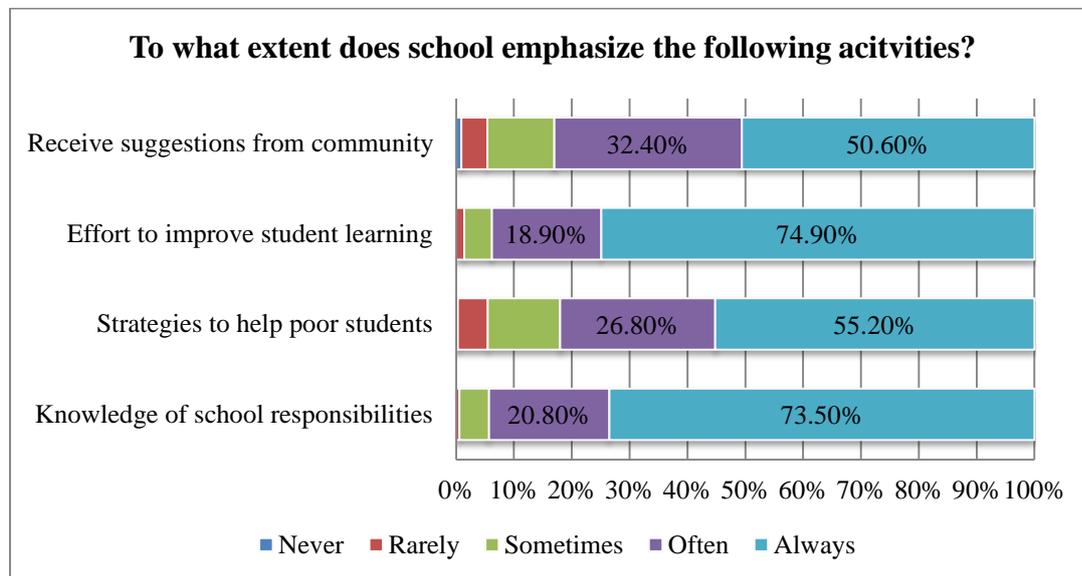
Figure 21: *About school performance by SSCs*

Viewpoints of non-SSCs towards school performance were apparently mixed. As Figure 22 illustrates, about two-thirds of the non-SSC participants reported that schools were always aware of their roles and responsibilities to the community and society. In the meantime, the community positively rated school efforts to improve student learning. However, they seemed to have a somewhat different perception of schools in terms of their efforts to receive suggestions from the community and to create strategies to help poor students in the community. These results reflected the limited functions of schools in the communities by suggesting that schools played a role merely limited to the existing problems on campus, while to some extent detaching themselves from the disadvantaged groups of students or the children in the communities at large. The views from non-SSCs seemed to differ, though not to a great extent, from what was commonly reported earlier by SSC members as to the fact that schools had played an active role in collaborating with the community on getting suggestions or feedback on school performance and helping poor students. These differences in rating may imply that non-SSCs were not better aware of school performance in the community as the SSC groups, a finding that calls the practice to promote school-community linkage into question.

To what extent does school emphasize the following acitvities?

Efforts to improve student learning: 21.50% | 64.40%
Strategies to help poor students: 30.30% | 45%
Knowledge about school responsibilities: 23.20% | 67.50%
Receive suggestions from the community: 36.90% | 35.50%

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always
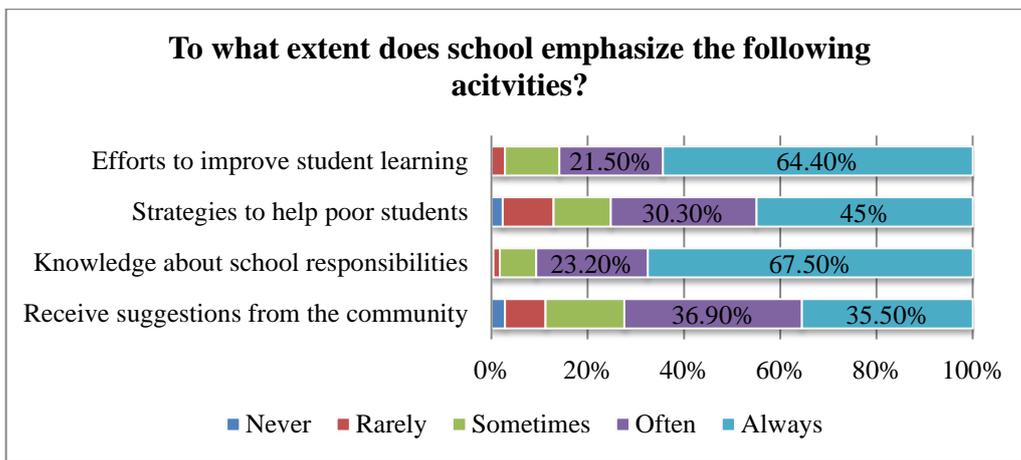
Figure 22: *About school performance by non-SSCs*

Satisfaction with school performance

SSCs were also asked to rate their satisfaction with some school performance tasks. Results showed that SSCs were generally satisfied with school performance in their communities (see Figure 23). However, their level of satisfaction highly pointed to school expenditure and efforts to collect school-age children for school. It appeared that these two prime tasks were of much interest and value to the communities, compared to other school activities. This is evident as reducing student dropout was also rated highly among others.

How satisfied were you with your school performace in the following activities?

Children's attitudes: 31.40% | 63.30%
Parents' satisfaction: 31.60% | 67.30%
Reduce dropout: 27.20% | 70.20%
Schoolwork to collect school-age children: 19.10% | 80.10%
School expenditure: 9.10% | 85.40%
Schoolwork: 31.60% | 67.30%

- Not satisfied at all
- Not satisfied
- Satisfied
- Strongly satisfied
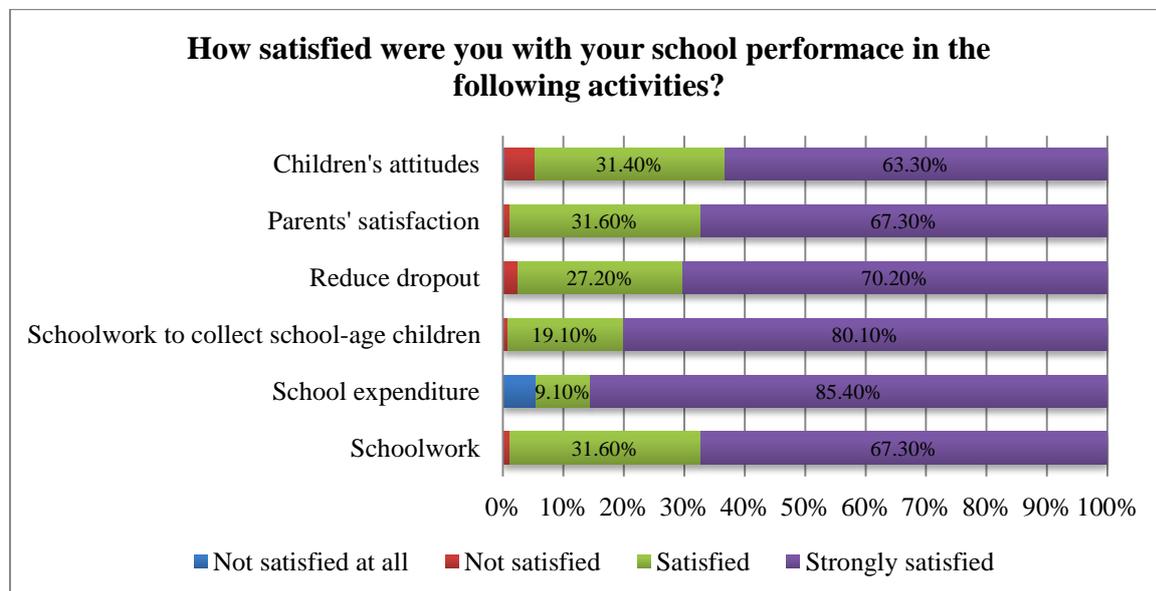
Figure 23: *Satisfaction with school performance by SSCs*

When asked about their satisfaction with school performance in their communities, non-SSC participants shared the views of the SSC members in that they were strongly satisfied with school expenditures, school efforts to collect school-age children and reduce student

43

dropout rates. They also highlighted that parents also showed relatively high support for the school functioning in the communities and were satisfied with their children's attitude after they were sent to school (see Figure 24).

In the focus group discussions with students from 12 schools, they were also satisfied with their schools. All the students agreed that their schools assisted them in learning. However, the ways that schools helped were a little different from one school to another. According to them, schools normally taught them knowledge (teaching them to read, write, do calculations, how to live in the society), and maintained high discipline for a good learning environment (resolving the students' conflict, punishing those who break the school rules or disciplines, enforcing school uniform codes, establishing strong relation among students, school staff and community, contact parents when students are absent, providing safety environment, etc.). They stated that their teachers took care of the learning progress, and they explained what was not clear to the slow-learning students, paid attention to the students, and reported the students' learning progress to their parents, gave them homework and checked their learning, though their salaries were quite low.

Those students however requested schools further improve their functions to help the students learn better. First, schools needed to strictly keep student discipline. The students need clean and safe learning environments, where there is an absence of bullying and fighting. It should be noted that many students reported that bullying and fighting were quite common in school these days. Those students also wanted their teachers to perform their tasks properly and avoid heavy absenteeism. They said that some teachers should not just pay attention to the rich or good students, leaving behind the poor and lazy students. Some students wanted their schools to create a program to help slow-learners. Meanwhile, they wished their schools would encourage students to do self-learning and research, such as going to the library, as they were not interested in the current practice of teaching and learning approaches. More teaching and learning resources, such as textbooks, books for the library, and labs need to be supplied to schools for student learning. The students finally recommended that the SSCs should better function in school in order to help school function, promote school safety, and eliminate school vandalism. In this sense, they could come to school and provide advice to them for the better learning of the students.
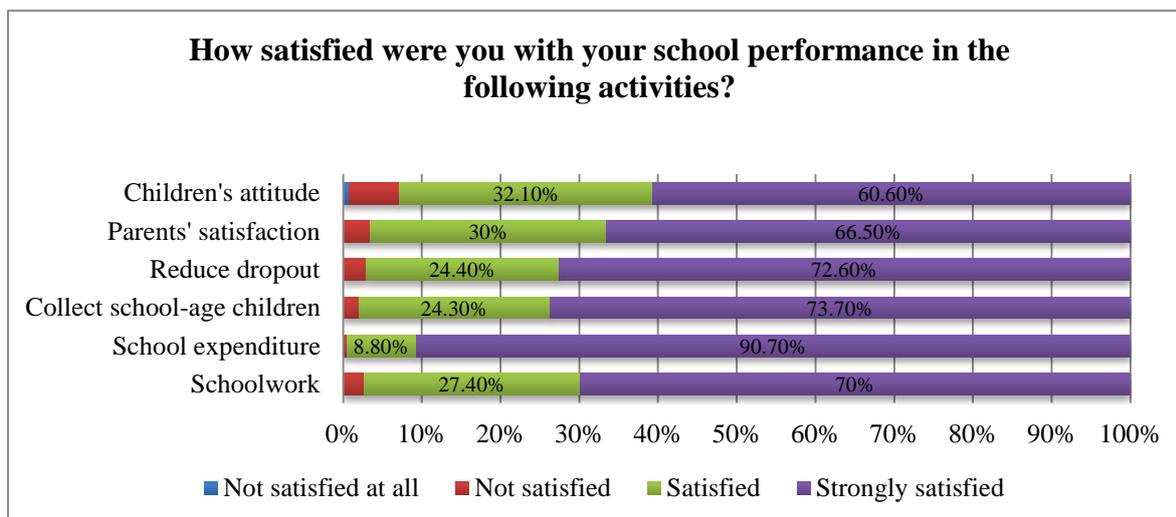
Figure 24: *Satisfaction with school performance by non-SSC community members*

Based on experiences working with schools, the NGO correspondents agreed that there are a number of actions that the schools typically perform well and some important roles and responsibilities that schools fail to carry out. First, schools have the ability to raise funds to build infrastructure and maintain classrooms or school buildings, monitor teachers, organize bi-monthly or quarterly meeting with the students' parents, coordinate with local police and commune council to prevent violence in school, carry out the campaigns to promote the enrollment and reduce dropout rate, do some administrative tasks, organize events, clear the procurement process, and develop annual work plan. Most School Directors, however, do not know the basics of *school management* and *leadership*. Most of the interviewees were concerned about the financial transparency inside schools. The School Directors never reported the available budget and expenditures to the staff and community. Another issue was that the schools were not able to control staff management. The school had no power to take disciplinary actions against low-performing teachers, those who were frequently absent or late, those who charged informal tuition fee from students, and those who had misbehaved against teachers' professional standards in Cambodia.

In order for schools to perform independently, the results showed that schools need to have full independence and autonomy, and they have to perform their tasks transparently. Independence and autonomy is needed regarding financial management; staff recruitment and management; decisions on teaching and learning activities, materials and processes; school development plan; and the like. Transparency would allow the community to be actively involved in school work, such as school expenditures, income, teaching and learning processes, and others. In this regards, the schools would gain trust from communities and communication would improve between school and community. This point is very important for the success of schools in Cambodia, and it is one of the missing characteristics in Cambodian schools.

Challenges

There is no denying that the existence of the SSC presents a new development of education system in Cambodia towards school and social accountability. This supportive body does play a fundamental role in bridging the school and community relations. Increased community participation is what the system needs in order to make a positive change in school-based management and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of school performance. However, while success stories were acknowledged throughout the report, there were a bulk of challenges that need to be attended to in both policy and practice. The responses from all stakeholders (School Directors, SSCs, non-SSCs, NGO representatives and students) through interviews and focus group discussions revealed that promoting community participation remains a great challenge. Several challenges were documented as barriers hindering the SSCs as well as the community at large from actively and effectively involving in school development processes.

School Directors' lack of understanding of SSC roles and responsibilities

The data from the field mainly indicated that the lack of community participation, especially the SSCs, was associated with a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of SSCs among School Directors. It was reported that in most cases School Directors seemed to have little knowledge about how the SSC worked for schools and the communities. The interviews showed that the School Directors did not even know the clear responsibility of SSCs. By and large, SSC members were selected for the purpose of helping schools to find/collect funds to support school. Although the SSC roles and responsibilities were well stated in the guidelines for the establishment of SSCs which consists of 8 core activities (designing school development plan, collecting school-age children, monitoring of student learning, fundraising and budget management, school infrastructure development and maintenance, experience and life skills sharing, irregularity preventions, and SSC capacity building), School Directors tended to limit the roles and responsibilities of SSCs in practice. For example, as the SSCs reported, in practice, the budget plan approval was just sent to the SSCs to sign on the report and plan (their jobs are just to sign the documents). This practice affected the community participation in school performance to a great degree. A broader scope of involvement by the community in helping schools to function well was largely questioned.

SSCs' lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities

Another challenge was associated with the SSC members' lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities. SSC members were reported to lack sufficient knowledge about what their roles and responsibilities would encompass or be limited to. On the one hand, the field interviews suggested a lack of training from school/School Directors that accounted for such gaps in understanding of their roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, their capacity was reportedly questioned. How the SSCs were selected would explain this.

Generally, SSC members were selected from less powerful and capable people such as farmers, (retired) teachers, commune councils, clergymen/monks, police/soldier and chief of the village. Such a composition left a critical question over their capacity to get involved actively in school development activities. In Kompong Cham, some SSC members, for example, did not even know how to read and write. Low education was a great barrier for them to take any initiative in helping with school functions. This was unfortunate at the time when School Directors were not fully aware of the desired roles and responsibilities of SSCs in relation to school functions. As one SSC commented:

"The work of SSC is to follow the order of the School Director".

The interview further revealed that most of the SSC members are old and dependent. The School Directors claimed that schools wanted powerful and strong members, but schools could not find those people because they did not have any incentives from their work. Hence, School Directors ended selecting these types of SSC members. In some schools, the SSC members even requested the interviewers ask the new and young force to replace them because their capacities were too low to deal with the work. The lack of participation was thus complicated as a lack of an understanding of the roles and responsibilities among SSCs seemed to be exacerbated by their low capacity. One School Director further added:

"All the SSC members are never involved in teacher or school observation because they believe it is not their tasks and they have no expertise in the field."

Low motivation and support from community

Motivation (to be) and the given support from communities to SSCs were contributing factors that prevented them from fully participating in school and community work. SSC members reported that they did not have motivation to work for schools or their communities, as there was no incentive. That situation appeared even worse as one non-SSC person mentioned:

"I am just a construction worker. I can afford to buy motorbikes. As a [school] principal, you can only ride a bicycle".

In addition, SSC members seemed to have little support from the local authorities. The interviews supported that the local authorities did not care much about SSC work; they only cared about their core work at their workplace. It was further reported that community members' roles in education were not widely accepted or understood. They pointed out that school activities are the sole responsibility of the government. They did not have any responsibility to do those tasks. As a consequence, the communities tended to turn their attention to supporting religious acts for their own sake instead.

Communication and collaboration problems

The lack of effective communication and collaboration between schools and SSCs and the communities was another major challenge. One School Director stated that, "The work is almost the same as the SSC members do not even know every member in the committee." Some of the schools, even in Phnom Penh, reportedly did not even know their SSC members. Some members just realized that they were the SSC members on the day when the data collectors called them. Moreover, it appeared that the principals did not create a close rapport with the communities, as this community member noted in an interview:

> *"The communities do not even know what the school wants".*

The cooperation between SSCs and School Directors was also questioned. The field interview and notes suggested that the work just flowed between the SSC director and the principal. Other SSC members reportedly did not know the work flow of the committee. Even in the case of Wat Bo School, a model primary school in Cambodia, the work was mainly directed to the School Director and the SSC director, leaving necessary information widely uncirculated.

Funding and fundraising

The functioning of SSCs was very much affected by a shortage of funding. By and large, SSC members got involved in schoolwork merely on a voluntary basis. There was little, if not any, financial support from schools. Therefore, funding the work of SSCs was technically non-existent. Fundraising was thus an alternative to keep schools and the SSCs functioning. SSC members, as most of them were from the religious bodies, created fundraising events through religious ceremonies to get contributions from parents and the community members in order to get financial support for school development. However, SSCs reported:

> *The fundraising did not attract the attention and trust of the community and parents any more in the last few years because the community is quite poor and migrated to other areas in the rural areas. The alternative form of fundraising was made through giving out the envelope to the parents to collect some contributions for school development, practice that fruitful outcomes were questioned due to the widening gaps in communication and relations between school and the community. "Bunpaka[3]" is not useful either because the funds raised were just enough to pay for the food and ceremony itself.*

The lack of transparency also emerged as a problem preventing community involvement in fundraising as schools did not exactly report expenses (the transparency of the work and

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[3] "Bunpaka" is a religious ceremony held to collect fund for development of a certain infrastructure in the community.

procurement of expense at all). In addition to this, the community did not want to be involved in schoolwork because teachers already collected money from students. Phnom Penh is a prime example of the lack of community participation due to this cause. Taken together, attracting the community to participate in funding the school or fundraising became a major problem that would urgently call for sound solutions from all the stakeholders, be it from School Directors or from the SSC members.

Good Practices of SSC: Two School Cases

Although schools in various locations in this study reportedly had low levels of community participation and fell short of good accountability practices, some instances where schools have worked to involve the community could be drawn from this study. In this section, school examples were explored to document some of the good practices used to promote community participation. The exemplary activities found in well-functioning SSCs included the following:

- Holding regular meetings with parents and community.

- Receiving inputs from them and put them into an annual operation plan.

- Asking for voluntary contributions from parents (teaching and learning materials, teacher's additional payment, etc.).

- School Directors not holding the school bank account to ensure financial transparency.

- Reporting to the community what the school did.

- Parents and community being asked to come and check the progress of the school.

- Teachers being encouraged to receive more professional development and given more recognition and appreciation.

- School Directors doing the leadership work, external and internal relations, and communication, while administrative and other tasks are delegated to their vice-principals.

- Decisions typically being decided by the school staff and community together.

All the good practices mainly reflect initiatives and actions undertaken by the School Directors, rather than simply following the national guidelines. In exemplary schools, the School Directors appeared to be aware of their roles and responsibilities in mobilizing others to coordinate school management processes and the activities SSCs were supposed to participate in. In the best practice schools, the high capacity of School Directors was a key factor. The role of School Directors was critical as SSC members were not well aware of their roles and responsibilities without this encouragement. The School Governance Project

(2014)[4] by CARE provided supporting evidence where the training of SSC members was needed to upgrade their understanding of the functioning of SSCs since, without systematic capacity building training, SSC members were not fully aware of their roles and responsibilities, while instead leaving the initiatives and actions related to school development activities to others. In this regard, School Directors need to have the capacity to take initiative and act in order to promote the implementation of the roles and responsibilities of SSCs. Figures 2 and 3: shows that in Provinces where the schools sampled had School Directors with higher levels of education, SSC functioning was also considered more effective.

A practical experience raised by a NEP's NGO member in a consultative meeting with NGOs working with SSC is related to the participation of SSC in managing uniform distribution to primary students. Through the involvement with NGO project, SSC members were better aware of their roles and responsibilities and made meaningful contribution to their schools.

Two projects of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) called "Social Care and Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities" (SCIE) and "Uniform Distribution project" are being implemented in 18 primary schools in three districts (Bati, Prey Kabas and Samrong) of Takeo Province with the goal of ensuring children with disabilities attend and achieve at schools.

It was observed that though SSCs are required for each school, many SSCs are not aware of their roles and responsibilities, and are not functioning well to support the education at school level. Hence, the CRS projects used the SSC guideline issued by the MoEYS to formalize the SSC structure, building their capacity which is very successful in engaging local communities to support the projects. The projects have involved the SSCs in many project activities such as conducting awareness raising on rights of children with disabilities (CwDs); school enrollment campaigns; screening CwDs and referring them to receive medical/rehabilitation services; development of the school annual operational plan; quarterly meetings between school, parents and SSCs; selection of project beneficiaries; fund raising and managing the fund to help improve the teaching and learning environment etc.

Results show that SSCs are now aware about their roles and responsibilities and have good communication, collaboration with school and parents to support the education for the children in their communities. School Annual Operational Plan for each school was clearly made, project beneficiaries were carefully screened and referred to receive services, selected ensuring beneficiary accountability and transparency, a clear agreement on the management of the contribution fund and plan for expenditure was jointly and carefully developed and used in a very transparent and effective ways to ensure total benefit to the school community etc.

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[4] The School Governance Project was conducted by CARE and funded through MoEYS Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF). The project was implemented in 2013 as a baseline survey and in October and November 2014 as an end line survey to enhance the capacity of DTMT1 and SSCs.

With all the challenges presented above, this research project could draw on a number of practical needs and solutions from School Directors and the community members. The results provided the following inputs for improving the SSC work and community participation. First and foremost, it was requested that the training of SSCs be conducted to expand their participation in school activities. Periodic follow-up activities by schools on SSCs performance were needed in order to evaluate their levels and the nature of participation in schoolwork and development activities.

Second, SSCs need to be selected from knowledgeable/influential/committed group, especially from people with experience in education and/or management. Building capacity on financial management and leadership for SSCs and School Directors could help improve the capacity of the SSC members and School Directors in understanding how to spend money (how to fill the expense form).

Third, SSCs and schools need to have more communication through frequent meetings. The field survey suggested that poor communication was a prime factor that led to the lack of understanding of what needed to be done and what had been done for school development. This would partially explain the lack of high levels of community participation in diverse school development activities.

Last but not least, financial support must be taken into consideration in order to sustain the functioning of SSCs and to promote school-community relations. All the stakeholders shared the view that schools or the ministry should establish a system to reward or incentivize the SSCs to contribute to school development. A separate budget for SSCs, in a form like Programme-based Budgets (PB), would help improve the motivation and work of School Directors and SSCs. In addition to this, there should be a fixed salary scheme for SSCs, although the amount was not specified clearly.

5. Discussion

Community participation

This school and social accountability research was a prime study within the Cambodian educational context that explored in detail the extent to which the SSCs participated in school performance and challenges to community participation in school performance at the primary and secondary schools in Cambodia that would be otherwise overlooked in policy and practice. The study provided all the stakeholders with a developmental understanding of how SSCs functioned in reality against what is stated in the guidelines. The results thus offered a few unique updated pieces of evidence to a small body of research on community participation and school accountability in Cambodia.

The current project revealed that community participation in school performance at the primary and lower secondary education cycles generally remained relatively low, especially in the city. However, evidence was found on their somewhat heightened level of participation in helping schools to design school plans and in school infrastructure development and maintenance. This finding supported that of Nguon (2011), who found a substantial level of SSC involvement in formulating the school plan. The finding that SSC involvement in school infrastructure development and maintenance added a new understanding and growth of community participation in school performance in Cambodia in addition to what was described in Nguon's findings. This study also presented a somewhat positive move schools had worked thus far to promote community participation through attracting SSCs to get involved in some core activities related to collecting school-age children for school, educating the local people to send their children to school, promoting a healthy school environment, and visiting schools to monitor student learning, thus suggesting that SSC roles were centered on more than fundraising and school contributions. Overall, these findings appeared to suggest that, despite a lack of depth, community participation in school performance as reflected in SSC involvement improved in breadth. Simply, this research revealed that more school-related activities were participated in by the community, though not in depth.

The results revealed some notable facts about the nature of their participation, too. By and large, this study found that SSC members were apparently interested in the issues of financial transparency related to school and the community, while they were less engaged in collecting and managing fund activities with schools. In practice, SSCs were more interested in the school budget and its use. Other activities involving collecting and managing funds remained unfulfilled. This finding implied that SSCs had yet to play an active role in school finance and decision making, a result that provided little progress to what was claimed in Nguon (2011) and Pellini (2005, 2007). For some reason, the concern over financial transparency among SSCs was what could closely explain this nature of their participation. The intention of the schools to promote contributions from the community to school development might also be a factor. Meanwhile, what was notable in their

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participation in school infrastructure development and maintenance is that the communities tended to switch attention to school infrastructure maintenance rather than development. As reported in the interview with SSC members, poverty, migration, and loss of trust among the communities were the prime factors that explained that change. While this finding highlighted that SSCs roles were not broadly fulfilled, it offered a change in SSC involvement in school infrastructure development and maintenance at primary and lower secondary schools in Cambodia.

School performance

As the results suggested, schools were mainly accountable for administrative work and curriculum and teaching. School Directors' roles were mainly limited to these two tasks in addition to other school-related management activities that were particularly related to the MoEYS. These results seemed to suggest that School Directors mainly played a role in fulfilling their duties to meet the requirements set forth by DoE/PoE/MoEYS, while neglecting their roles to link schools to the communities and other schools. Such results highlighted the fact that school accountability was a prime task among School Directors. Social accountability was in turn called into question. This finding is useful in a way that broadening the capacity of School Directors is critical because, to some extent, School Directors were not well trained to have a refined understanding of their roles and responsibilities especially in relation to their knowledge about the functions of school in the communities and society. This finding thus concludes that school accountability was not broadly practiced among School Directors. There is a conflicting understanding of roles and responsibilities among those educational stakeholders, leaving schools not well aware of what they have to be accountable for.

Also, this study found that school evaluation activities were not fully performed at school. There were limited practices of self-evaluation and external evaluation of schools. Publications of school performance reports were not done in most schools in this study. This result is expected as school evaluation systems were not fully implemented in Cambodia. In particular, although the MoEYS conducts the school inspection every year, school evaluations were not a prime focus. The principals' lack of capacity to conduct self-evaluation would also be a cause leading to the lack of school evaluation practice and publication of school evaluation reports. This result is not new. Apparently, accountability for student learning is still in question as there is a widening gap between schools and communities in the knowledge of school performance and student learning.

The critical fact of school accountability in Cambodia would be associated with the extent to which School Directors knew their roles and responsibilities. The results showed that there were limited functions that School Directors perceived to be their main responsibilities. As the results indicated, they perceived that they had to be more responsible for student registration and making school performance reports. Other school-related tasks such as recruitment/firing of teachers, selection of textbooks or teaching contents, and setting

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budgets for teacher capacity development were reportedly directed to PoE/DoE/MoEYS. This finding questioned the capacity and the level of autonomy of School Directors in Cambodia in performing school-related tasks. This would considerably affect their level of understanding of what schools should be held accountable for in practice, especially in relation to the community.

This study found that school development plan information was not widely circulated. This is evident as SSC members appeared to report more knowledge about what schools were doing compared to their non-SSC counterparts. Outside the SSC circle, it appeared that the understanding of school performance was limited. This result provided the evidence that the communication flowed merely between School Directors and SSCs, in some cases only to the SSC chief. Community participation was lacking in this regard. This is supported by the finding presented earlier that schools were mainly accountable for internal tasks required by the ministry. Rather, they reportedly failed to expand their functions to reach the community at large.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

Several conclusions have been drawn from this research project. First, although community participation in school performance remains relatively low, especially in the city, there are some improvements in terms of the nature of their involvement. Results point out that the SSCs have become more aware of their roles and responsibilities, though not at a desired level, by becoming involved in more diverse school-related activities than what was reported a decade ago by Pellini (see Pellini, 2005, 2007). Basically, they contribute to school development in terms of participating in school development planning and the monitoring of the implementation plan. , Although they participate less in school infrastructure development, there is an increasing participation from the community in monitoring school building processes and maintaining available infrastructure. Also, they lend some support to schools in ensuring the safe and learner-friendly environment.

Second, key findings of this research study draw to a conclusion that there is a significant gap between SSCs and non-SSCs in knowing what and how schools are functioning, especially the roles and responsibilities of SSCs. Non-SSCs apparently feel more detached from schools, leaving their understanding of what SSCs are doing more limited compared to their SSC counterparts. SSCs seem to be more aware of school performance, strategies or practices to link to the community. Despite this, they share views on possible challenges that prevent SSCs or the community from actively participating in school performance or development activities. These challenges include the lack of understanding of SSC roles and responsibilities among School Directors and SSC members, low motivation or trust from community and local authorities, lack of communication and collaboration among School Directors, SSCs and the community, and the lack of funding to sustain the work of SSCs.

Last but not least, there are a number of good practices in dire need to ensure and promote the work of SSCs and community participation. This study concludes that SSCs may not be functioning well unless the roles and responsibilities of SSCs are clearly communicated to School Directors and the SSCs themselves; the SSCs are elected from knowledgeable/ influential/committed groups; communications between School Directors and SSCs are bridged, basically through regular meetings; and a financial sustainability is in place to motivate SSC members to work with and for schools and communities.

Recommendations

This report does not aim to provide prescriptive recommendations for policy and practice to enhance school accountability in Cambodia, but it aims to point out key areas and gaps drawn from the existing practices of community participation in school performance as a

tool to improve school accountability. It also aims to set a platform for further policy dialogues, and discussions. The following key areas are thus provided for those purposes.

Reinforcing the implementation of the existing SSC guidelines:

Many aspects in the Guidelines on SSCs are stated very clearly. However, the implementation at the school level is seen limited. In this regard, School Director and School Management Committees should pay more attention to the implementation of the SSC guideline to make sure that their practices at the school level reflect what is stated in the guideline and make the best use of SSC resources for school activities. Following areas are crucial to consider:

- Actively recruit or re-elect qualified SSC: School Director and School Management Committees should spread the information of SSC recruitment and/or re-election in their school. School Directors should disseminate the information on the crucial roles of SSCs in promoting school performance and accountability to attract qualified people to be SSC members. SSCs should re-elect regularly according to the existing guidelines.

- Empower SSCs to fully perform their task: School Director and School Management Committee should delegate power to SSC, especially in monitoring school performance including school budget to make sure that school budget is spent in a transparent way so that SSC can accurately report to community to attract more support and contribution.

- Structure, composition, and roles and responsibilities of SSCs should be posted that is visible and accessible at the school level.

Enhancing capacity of School Directors and SSCs

The study identified the lack of a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities among School Directors and SSC members. Although capacity building on the Guideline on School Support Committee was provided at provincial and school levels, there still is a critical lack of understanding of what schools should perform or are accountable for and of what SSCs should undertake. As the results showcased, the community may view the involvement in the monitoring of student learning and teaching as the sole responsibility of the school or the government. Thus, the School Directors and SSCs need to have a precise understanding of the roles and responsibilities they need to undertake. To this end, there are two specific key recommendations:

- Engage School Directors and SSCs in training or workshops to enhance their capacity of their roles and responsibilities, particularly the SSC guideline.

- Ensure all School Directors are trained in basic leadership and management skills and communication skills to make them aware of what the schools need to offer to the community.

Improving coordination amongst key actors

A communication gap between schools and communities is not uncommon in a country where economic and social benefits are not well offered and articulated. In Cambodia, the formation of SSCs is a good sign that enhances the decentralization process and leads to more involvement from communities in school performance. However, the success of this functioning body requires better coordination from all concerned governing bodies. Therefore, DTMT should coordinate periodic reflection meetings between School Management Committee, teachers and SSC members.

Enhancing financial accountability

The research study shows that the lack of support from the community hampers the work of SSCs and the practice of school accountability at the primary and lower secondary schools in Cambodia. The lack of trust from the community on school as well as that of SSCs' financial management transparency upon the community contribution either in cash and in kind could result in low community participation. For example, "Bunpaka" is no longer effective; upon their financial contributions to school development, there is no financial report released to the communities. It is this alleged irregularity that matters. To gain trust from community, School Directors and SSCs need to show transparency to community by publishing reports regularly.

Empowering the role of commune councils

It is noteworthy in this research study is the influential role of the commune councils in educating parents and local communities to value the essence of education and to send their children to school. With the lack of in-depth participation from the communities in schoolwork, empowering the role of commune councils in attracting more people in the community to better understand the performance of schools and SSCs could be an advantage. Specific recommendations are as follows:

- Engage commune council members in school development plans and school events on a regular basis.

- Organize local social events to enable commune council members to communicate school learning principles or social issues, especially the work of SSCs, to children, parents and the community at large.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Principals

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

- The interviewer greets the interviewee and has a small talk together around a minute.
- The interviewer inform the interviewee the purposes of the research project to ensure importance of the accurate and reliable data from them to tackle the current challenges of school accountability in Cambodia in an attempt to dig out the possible solutions to the problems.

Province	_____
Name of school cluster	_____
Name of the school	_____
Date of interview	_____

Section A: About You

These questions are about you, your education and your position as a School Director. In responding to the questions, please mark the appropriate box.

1. Gender ☐ Female ☐ Male

2. Age ☐ Under 40 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60+

3. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?
   ☐ Never attended school ☐ Primary school
   ☐ Lower secondary school ☐ Upper-secondary school
   ☐ Bachelor or higher

4. Do you have principal responsibilities for more than one school?
   ☐Yes ☐No

5. How many years of experience have you worked as a School Director?
   ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3-5 years ☐6-10 years ☐11-15 years
   ☐ 16-20 years ☐ More than 20 years

6. How many years of experience have you worked as a principal at this school?
   ☐ 1-2 years ☐3-5 years ☐6-10 years ☐11-15 years
   ☐16-20 years ☐More than 20 years

7. Does your school keep a good and updated record of school aged children in your school attachment area?

   ☐ Never recorded   ☐ Once every 5 years ☐ Once in 3-4 years
   ☐ Once in 2 years   ☐ Every year

8. Does your school use the statistics above to identify and enroll the children in school?

   ☐ Not at all   ☐ Of course, it does

9. What is your school average rate of dropout in the last three years?
   _____%

10. What is your school average rate of repetition in the last three years?
    _____%

11. What is your school average rate of promotion in the last three years?
    _____%

12. As a principal of this school, on average throughout the school year, what percentage of time do you spend on the following tasks in this school? *Rough estimates are sufficient. Please write a number in each row. Write 0 (zero) if none. Please ensure that responses add up to 100%.*

    ____% a) Internal administrative tasks (including human resource/personnel issues, regulations, reports, school budget, timetable)

    ____% b) Curriculum and teaching-related tasks (including teaching, lesson preparation, classroom observations, mentoring teachers)

    ____% c) Responding to requests from district, state, or national education officials

    ____% d) Representing the school at meetings or in the community and networking

    ____% e) Other _____

Section C: Your School Performance

13. What is your current school performance rank in the province?_____

14. What is your school accountable for? (More than one answer is accepted?)
    ☐ Achieving objectives set by MoEYS
    ☐ Achieving objectives set by DOE and POE
    ☐ Obtaining good working conditions for teachers   ☐ Student learning
    ☐ Improving organizational capacity
    ☐ Responsiveness to students, parents and community
    ☐ Other (Please specify.)_____

15. To whom is school accountable?

☐ MoEYS   ☐ DOE and POE   ☐ Teachers   ☐ Students and parents
☐ Other (Please specify.)_____

16. In this school, to what extent is the learning of students hindered by the following behaviors? Please mark one choice in each row.

By students in this school:	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	A lot
a) Arriving late at school	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
b) Absenteeism (i.e. unjustified absences)	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
c) Classroom disturbance	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
d) Cheating	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
e) Profanity/Swearing	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
f) Vandalism	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
g) Theft	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
h) Intimidation or verbal abuse of other students (or other forms of bullying)	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
i) Physical injury to other students	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
j) Intimidation or verbal abuse of teachers or staff	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
k) Use/possession of drugs and/or alcohol	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
l) Others _____	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3

By teachers in this school:	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	A lot
m) Arriving late at school	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
n) Absenteeism	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
o) Lack of pedagogical preparation	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3
p) Others _____	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3

17. Regarding this school, who has a considerable responsibility for the following tasks?
A 'considerable responsibility' is one where an active role is played in decision making. Please mark as many choices as appropriate in each row.

	Principal	Teachers	SSC	DOE/POE	MoEYS
a) Selecting teachers for hire	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
b) Firing teachers	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
c) Establishing teachers' starting salaries.	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
d) Determining teachers' salary increases	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
e) Formulating the school budget	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
f) Deciding on budget allocations within the school	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
g) Establishing student disciplinary policies	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
h) Establishing student assessment policies	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5

i) Approving students for admission to the school.	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
j) Choosing which textbooks are used	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
k) Determining the course content	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
l) Deciding which courses are offered	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
m) Allocating funds for teachers' professional development	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
n) Forming their own school vision and missions	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
o) Establishing an annual implementation plan in school	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
p) Monitoring student learning	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
q) Making a school performance report					
r) Others _____	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5

18. On what conditions, do you think that school can perform their own actions independently without much interference from the MoEYS and POE?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

19. How often during the last 5 years did this school produce a school self-evaluation document and/or was the school evaluated by an external agency or body (e.g. external inspector)?

This refers to an evaluation of the whole school rather than of individual subjects or departments. Please mark one choice in each row.

	Never	Once	2-4 times	Once per year	More than once per year
a) A school self-evaluation report was produced	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
b) An external evaluation was conducted	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
c) Publication of school performance report	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
d) Receiving the feedback on its performance for re-orientation of the next year school activities	☐0	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4

Section D: School Partnership with SSC

20. Does school normally involve other stakeholders in the school work?

	Much	Little	No
School Development Planning			
1. Designing and developing school development plan	2	1	0
2. Forming school vision and missions	2	1	0
3. Monitoring the plan implementation	2	1	0
4. Evaluating the plan implementation	2	1	0
5. Help putting the school development plan into the commune development plan	2	1	0
School Enrollment Enforcement			
1. Collecting the school-aged children to school.	2	1	0
2. Creating strong programs to assist students with financial difficulties to have access to education.	2	1	0
3. Creating strong programs to assist students with physical difficulties to have access to education.	2	1	0
4. Creating strong programs to assist minority children to have access to education.	2	1	0
5. Educating the local people to send their children to school on time	2	1	0
6. Joining new academic year orientation every year	2	1	0
Monitoring of Student Learning			
1. Educating parents to invest more (time, tutoring, learning materials, etc.) on their children's education so that they can finish lower-secondary school	2	1	0
2. Visiting the School Directors to monitor student learning	2	1	0
3. Monitoring the teaching process inside school	2	1	0
4. Finding strategies to reduce repetition rate	2	1	0
5. Finding strategies to reduce the dropout rate	2	1	0
6. Discussing the issues of absence of principal, teachers or students	2	1	0
7. Promoting healthy environment of the school	2	1	0
8. Forming strategies to prevent epidemic diseases or disasters	2	1	0

Collecting and Managing Fund			
1. Disseminating the needed budget of the school with the local community, donors, local NGOs, etc.	2	1	0
2. Raising fund for the school development plan	2	1	0
3. Monitoring how the school spends the limited available fund	2	1	0
4. Informing the school whether or not they are on the right track	2	1	0
5. Reorienting their actions based on the suggestions	2	1	0
School Infrastructure Development and Maintenance			
1. Raising fund, in terms of cash or materials, to build more rooms to facilitate the learning of the students	2	1	0
2. Collecting free local manual for the school building or maintenance	2	1	0
3. Monitoring school building process to ensure the work is being carried out properly	2	1	0
4. Maintaining the available school infrastructure	2	1	0
Experience and Life Skills Sharing			
1. Finding out relevant stakeholders for the life and technical skills program in school	2	1	0
2. Providing life skills training to the students	2	1	0
3. Compiling good practices of the local life and technical skills for school	2	1	0
Irregularities Prevention			
1. Ensuring the safe and learner-friendly environments	2	1	0
2. Dealing with the ill-disciplined students	2	1	0
3. Solving the problem inside or outside school, such as bullying, crime, computer games, etc.	2	1	0
Capacity Building			
1. Creating the platform for school and community to share with each other their experience	2	1	0
2. Evaluating learning and teaching in school to find ways to improve them	2	1	0

21. Mainly, what activity does the local community normally work with school?

_____
_____
_____
_____

22. Based on your opinion and real experience, what are the challenges in engaging the local community in school performance activities?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

23. If you are not satisfied with the current practice of local community involvement in school functioning work, what are your recommendations to improve the relation between school and community so that the school can perform better?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AT PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY LEVELS.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE
(SSC MEMBERS)

- The interviewer greets the interviewee and has a small talk together around a minute
- The interviewer inform the interviewee the purposes of the research project to ensure importance of the accurate and reliable data from them to tackle the current challenges of school accountability in Cambodia in an attempt to dig out the possible solutions deal the problems.

Province: _____

Name of school cluster   _____

Name of the school   _____

Date of interview   _____

SECTION A: About the Interviewee

1. Name of the interviewee: _____

2. Gender   ☐Male   ☐ Female

3. Age   ☐20-30   ☐ 31-40   ☐41-50   ☐51 and older

4. Occupation   _____

5. What is your highest level of formal education you received?
    ☐ Never attended school   ☐ Primary school
    ☐ Lower secondary school   ☐ Upper-secondary school
    ☐ Bachelor or higher

6. What is your membership category in the school committee?
    ☐Teacher   ☐Parents   ☐Local community
    ☐Local authority   ☐Alumni   ☐Others _____(Specify)

7. Are you now a member of School Support Committee? What is your position in the school committee?
    ☐Honorary president   ☐Advisor   ☐President of SSC   ☐Vice president
    ☐Member   ☐Not working in SSC

8. How long have you been a member of SCC? _____

9. Why did you want to be its members? (More than ONE answer is possible.)
    ☐I want to improve the function of schools.
    ☐I want to raise the quality of education.
    ☐I was selected and entrusted by the community.

SECTION B: School Support Committee Members and Decision

10. How many members (including all) are there in your school committee?

_____

11. How was each member of school committee selected?

☐ Appointed by principals or others   ☐ Elected (secret, hand raising, etc.)

☐ By interest in working in SSC

12. How often is the committee selected?

☐ Every academic year   ☐ Every two years   ☐ Every three years

☐ Never changed

☐ Selecting new members only when the old members leave

☐ Others _____ (specify)

☐ I don't know

13. In the last five years, did the committee members change?

☐ Every year   ☐ Every two years   ☐ A few new members

☐ Almost never changed   ☐ A life time membership

☐ Others _____ (specify)

☐ I don't know

14. How is a decision normally made in your committee?

☐ by voting   ☐ by the president's decision   ☐ other _____

SECTION C: Your School Support Committee Work

15. How far does the School Support Committee work on its assigned tasks?

	Much	Little	No	I don't know
C1. School Development Planning				
1. SSC participates in designing and developing school development plan.	2	1	0	IDK
2. SSC participates in forming school vision and missions.	2	1	0	IDK
3. SSC monitors the plan implementation.	2	1	0	IDK
4. SSC evaluates the plan implementation.	2	1	0	IDK
5. SSC helps put the school development plan into the commune development plan.	2	1	0	IDK
C2. School Enrollment Enforcement				
6. SSC helps collect the school-aged children to school.	2	1	0	IDK
7. SSC has strong programs to assist students with financial difficulties to have access to education.	2	1	0	IDK
8. SSC has strong programs to assist students with physical difficulties to have access to education.	2	1	0	IDK
9. SSC has strong programs to assist minority children to have access to education.	2	1	0	IDK
10. SSC educates the local people to send their children to school on time.	2	1	0	IDK
11. SSC members attend new academic year orientation every year.	2	1	0	IDK

C3. Monitoring of Student Learning				
12. SSC members educate parents to invest more (time, tutoring, learning materials, etc.) on their children's education so that they can finish lower-secondary school.	2	1	0	IDK
13. SSC visits the School Directors to monitor student learning.	2	1	0	IDK
14. SSC monitors the teaching process inside school.	2	1	0	IDK
15. SSC works closely with school to find strategies to reduce the repetition rate.	2	1	0	IDK
16. SSC works closely with school to find strategies to reduce the dropout rate.	2	1	0	IDK
17. SSC holds regular meetings to discuss the issues of absence of principal, teachers or students.	2	1	0	IDK
18. SSC promotes the healthy environment of the school.	2	1	0	IDK
19. SSC creates the programs or strategies to prevent epidemic diseases or disasters.	2	1	0	IDK
C4. Collecting and Managing Fund				
20. Your SSC disseminates the needed budget of the school with the local community, donors, local NGOs, etc.	2	1	0	IDK
21. Your SSC raises fund for the school development plan.	2	1	0	IDK
22. Your SSC monitors how the school spends the limited available fund.	2	1	0	IDK
23. Your SSC informs the school whether or not they are the right track.	2	1	0	IDK
24. Your SSC closely monitors whether the school reorient their actions based on the suggestions.	2	1	0	IDK
25. Your SSC reports the school problems to relevant officers if the school does not spend on what they are supposed to.	2	1	0	IDK
C5. School Infrastructure Development and Maintenance				
26. Your SSC raises fund, in terms of cash or materials, to build more rooms to facilitate the learning of the students.	2	1	0	IDK
27. When money is not available, your SSC collects the free local manual for the school building or maintenance work.	2	1	0	IDK
28. Your SSC monitors the school building process to ensure the work is being carried out properly.	2	1	0	IDK
29. Your SSC helps maintain the school infrastructure.	2	1	0	IDK
C6. Experience and Life Skills Sharing				
30. Your SSC works to find out relevant stakeholders for the life and technical skills program in school.	2	1	0	IDK
31. Your SSC helps school to provide life skills training to the students.	2	1	0	IDK
32. Your SSC compiles the good practices of the local life and technical skills for the future use in school.	2	1	0	IDK

C7. Irregularities Prevention				
33. Your SSC works with the people living near the school to ensure the safe and learner-friendly environments.	2	1	0	IDK
34. Your SSC helps schools to deal the ill-disciplined students.	2	1	0	IDK
35. Your SSC works with the school to solve the problem inside or outside school, such as bullying, crime, computer games, etc.	2	1	0	IDK
C8. SSC Capacity Building				
36. Your SSC creates the platform for the school and community to share each other their experience.	2	1	0	IDK
37. Your SSC works with DTMT to evaluate learning and teaching in school.	2	1	0	IDK
38. Your SSC members receive professional development trainings on school development.	2	1	0	IDK
39. Your SSC members conduct field visits to the schools where there are strong SSCs to learn from them.	2	1	0	IDK

16. Are you satisfied with the current work of SSC in improving school functioning?
   ☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Satisfied   ☐Not quite satisfied   ☐ Very disappointed

17. If you are not satisfied with the current practice of local community (SSC) involvement in school functioning work, what are your recommendations to improve the relation between school and community so that the school can perform better?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

18. Mainly, what activity does the SSC normally work with school?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

19. Based on your opinion and real practice, what are the challenges that hinder engagement of the local community in school performance activities?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

Section D: Perceptions on the School Performance

20. Does the school report what it has done to the public?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

21. Does the school normally accept the suggestions from local people, including parents?
☐ Always   ☐ Often   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Not at all

22. What is your opinion on the overall performance of the school?
☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Satisfied   ☐Not quite satisfied   ☐ Very disappointed

23. Do the School Director and management team know what they are supposed to do?
☐ Always   ☐ Often   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Not at all

24. Are you satisfied with the way the school spend their budget?
☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Satisfied   ☐Not quite satisfied   ☐ Very disappointed

25. Does your school work so well in getting the school-aged children to enroll in school?
☐ Very well   ☐ Well   ☐ Not quite well ☐ Not at all

26. Does your school have good strategies to prevent students from dropping out?
☐ Always   ☐ Often   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Not at all

27. Does your school have good strategies to help the slow learners?
☐ Always   ☐ Often   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Not at all

28. Are most of the parents you know satisfied with the current performance of the school?
☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Satisfied   ☐Not quite satisfied   ☐ Very disappointed

29. Does your school work so hard to make the students study well, especially reading, writing, and other important subjects and skills?
☐ Always   ☐ Often   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Not at all

30. Are you satisfied with the behaviors of the students?
☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Satisfied   ☐Not quite satisfied   ☐ Very disappointed

31. What other educational problems that school can deal with but normally fail to do so?

_____

_____

_____

32. On what conditions, do you think that school can perform their own actions independently without much interference from the MoEYS and POE?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C: Questionnaire for Non-SSC Members

THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AT PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY LEVELS.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE
(NON-SSC MEMBERS)

- The interviewer greets the interviewee and has a small talk together around a minute
- The interviewer inform the interviewee the purposes of the research project to ensure importance of the accurate and reliable data from them to tackle the current challenges of school accountability in Cambodia in an attempt to dig out the possible solutions deal the problems.

Province: _____
Name of school cluster   _____
Name of the school   _____
Date of interview   _____

SECTION A: About the Interviewee

1. Gender   ☐ Male   ☐ Female
2. Age   ☐ 20-30   ☐ 31-40   ☐ 41-50
                        ☐ 51 and older
3. Occupation   _____
4. What is your highest level of formal education you received?
   ☐ Never attended school   ☐ Primary school
   ☐ Lower secondary school   ☐ Upper-secondary school
   ☐ Bachelor or higher

SECTION B: Your School Support Committee Work

5. Have you ever heard of School Support Committee?
   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
6. How far does the School Support Committee work on its assigned tasks?

	Much	Little	No	I don't know
C1. School Development Planning				
1. SSC participates in designing and developing school development plan.	2	1	0	IDK

C2. School Enrollment Enforcement				
2. SSC does so much in improving the enrollment.	2	1	0	IDK
3. SSC helps collect the school-aged children to school.	2	1	0	IDK
4. SSC has strong programs to assist students with financial difficulties to have access to education.	2	1	0	IDK
5. SSC assists minority children to have access to education.	2	1	0	IDK
6. SSC educates the local people to send their children to school on time.	2	1	0	IDK
7. SSC members attend new academic year orientation every year.	2	1	0	IDK
C3. Monitoring of Student Learning				
8. SSC members educate parents to invest more (time, tutoring, learning materials, etc.) on their children's education so that they can finish lower-secondary school.	2	1	0	IDK
9. SSC visits the School Directors to monitor student learning.	2	1	0	IDK
10. SSC monitors the teaching process inside school.	2	1	0	IDK
11. SSC works closely with school to find strategies to reduce the repetition and dropout rate.	2	1	0	IDK
12. SSC holds regular meetings to discuss the issues of absence of principal, teachers or students.	2	1	0	IDK
C4. Collecting and Managing Fund				
13. Your SSC raises fund for the school development plan.	2	1	0	IDK
14. Your SSC monitors how the school spends the limited available fund.	2	1	0	IDK
C5. School Infrastructure Development and Maintenance				
15. Your SSC raises fund, in terms of cash or materials, to build more rooms to facilitate the learning of the students.	2	1	0	IDK
16. Your SSC collects the free local manual for the school building or maintenance work.	2	1	0	IDK
17. Your SSC helps maintain the school infrastructure.	2	1	0	IDK
C6. Experience and Life Skills Sharing				
18. Your SSC works to find out relevant stakeholders for the life and technical skills program in school.	2	1	0	IDK
C7. Irregularities Prevention				
19. Your SSC works with the people living near the school to ensure the safe and learner-friendly environments.	2	1	0	IDK
20. Your SSC works with the school to solve the problem inside or outside school, such as bullying, crime, computer games, etc.	2	1	0	IDK
C8. SSC Capacity Building				
21. Your SSC members receive professional development trainings on school development.	2	1	0	IDK
22. Your SSC members conduct field visits to the schools	2	1	0	IDK

where there are strong SSCs to learn from them.				

7. Are you satisfied with the current work of SSC in improving school functioning?
   □ Very satisfied   □ Satisfied   □Not quite satisfied   □ Very disappointed

8. If you are not satisfied with the current practice of local community (SSC) involvement in school functioning work, what are your recommendations to improve the relation between school and community so that the school can perform better?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

9. Mainly, what activity does the SSC normally work with school?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

10. Based on your opinion and real practice, what are the challenges that hinder engagement of the local community in school performance activities?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

Section C: Perceptions on the School Performance

11. Does the school report what it has done to the public?
    □ Yes   □ No

12. Does the school normally accept the suggestions from local people, including parents?
    □ Always   □ Often   □ Sometimes   □ Not at all

13. What is your opinion on the overall performance of the school?
    □ Very satisfied   □ Satisfied   □Not quite satisfied   □ Very disappointed

14. Do the School Director and management team know what they are supposed to do?
    □ Always   □ Often   □ Sometimes   □ Not at all

15. Are you satisfied with the way the school spend their budget?
    □ Very satisfied   □ Satisfied   □Not quite satisfied   □ Very disappointed

16. Does your school work so well in getting the school-aged children to enroll in school?
    ☐ Very well ☐ Well ☐ Not quite well ☐ Not at all
17. Does your school have good strategies to prevent students from dropping out?
    ☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not at all
18. Does your school have good strategies to help the slow learners?
    ☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not at all
19. Are most of the parents you know satisfied with the current performance of the school?
    ☐ Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Not quite satisfied ☐ Very disappointed
20. Does your school work so hard to make the students study well, especially reading, writing, and other important subjects and skills?
    ☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not at all
21. Are you satisfied with the behaviors of the students?
    ☐ Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Not quite satisfied ☐ Very disappointed
22. What other educational problems that school can deal with but normally fail to do so?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

23. On what conditions, do you think that school can perform their own actions independently without much interference from the MoEYS and POE?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

Appendix D: NGO Interview Guiding Questions

THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AT PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY LEVELS.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FOR NGO

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

1. How do you define "school accountability"? Do schools and community you have been working with share your view on "school accountability"?

2. Based on your work experience with schools in Cambodia, what areas are schools accountable for? What areas are schools not accountable for?

3. On what conditions, do you think school can perform their own actions independently without much interference from the MoEYS and POE?

4. What educational problems do schools normally fail to deal with?

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

5. What is your view on community participation in school performance/activities?

6. What areas of school performance/activities has community contributed to? What areas of school performance/activities has community not contributed to?

7. What are the main challenges hindering community participation in school performance/activities?

8. What roles should community take in order to contribute to/engage in school development?

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

9. What makes a difference between high accountable schools and low accountable schools in Cambodia?

10. What initiatives/action plans should be in place to bridge school-community relations?

Project on School Accountability in Cambodia: Community Performance in School Performance

Focus Group Discussion

School performance

1. What information do you usually get from your school?

2. Does your school inform you of any events or activities at school? If not, what is the main source of information (friends, relatives, teacher, commune chief, etc.)?

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your school in terms of information management?

4. Is your school accountable for your learning? If not, what does your school really do in this community?

5. What do a school principle and teachers actually do at your school?

6. Do you know what the main problems in this school are?

7. What should school do more to help you to learn?

Community participation

1. Do you know people in this community participate in school operations such as meeting, organizing school events, discussion about your learning? Who are they? Why?

2. What are the main contents of the meeting?

3. How do they get the information about school? (Give an example of your parents or relatives)

4. What areas do people in your community have little information about school?

5. What does your school need to do to improve school-community relations?

លិខិតយល់ព្រមចូលរួមក្នុងការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវ

យើងខ្ញុំជា ក្រុមសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវមកពីសាកលវិទ្យាល័យភូមិន្ទភ្នំពេញ សូមអញ្ជើញលោក/ លោកស្រីឬ សិស្សានុសិស្ស ឱ្យចូលរួមនៅក្នុងការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវរបស់យើង។ ជាបឋម អ្នកត្រូវចុះ ហត្ថលេខាលើលិខិតបញ្ជាក់ពីការយល់ព្រមក្នុងការចូលរួមការសិក្សានេះ។ ក្នុងការចុះហត្ថលេខា ចូលរួមការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ អ្នកត្រូវមានអាយុយ៉ាងតិច១៨ឆ្នាំ(បើមិនដូច្នេះទេ ត្រូវមានការ អនុញ្ញាតពីលោកគ្រូអ្នកគ្រូ ឬ អាណាព្យាបាល)។ អ្នកចូលរួមក៏អាចពិភាក្សាជាមួយមិត្តភ័ក្តិ ឬ ក្រុម គ្រួសារដើម្បីសម្រេចចិត្តអំពីការចូលរួមនេះផងដែរ។ អ្នកចូលរួមនឹងទទួលបានលិខិតនេះមួយច្បាប់។

អំពីការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវ

ការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះសិក្សាទៅលើការចូលរួមរបស់សហគមន៍ និងការបំពេញតួនាទីភារកិច្ចរបស់ សាលារៀននៅក្នុងប្រទេស កម្ពុជា។ អ្នកចូលរួមនៅក្នុងការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះត្រូវចូលរួមផ្ដល់ កិច្ចសម្ភាសរយៈពេលពី ៦០-៩០នាទី និងត្រូវចូលរួមចែករំលែកគំនិតរបស់ខ្លួនទាក់ទងនឹងទស្សន និងបទពិសោធន៍អំពីការបំពេញតួនាទីភារ កិច្ចរបស់សាលារៀន និងការចូលរួមពី សហគមន៍។ សំណួរសំខាន់ៗផ្ដោតទៅលើការបំពេញតួនាទីភារកិច្ចរបស់ សាលារៀន និងទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងសាលា រៀនជាមួយសហគមន៍ និងសាធារណជនទាក់ទងបញ្ហាសម្រេចចិត្ត បញ្ហាសិក្សារៀនសូត្ររបស់ សិស្សានុសិស្ស និងបញ្ហាគណនេយ្យភាពសាលារៀន។ ការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះមិន ផ្ដោតសំខាន់ លើព័ត៌មាន ឬទិន្នន័យផ្ទាល់ខ្លួនរបស់អ្នកចូលរួម ហួសពីការកំណត់នៅក្នុងគោលបំណងនៃការ សិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះឡើយ។

ភ្នាក់ងារសម្ភាសន៍របស់យើងនឹងជួយណែនាំអ្នកចូលរួមដើម្បីឆ្លើយសំណួរនានា។ អ្នកចូលរួម មានសិទ្ធិសួរ និង ស្នើសុំការពន្យល់បន្ថែមប្រសិនបើចាំបាច់។ ការចូលរួមក្នុងការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវ នេះជាការស្ម័គ្រចិត្ត។ អ្នកចូលរួម អាចដកខ្លួនចេញពីការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះគ្រប់ពេលវេលា ប្រសិនបើ អ្នកយល់ថាការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះប៉ះពាល់ដល់ខ្លួន។ ការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះមិនមែន ផ្ដោតទៅលើការបើក កកាយប្រវត្តិ ទស្សនៈយល់ឃើញ ឬព័ត៌មានផ្ទាល់ខ្លួនរបស់អ្នក ចូលរួមជាសាធារណៈទេ។ ព័ត៌មាន ទាំងអស់នឹងត្រូវរក្សាការសម្ងាត់ហើយនឹងមិនត្រូវប្រើប្រាស់ក្នុងគោលបំណង ណាផ្សេងក្រៅអំពីបាន រៀបរាប់នៅក្នុងគោលបំណងនៃការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះទេ។ ព័ត៌មានឯកជនរបស់អ្នកនឹង ត្រូវបាន គោរព និងរក្សាការពារ។

អំពីហានិភ័យ និងបញ្ហាប៉ះពាល់មួយចំនួន

ក. ក្នុងពេលសម្ភាសន៍ សំណួរអាចត្រូវបានចោទសួរទាក់ទងនឹងបញ្ហានានាអំពីសាលារៀន ការ
រៀនសូត្រ និង ទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងសាលារៀន និងសហគមន៍របស់អ្នក។ សំណួរមួយចំនួនអាច
មានខ្លឹមសារអរិដ្ឋមាន ឬទាក់- ទងបញ្ហារសើប ដែលអាចប៉ះពាល់ដល់អារម្មណ៍របស់អ្នកចូលរួ
ម។

ខ. សំណួរមួយចំនួនទាក់ទងនឹងព័ត៌មានផ្ទាល់ខ្លួនរបស់អ្នក ប៉ុន្តែចម្លើយនឹងសំណួរទាំងនោះនឹង
ត្រូវទទួលបាន ការរក្សាការសម្ងាត់ខ្ពស់បំផុត។

គ. សំណួរនានានឹងមិនបង្កជាហានិភ័យចំពោះសុខភាពរូបរាងកាយ និងបញ្ហារបស់អ្នកឡើយ។

អំពីផលកម្រៃពីការចូលរួមការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវ

អ្នកនឹងមិនទទួលបានកម្រៃអ្វីពីការចូលរួមរបស់ខ្លួននៅក្នុងការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះឡើយ។

អំពីសារប្រយោជន៍ចំពោះអ្នកចូលរួម សហគមន៍ និងសង្គម

អ្នកនឹងទទួលបានប្រយោជន៍ដោយប្រយោលពីការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ។ យ៉ាងណាមិញ៖

ក. លទ្ធផលនៃការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះនឹងបង្ហាញជារួមអំពីការបំពេញគួនាទីភារកិច្ចរបស់សាលារៀន និង
ការចូលរួមរបស់សហគមន៍នៅក្នុងប្រទេសកម្ពុជាដើម្បីជាទុនសម្រាប់បង្កើតគោលនយោបាយ
និងការអនុវត្តឱ្យកាន់ តែប្រសើរជាងមុន។

ខ. អ្នកនឹងមានឱកាសសុំាំនឹងគម្រោងការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះតាមរយៈការចូលរួមរបស់ពួកគេ។

គ. អ្នកនឹងមានឱកាសរួមចំណែកជួយគម្រោងការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះដើម្បីបង្កើនការយល់ដឹងអំពី
ការ ចូលរួមរបស់សហគមន៍ និងបញ្ហាប្រឈមរបស់ពួកគេ។

ប្រសិនបើលោកអ្នកមានសំណួរ ឬចម្លល់ផ្សេងៗទាក់ទងនឹងការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ សូម
ទាក់ទងមកកាន់ប្រធានដឹកនាំក្រុមសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ បណ្ឌិត ណូ ហ្វាតា ត្រូវជាប្រធាន
មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលបណ្ណុះបណ្ណាល និងស្រាវជ្រាវអប់រំ នៃសាកល វិទ្យាល័យភូមិន្ទភ្នំពេញតាមរយៈសារអេ
ឡិចត្រូនិក nofata@gmail.com ឬទូរស័ព្ទ លេខ ០១៧ ៦៦២ ២១៦។

ហត្ថលេខាអ្នកចូលរួម ឬអាណាព្យាបាល   ហត្ថលេខាអ្នកសម្ភាសន៍

Appendix G: Research Permit

ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា

ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ

ក្រសួងអប់រំ យុវជន និងកីឡា

លេខ: ១១៣៤ អយក. សប

រាជធានីភ្នំពេញ ថ្ងៃទី ២៧ ខែ មីនា ឆ្នាំ ២០១៥

ជម្រាបជូន
លោក លោកស្រីប្រធានមន្ទីរអប់រំ យុវជន និងកីឡា
រាជធានីភ្នំពេញ ខេត្តកំពង់ចាម កំពត ព្រៃវែង ស្វៀមរាប និងខេត្តឧត្តរមានជ័យ

កម្មវត្ថុ ៖ ការណើការស្នើសុំផ្តល់ឯកសារសម្រាប់ដល់ការស្រាវជ្រាវរបស់ក្រុមស្រាវជ្រាវ នៃសាកលវិទ្យាល័យ ភូមិន្ទភ្នំពេញ ដឹកនាំដោយ **លោកបណ្ឌិត ឈ្នា ហ្សាតា** រយៈពេលពំរវៃ នៅតាមសាលារៀន ចំនួន ១១៨ ។

យោង ៖ -លិខិតលេខ ១៦៧/២០១៥ សភាភ ចុះថ្ងៃទី ០៦ ខែ មីនា ឆ្នាំ ២០១៥ របស់សាកលវិទ្យាល័យ ភូមិន្ទភ្នំពេញ ។
-ចំណារលេខភាពចុះថ្ងៃទី ១៦ ខែ មីនា ឆ្នាំ ២០១៥ របស់ឯកឧត្តមរដ្ឋមន្ត្រីក្រសួងអប់រំ យុវជន និងកីឡា ។

សេចក្តីដូចមានចែងក្នុងកម្មវត្ថុ និងយោងខាងលើ ខ្ញុំសូមជម្រាបជូនលោក លោកស្រីប្រធាន ជ្រាបថា ៖ ក្រុបស្រាវជ្រាវរបស់បេក្ខាវិទ្យាល័យអប់រំ នៃសាកលវិទ្យាល័យភូមិន្ទភ្នំពេញ ដែលដឹកនាំ ដោយ លោកបណ្ឌិត ឈ្នា ហ្សាតា និងរៀបចំតម្រោងចុះស្រាវជ្រាវមួយក្រោមប្រធានបទ " **ការចូលរួម របស់គណៈកម្មការទ្រទ្រង់សាលា ក្នុងការលើកកម្ពស់គណនេយ្យភាពនៅតាមសាលាបឋមសិក្សា និង អនុវិទ្យាល័យក្នុងប្រទេសកម្ពុជា** " ។ គម្រោងស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ បានទទួលមូលនិធិពីភាពជាដៃគូអប់រំ នៃរដ្ឋការក្រៅរាជរដ្ឋាភិបាល(NEP) ដើម្បីប្រមូលទិន្នន័យសំខាន់ៗ ដែលមានកទុននឹងការអនុវត្តការងារ របស់គណៈកម្មការទ្រទ្រង់សាលារៀន និងនាយកសាលា ក្នុងកិច្ចការគណនេយ្យភាពសាលារៀន ដោយផ្តែកលើមស្យួនរបស់សហានិកគណៈកម្មការទ្រទ្រង់សាលា នាយកសាលា មាតាបិតាសិស្ស លោកគ្រូ អ្នកគ្រូ និងមន្ត្រីអង្គការសង្គមស៊ីវិល ដែលមានការពាកព័ន្ធនឹងវិស័យអប់រំ ។

ក្រសួងអប់រំ យុវជន និងកីឡា បានឯកភាពតាមការស្នើសុំខាងលើ និងសូមលោក **លោកស្រីប្រធាន** មេត្តាផ្តល់ការសម្របសម្រួលជូនដល់ក្រុមស្រាវជ្រាវរបស់បេក្ខាវិទ្យាល័យអប់រំ នៃ សាកលវិទ្យាល័យភូមិន្ទភ្នំពេញ បានចុះធ្វើការស្រាវជ្រាវនៅតាមសាលារៀនមួយចំនួន ដើម្បីប្រមូលទិន្នន័យ ពាក់ព័ន្ធ និងប្រធានបទខាងលើ ចាប់ពីថ្ងៃទី ០៥ ខែ មីនា រហូតដល់ថ្ងៃទី ៣១ ខែ ឧសភា ឆ្នាំ ២០១៥។
សូម**លោក លោកស្រីប្រធាន** មេត្តាទទួលមូលនូវការគោរពដ៏ស្មោះព័ត្រខ្ញុំ។

ជំនួសមន្ត្រីក្រសួងអប់រំ យុវជន និងកីឡា
រដ្ឋលេខាធិការ

កិន_ម៉ាណាច

ចម្លងជូន:
-សាកលវិទ្យាល័យភូមិន្ទភ្នំពេញ "ដើម្បីជ្រាប"
-លោកបណ្ឌិត ឈ្នា ហ្សាតា "ដើម្បីអនុវត្ត"
-ឯកសារ-កាលប្បវត្តិ ៖ ទុកកប្បវៈប្បាល

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NGO Education Partnership (NEP) is a membership organization that promotes active collaboration between NGOs working in education and advocates on behalf of its members organiations in policy dialogues and discussions with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in Cambodia. Over 130 education NGOs working in Cambodia are members of NEP.

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