



ភាពជាដៃគូអប់រំនៃអង្គការក្រៅរដ្ឋាភិបាល
NGO EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR QUALITY EDUCATION



Supported by

Asia South Pacific Association For Basic and Adult Education
Learning Beyond Boundaries



April 2011

**A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
FOR QUALITY EDUCATION**

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Acknowledgment

This research study would not have been made possible if not for a great number of people whose contributions in various ways to the research and making this research deserved special mention. It is a pleasure to convey our team's gratitude to them all in our humble acknowledgment. In the first place I would like to record my gratitude to Mr. York Sovan Director of Primary Education Department for supervision, advice, and guidance from the very early stage of this research as well as giving extraordinary experiences throughout the work.

I gratefully acknowledge Ms. Psyche Amor Lao VSO's Research Advisor to NEP and Ms. Marina Oro, VSO Research Advisor for technical support, supervision, and crucial contributions, which provided a backbone for this research.

Special thanks is also addressed to its donor, Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF), for funding support to NEP's activities especially this research study. Above all, big thanks to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and its departments, NEP partners like PKO (Battambang), KAPE (Kampong Cham) and VSO Kampot which provided unflinching encouragement and support in various ways.

Many thanks go in particular to NEP team that in the midst of all their activity, they accepted the challenges in undertaking such vital study and as a pleasure to pay tribute also to the other collaborators.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Royal Government of Cambodia and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) have made many significant progresses over the last decade, particularly in the area of primary school enrolment at the national level. However, there are still a number of pressing issues that need to be addressed such as lack of human resources, limited time for active participation and practice in class, no and shared understanding of the elements of quality education. With financial support from Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF), NGO Education Partnership or NEP worked with its three member partners to implement a pilot project on Community Engagement in Quality Education in three provinces namely Battambang, Kampong Cham and Kampot. The study mainly focused to assess the level of awareness and understanding of the community on the quality of education.

Community is an important part in the education system in Cambodia. In fact, many education policies (i.e. National Education Policies, Education Law, Educational Strategic Plan, Policy on Child Friendly School, etc.) have been designed and ratified in order to demonstrate its efforts towards the attainment of education for all. Particularly, in the Child Friendly School Programme Policy (CFSP) parental engagement and community partnerships is one of the major dimensions that were considered. Based on the CFS policy document, dimension five refers to the “participation of children, families and communities in the running of their local school.” The objective is to enhance the dynamic relationship and two-way participation between schools and communities so that schools become community-supported resource centers, families and communities become resources for school improvement and play an active role in management.³ Furthermore, the dimension focuses on communication among parents, supplementary learning opportunities in

³ Child Friendly School Policy, December 2007.

the home, the wider role of community, school community partnerships to help establish clean, healthy and safe homes for the children. Students, teachers and parents agree that community support is vital to the success of schools and individual students.

The study discusses how the communities can positively or negatively affect the students' individual experiences with school and schooling. Many students are encouraged by individual community members, but at the same time, the students take responsibility for their own education while recognizing their dependence on the community to help them achieve their goals.

Moreover, community engagement and parent involvement hold promise as ways to improve and revitalize education at a time when the public's confidence in public schools is dwindling. Community engagement can be characterized as a quiet revolution occurring in large and small communities across the country that works towards inclusiveness, stronger consensus around educational goals, and real change in educational practice and outcomes. Community engagement does not necessarily lead to quick results. Instead, it represents a long-term investment in building ownership, capacity and "social capital" for deeper changes in educational policy and practice. (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 1998). In poor rural areas, community engagement is especially important because public schools are often the most visible and accessible institutions for bringing people together around community concerns. In many rural communities, there is a strong sense of local place and an essential connection between education, economic vitality and community health. Community engagement can be a powerful force for social and educational integration in achieving the educational goals of Cambodia.

This paper presents a study of community engagement and the quality of education that were designed to increase community engagement and parent involvement in education. This paper aimed to present a study of the extent of community engagement and parent involvement as one of the components of Child Friendly School Program. The research study took place in rural communities in the

three provinces of Cambodia; Kampong Cham, Battambang and Kampot, under financial support from Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF). NEP worked with its three member partners namely Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO-Cambodia), Puthi Komar Organization and Kampuchea Action for Primary Education (KAPE) to implement the pilot project on Community Engagement in delivering Quality Education. The study examines how school-community partnerships are formed and sustained so that educational transformation can become a more stable endeavor that ultimately benefits all students.

The results of the preliminary study will be used by NEP and its other NGO partners on how different stakeholders define quality of education, how the community should be involved in promoting quality education and in providing support for the learning outcomes of their children. It will also be used to design strategies/activities that can bring those stakeholders to have a common understanding with regard to community engagement and parental involvement to be able to work together in order to improve the quality of education. In addition, this preliminary study will be used as the baseline information to reflect the changes of stakeholders' understanding and attitude toward quality of education after the implementation of Community Engagement in Quality of Education project.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Parents play a key role in the overall functioning of a school by providing suggestions for the school at the school meetings. Parents who get involved in their children's education also set a positive example for their children and demonstrate to them the importance of education.

Schools often play a key role in the community by volunteering and taking part in important local causes, such as information dissemination and awareness activities. Having community involvement in schools helps students feel empowered to take active roles as citizens in their local communities by continuing volunteering even after leaving school.

General Objective

The general objective of the study is to find out the current perception of the community in selected provinces on the quality of education.

Specific objectives:

- 1) To assess the awareness/understanding among parents, teachers and local authority on the quality of education;
- 2) To describe the students' learning outcomes from selected schools;
- 3) To identify the barriers and factors that contributes to quality education;
- 4) To explore community participation in child education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to carry out the study, the research team designed and developed questionnaires that were used for Household Survey and a guide questionnaire for the Focused Group Discussion (FGD). The specific methods were adopted in order to gain specific information from target representative or sample of a particular group.

Survey respondents were asked to respond to one or more of the following kinds of items: open-ended questions, rankings, ratings and so on. Results were essentially used to understand the attitudes, beliefs or knowledge of the target respondents regarding their perception on the quality of education. All data has been taken in the development of the survey items and selection of the survey sample and that adequate response rates have been achieved. Household data were analyzed using frequencies, mean and correlation while focus group data only used frequencies and categorizing of the different responses. Note, however, that results from surveys should be generalized only to the population from which the survey results were drawn.

A random purposive sampling was used as this adds credibility when the purposive population is larger than one can handle, reduces judgment within a

category although even with such sampling, results are not to be taken as generalizations or actual representations of the entire population

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focused on the perception of the target respondents on the quality of education in terms of community involvement. The study was conducted in three selected provinces; Battambang, Kampong Cham and Kampot. Those provinces were chosen primarily because NEP considered they already have existing education partners in those areas so mobilization of resources and people were manageable (i.e. arrangement of schedules, coordinating with local authorities and identified focal points) and also, those three provinces were among the biggest and most populated. The study was delimited to 600 respondents (200 households per province).

Table 1: Target Household Sample

Province	No. of target villages	No of target schools	No. of Household
Battambang	5	5	200
Kampong Cham	7	6	200
Kampot	11	3	200

In addition, focus group discussions were conducted among school management, local authorities, school support committee, students and teachers of the studied schools, as well as POE and DOE to gather pertinent data related to the study. Table below shows the breakdown of the focus group discussions conducted in the three provinces among different stakeholder groups.

Table 2: Number of Focus Group Discussion by Province

Group / Province	Kampong Cham	Kampot	Battambang
School Management	6	3	5
Teachers	6	5	5
School Support Committee	6	3	5
Local Authority	5	3	1
Students	12	9	10
PoE	1	1	1
DoE	1	2	1
Total	37	26	28

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terminologies in this section were defined how they were used in this research.

Curriculum -	A curriculum is defined as the planned educational experiences offered by a school which can take place anywhere at any time* in the multiple context of the school, e.g. public schools as caring communities, (Todd, E.A. Curriculum Development and Instructional Planning, 1990)
Community Involvement -	This two-way process based upon actions and decisions that ensure inclusivity and capacity .
Focus Group Discussion -	A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people (i.e. parents, local authority, school administrators, school support committee head and teachers) are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards quality of education in Cambodia.
Household –	refers to parents of the children who are enrolled in the primary schools in the target provinces where the research was conducted.

Learning Outcome -	Student learning outcomes are defined in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students have attained as a result of their involvement in a particular set of educational experiences.
Parent involvement -	is the support and participation of parents at home, in the community, and at the school site that directly and positively affect the educational performance of all children
School Development -	address the learning goals and objectives established for professional development by educators at the school level as well as related local educational offices and school improvement goals
Stakeholders -	Quality of Education - quality may be based on an institution's or program's reputation, the extent to which schooling has influenced change in student knowledge, attitudes, values, and behavior, or a complete theory or ideology of acquisition and application of learning, (Adams 1998)

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section of the study presents some related research studies from both developing and developed countries on community involvement, which consistently showed results that such involvement adds to the quality of the schools involved and makes a difference in children's learning and achievement outcomes.

Parents or family involvement is a related reform theme that speaks directly to partnerships between schools and parents (or other caregivers) for the purpose of strengthening the links between parental expectations, student motivation, learning habits and academic performance. **Joyce Epstein (1991, 1995; Epstein & Hollifield, 1996) and other researchers (Griffith 1996, Henderson & Berla, 1994, Thorkildsen, Thorkildsen & Stein, 1998) provide evidence that parent involvement in the educational process reaps positive results for students, teachers and parents.** School-family partnerships are especially beneficial in leveling the effects of poverty by helping parents; teachers

and students in impoverished communities develop coordinated strategies that lead to high expectations for educational attainment as well as constructive learning habits. Successful partnerships can transcend the effects of poverty and social class by capitalizing on a strong sense of caring for children shared by parents and teachers even in the most impoverished communities. Successful partnerships require a strong and sustained effort on everyone's part (Epstein, 1995). This is particularly true in communities where parents have felt disenfranchised because of race, culture or poverty. Successful partnerships not only depend on how welcome parents are made to feel by the school, but on parental beliefs about their role in the educational process. Parent role conceptions are influenced by many factors including social and church groups, race, social class and basic beliefs about child development and child rearing. Parent expectations about their involvement also depend on their own sense of efficacy. Parents with low educational attainment, for example, often see a very limited role for themselves in helping their own children succeed in school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Within the broader framework of Education for All, USAID Washington pursued the development of a policy reform and education sector support framework that was committed to three foci: school and community change; systemic reform; African ownership of and capacity for the reform process. More specifically, it was ***based on the promotion of community participation and the improvement of access to education***, especially for girls, quality and efficiency. When in Mali, Guinea, Ethiopia, Malawi and Benin, NGOs such as Save the Children and World Education proposed their own innovative community-based approaches to achieving these broader goals in unsolicited proposals to missions, they clearly matched and supported USAID's goals and theoretical approaches.

In Ethiopia alone, current education policy calls for greater community engagement as the final, most localized level of the decentralized system and explicitly mandates participation in school operations and management. The policy change began with the 1994 Education Sector Strategy policy of the Transitional Government, which stated:

Schools will be strongly linked with the community, which will take responsibility in its well-being and upkeep. They will be made to be responsive to the local needs and requirements and shall act as centers for all educational activities of the community. The management of each school will be democratized and run with the participation of the community, the teachers, the students and the relevant government institutions. (Transitional Government of Ethiopia, 1994, pp. 16–17).

In Asian developing countries, like Singapore, based on the report from SEAMEO-INNOTECH on the Challenges of Education in Southeast Asia, it was emphasized in the section on addressing education equity that it is very important to strengthen partnership with community, private and business sectors. This will help minimize the gap between education and the world of work.

Ministry Of Education in Singapore, like in other countries, recognizes the importance of involving schools, parents, community and industries as partners in education. Efforts have been made to involve the various stakeholders at the Ministry and school levels in most developing countries, it is widely recognized that if pupils are to maximize their potential from schooling they will need the full support of their parents. Attempts to enhance parental involvement in education occupy governments, administrators, educators and parents' organizations across North America, Australasia, continental Europe, Scandinavia and the UK. It is anticipated that parents should play a role not only in the promotion of their own children's achievements but more broadly in school improvement and in the democratization of school governance. The European Commission, for example, holds that the degree of parental participation is a significant indicator of the quality of schooling. ^{1.2} In England, the Government's strategy for securing parental involvement was first set out in the 1997 White Paper, 'Excellence in Schools'. The strategy described included three elements (a) providing parents with information, (b) giving parents a voice and (c) encouraging parental partnerships with schools (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FINDINGS

1. DEMOGRAPHIC

Kampong Cham

Kampong Cham province is located at the eastern part of Cambodia. It is divided into 16 districts and each district has different communes. The main occupation of the families within the five communes is **farming**. Most of these farmers work on other's farms because they do not have their own land. The main issue in this district / communes is poverty or lack of source of income. There are 779⁴ primary schools in the province and six schools were included in this study: **Phnom Del, Bateay, Cheung Prey, PhaAo, Chelea and Cheung Chnok**. These six schools are located in Bateay District. Each of the schools has 2 to 3 classes for each grade level. The total number of enrolled students in the six schools is 3,809⁵ with 90 teachers to teach them. The six schools have no problem of teacher shortage. Each class has one teacher and in general, the average number of students for one teacher is 42.

Kampot

Kampot is a province on the southern part of the country with 8 districts. Each district consists of communes or villages. Three communes were included in this study. In each commune, the two main occupations of the families are farming and fishing. According to EMIS 2008-2009 there is 298 primary schools in this province. The three schools that are included in the study are **TreyKosh, Ang Sophy and Raksmeay**. The total number of students enrolled in the three schools is 1508. Each grade level

⁴ The figures on numbers of primary schools in each province were based on the Education Statistics and Indicators 2008-2009 of EMIS

⁵ See Table xx in Annexes for detailed statistics from school records

has one or three classes and the same number of teacher. In Ang Sophy Primary School, the average number of students for one teacher is 55.

Battambang

Battambang province is located in the northwestern part of Cambodia. It has 13 districts and each is divided into communes. This study covered five primary schools in Wattamin commune namely: **Slor Kram, Kampong Chlong, OsrolaoLek, Anlong Lvea and BouKana**. These five schools have a total number of 1571 students enrolled for school year 2008-2009. Each grade level has 1 to 2 classes with a good student-teacher ratio. In Kampong Chlong, the average number of students for one teacher is 18. In the commune, the main occupation or source of income of the families is farming.

2. PARENTS PERCEPTION ABOUT THE CURRENT QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Education for All goals and development works in education sector are all talking about gearing towards quality education for all. However, in sub-national level, it is important to know and have a common understanding of what is quality education in order to be effective in promoting it.

This section analyses the different perceptions and views of parents on the current quality of education in Cambodia. While institutionalized educational policies⁶ of participation created by MOEYS are new, Cambodian communities, despite 25 years of political turmoil, have traditionally provided support to schools by advocating for community participation and involvement in education. The underlying argument of the study is that, Cambodia is now recognizing the high significance of the community participation and what it can contribute to further improve the quality of education.

The research team surveyed and interviewed parents (a total of 600 households) for each province having 200 household-respondents that were surveyed. It appears that most household-respondents' opinion when asked about their perception on the

⁶ Child Friendly School Policy, December 2007, Education Law 2007, ESP/ESSP 2009-2015

quality of education in their community, they perceived it as **good** such as Kampot with 55%, Kampong Cham with 42%, and Battambang with 41%. Categorically speaking, good quality of education on the basis of household-respondents' perception is that, their children are able to learn basic knowledge, skills (able to read, write, count) and develop positive attitude and behavior.

2.1 Opinion on Current Quality of Education

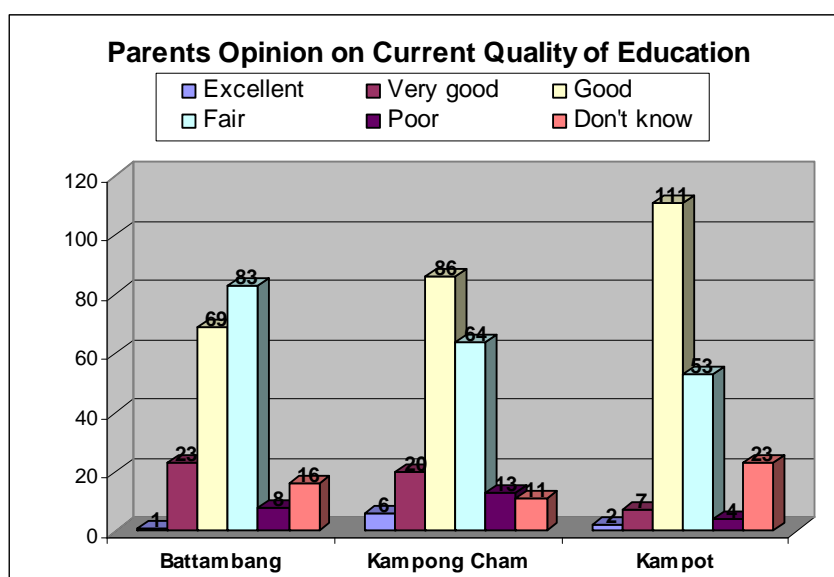


Figure 1: Parents Opinion on Current Quality of Education

Category	Battambang	Kampong Cham	Kampot	Total	%B	%KC	%K
Excellent	1	6	2	9	1	3	1
Very good	23	20	7	50	12	10	4
Good	69	86	111	266 (44%)	34	42	55
Fair	83	64	53	200 (33%)	41	32	26
Poor	8	13	4	25	4	7	2
Don't know	16	11	23	50 (8.33%)	8	6	12
	200	200	200	600	100	100	100

Table 3: Breakdown on Parents Opinion on Quality of Education

Based on the report, two of the primary contributing factors in high repetition were the low parental, community participation, and inefficient school administration.

Communal advocacy of the importance of primary education is hampered by parental need for their children's labor. Seasonal withdrawal of children from school to the farms is increasing as poverty deepens in families and homes. In some cases, older children, particularly girls, are kept at home to care for younger siblings. These practices have profound effects on pupil enrolment, repetition, promotion and drop out rates, and related indicators of school access and quality.

The supervisory skills of head-teachers are limited, *the relationship between school and society and family is weak* and the frequency of regular school inspection is low owing to poor financing of the inspectorate. It is hoped that the MoEYS's ongoing national programme of training school principals and cluster heads in Information-based School Management skills will improve performance.⁷

The analysis of the primary subsystem indicated that although there have been remarkable structural improvements since 1990, primary education in Cambodia has yet to attain a fair share of its ambitious EFA propositions: there is a high level of cooperation between MoEYS and its education partners NGOs, and IOs, but a lower level of communication with the community and parents.

In 2007, as a response to those major issues on community and parental participation in education, MOEYS approved the Child Friendly School Policy and Programme, such that it emphasized community participation as a major area of concentration. Its core activities include collection of children's work for student portfolio and exhibition for community, social activities/mobilization for interest of community, student council and strategies by which school helps families and communities.⁸

Although it was less than 50% of the total household-respondents gave their perception on the quality of education above fair, evidently, the results of the survey still showed (see figure xx) that out of 600 household-respondents, 266 or 44% said

⁷ Education For All 2000 and Beyond: An Assessment Report

⁸ Child Friendly School Policy, 2007 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

that the quality of education is “good”, particularly in the province of Kampot followed by Kampong Cham and then Battambang. On one hand, still 8.33% also believed that the kind of education of education their children are getting is “very good,” specifically in the province of Kampong Cham. On the other hand, about 8.33% of those that were surveyed were not able to provide a clear answer on what they think about the current quality of education their children are receiving.

Based from the statistics, it means that programme and policies of the MoEYS are making significant impacts in trying to improve the quality of education through community and parental participation. That being said, communities and parents at least in the target areas where the survey was conducted, revealed that MOEYS has gradually achieved part of its EFA goals by keeping the communities constantly informed of plans, policies and purposes of activities in education; devising means and modalities of establishing a two-way healthy relationship between the Ministry and the school on the one hand, and the community, on the other; for example, giving and receiving feedback to and from the communities and keeping school programme and projects in tune with the real needs of the communities and the society at large.

2.2 Household Attending School Development Meetings

Part of the strategy that the schools involve the community in school development programs is by conducting meetings with the parents. Usually, the meetings are done twice a year; first at the beginning of the school year and second before the end of the school year. The meeting is used as a venue for the school administrators to collect ideas and suggestions from parents on how to further improve the learning conditions of the children and also to inform and orient the parents of any new developments set forth by the MoEYS. The meetings are usually held in primary schools.

Combining the attendance of household-respondents for both school and community meetings, Kampot led the highest number of attendees (parents) with a total number of 126 parents, next is Kampong Cham with 108 parents and Battambang with only 70 parents that participated in the two meetings.

The graph below showed (figure XX) that out of 200 households per province, only 35 or 17.5% of household-respondents attended school development meetings in Kampong Cham, 57 or 28.70% in Kampot and 55 or 27.5% in Battambang. However, combined percentage of household-respondents showed only 24.5% that have attended school development meetings. This is an evidence of the extent of parent's involvement in school activities.

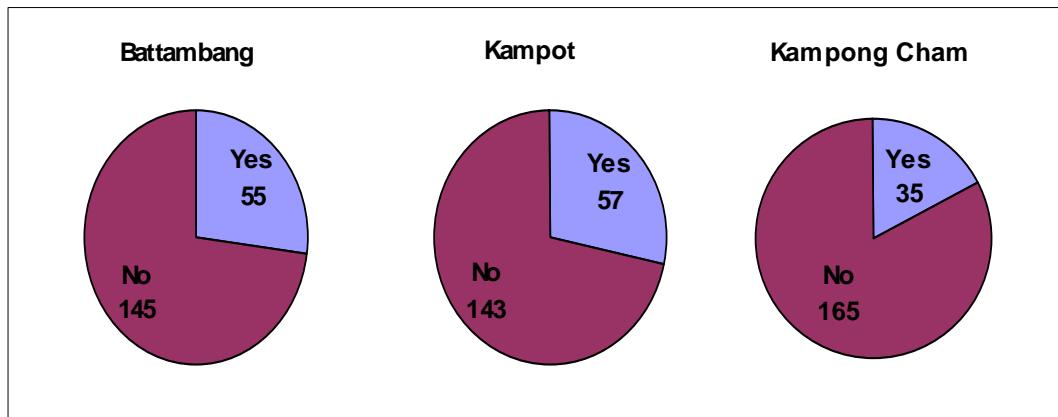


Figure 2: Household attending school development meetings

Based on the graph below, only 26.17% or 157 household respondents attended community meetings regarding school development such as school needs, school development plan and school activities. Among the 3 provinces, Kampot had the highest attendance of household-respondents. According to some household-respondents, they were unable to attend the meeting because they have never been invited to participate neither they have ever been informed about such activity. However, mainly, a vast majority (75.5%) of the household-respondents are busy with their work, especially during planting and harvesting period so they have no time to participate in any school events/activity according to the survey. But for some parents, they migrate to other places to find work according to the commune leaders during an FGD with them.

2.3 Household Attending Community Meetings

Household meetings are held in community when the need arises. Generally, the community meetings are called by commune leaders in cooperation with school for various agenda like orient/inform parents of new MOEYS policy and directives, schools events and other related school activities (e.g. school clean-up day, to support the school in minor construction). However, less than half of the parents that were surveyed often attend the meeting. Primarily, according to parents surveyed, they are busy with their work or taking care of household chores, mending for their young children.

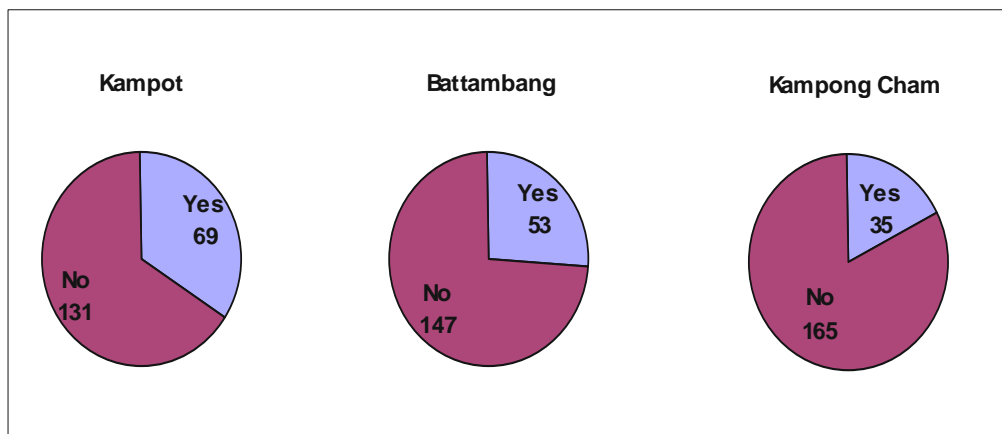


Figure 3: Household attending community meetings to discuss school development

There have been studies that confirmed that the higher the educational attainment of the parents, the more they value education and create opportunities, specifically, for their children's education and future standings in the society. According to a study, it has been found that background variables including family income, family type, family size and **parents' education are determinants of the amount and quality of education children receive over their lifetime** (Jones, 1999; Rosetti, 2000). It is evident that familial and parental factors can either benefit or harm the chances of children receiving an education and excelling in a scholastic environment.

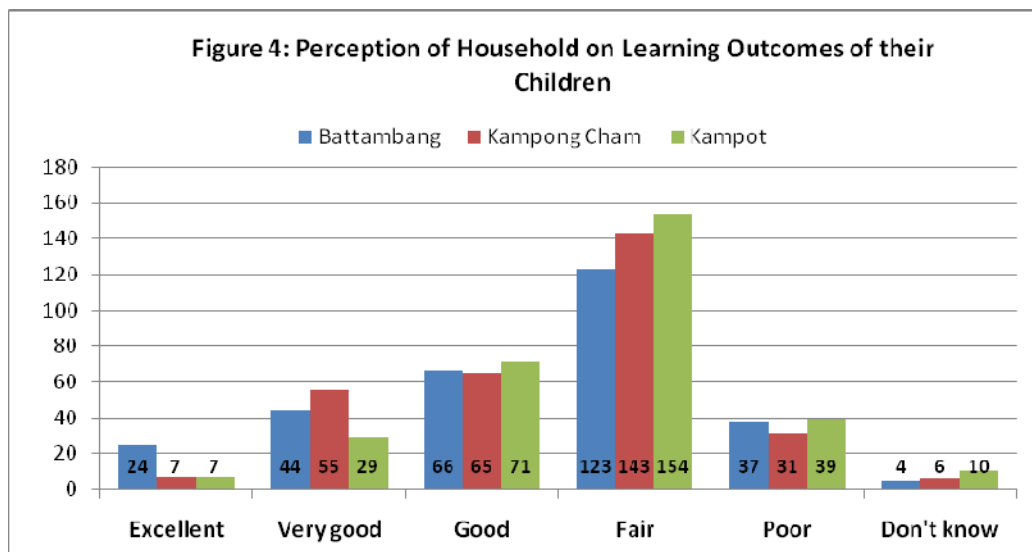
However, support for family and community involvement begins with and must also be initiated by school administrators. Their willingness to recruit parents and community members for school tasks, to listen to parents' viewpoints, and to share

decision-making provides a necessary foundation for all school-family-community partnerships. Williams and Chavkin (1989) noted that administrative support can be provided through funding that is made available from the district office budget; materials, space, and equipment used in promoting family and community involvement; and people designated to carry out programs.

3. PERCEPTION OF HH ON THEIR CHILDREN'S LEARNING OUTCOME

The household-respondents were asked during the survey on their perception or what they think about their children's academic performance in school. Generally, the household-respondents from all three provinces rated their children's academic performance as fair. The result was based from the computation, which resulted to a mean score of 2 for all 3 provinces. Numerical value for each category was given such that 5 being excellent, 4 being very good, 3 being good, 2 being fair and 1 being poor. Although it was not made clear in the study as to where and which factor the fair rating maybe attributed, the result may however be that of the limited support of parents given to their children and/or the lack of learning opportunities provided by the school to the students. Either way, the parents and school must be able to provide holistic support that will help improve the students learning abilities in a given period.

Below, the graph illustrated the perception of the household-respondents on their children's learning outcome per province. One must take into consideration that some household-respondents have more than one child currently studying. This is the reason why there were a total of 895 responses as opposed to the selected 600 household-respondents.



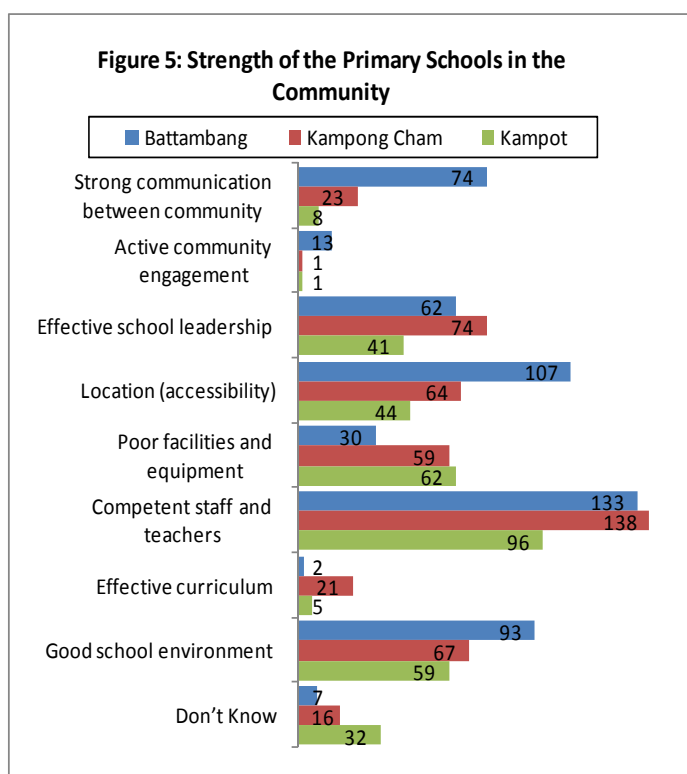
4. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE SCHOOLS

There were several factors that were included in the survey questionnaire in which the household-respondents can choose among the various factors in terms of what they think the strengths and weaknesses of the respective primary schools that their children attend. The graph below showed those factors and those were primarily based from the concepts of the Child Friendly School Program where it ⁹“ recognizes children’s basic rights in a way that includes all stakeholders, especially parents, in the development of a learning environment for students that is characterized by solidarity, freedom, balance, equity, non-violence, and mental, physical and emotional health, that leads to the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and morals and that is focused on enrolling all children in school, and on quality and effective learning according to children’s present and projected future needs.”

⁹ Child Friendly School Framework, 2005

4.1 Strengths of the Primary School

According to the household-respondents from the three selected provinces, **competent teachers and staff was the main strength of their primary school.** Majority of the parents strongly believe that teachers and staff play a vital role in the dynamics of education in school. What teachers know, do, expect and value has a significant influence on the nature, extent and rate of their children's learning



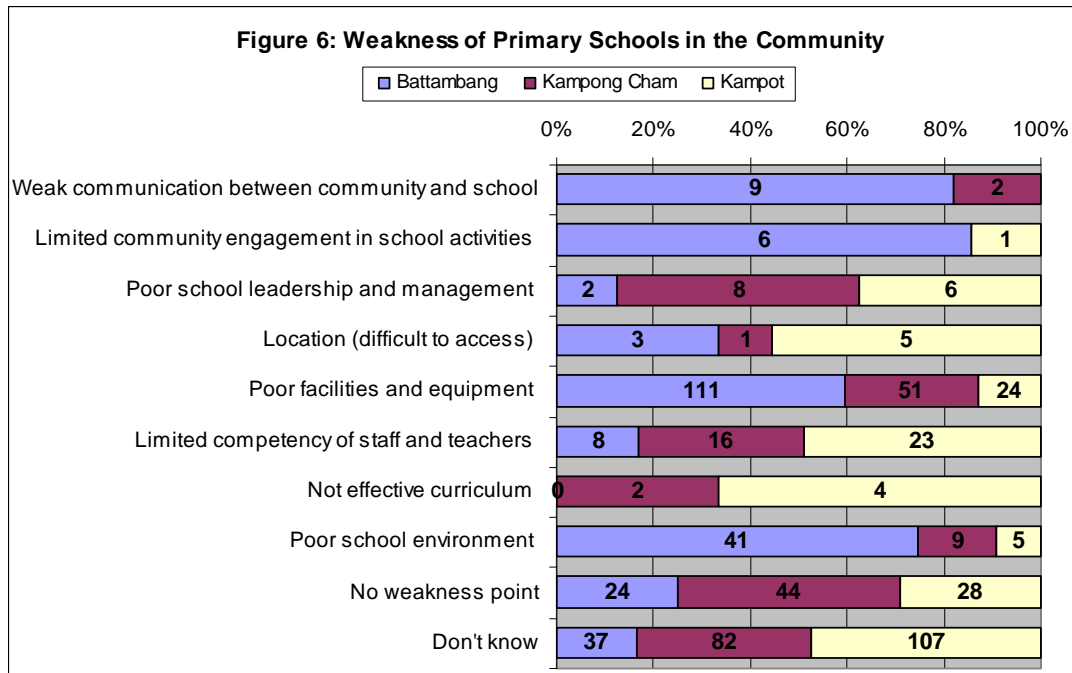
outcome. These principles and perceived role of teachers and staff were confirmed by the parents when asked about the strengths of their primary school per province. Among the three provinces, only Battambang (1%) considered effective curriculum as the least of the primary school's strength. Kampot and Kampong Cham (both have 0.5%) regard active community involvement as the least of their primary school's strength. Again, this may be because, majority of the household-respondents were unaware of the activities in their children's school.

Other responses from a few household-respondents believed that strong communication between schools and community is one of the strengths of their primary school. Previously, it was mentioned that majority, approximately 98% of the household-respondents were not involved in school activities (meeting) because they have not been invited.

In other neighboring developing countries like the Philippines, parents' participation and strong involvement in school development and activities are given high importance. For example, in the Philippines, all public schools have organized Parent-Teacher Association which main purpose is to help in fundraising services, organize school events, and help students in academics through tutoring and assisting as class aids. And these are the same with Malaysia, Thailand or Singapore. In developed countries like USA, schools heavily involved parents in many school and community events, particularly in decision-making process of their children's holistic development (Rodick and Henggeler, 1980)

Community involvement fosters partnerships among schools, families, community groups and individuals. These partnerships result in sharing and maximizing resources. Moreover, they help children and youth develop healthy behaviors and promote healthy families. If the vast majority of the household-respondents fail to provide necessary importance on their participation in school and needless to say, in their children's learning, the quality of education that their children will receive might not be as effective as they expected it to be. All parents must be able to realize and recognize how schools, parents and the community at large should work together to promote quality education, well-being and learning of their children. When parents actively involve themselves and engage community resources, they are able to respond more effectively to the learning-related needs of their children.

4.2 Weaknesses of Primary School



Poor facilities and equipment was the main weakness that was pointed out by household-respondents, except for Kampot with less than 50% in terms of the number of household-respondents from the three provinces that were surveyed that contributes to ineffective learning outcome of their children. Majority of the households surveyed consider that school facilities also seem to symbolize something to the community.

Based on the opinion of household-respondents gathered from the survey about whether or not schools were good, majority of parents seem to associate the quality of the school and the level of their children's achievement, with the quality of the school building and facilities. Policymakers should never underestimate the impact of "pride of place" on students or the community. An attractive school is a source of pride and generates good will for public education. Historically, the assumption has been that as long as the basic physical requirements of the school building are met—minimum standards for classroom size, illumination, and space, - the child's learning depends in large part on pedagogical, psychological, and social variables. ***In actual, the***

research demonstrates that buildings are much more than mere preliminary requirements for the learning process. Factors that can affect learning are many and varied. Chapman and Adams, 2002. Categorically, a good quality education also entails the academic programme, curriculum, instruction, co-curricular activities,, support services, qualified personnel, availability of facilities and equipment and school-community relations, J. Palma, 2002.

By observation, parents that were surveyed do not seem to really have any clear idea on what defines quality education for their children. That is why for Kampot (53%) and Kampong Cham (41%), the household-respondents are unable to identify if their schools even have weaknesses.

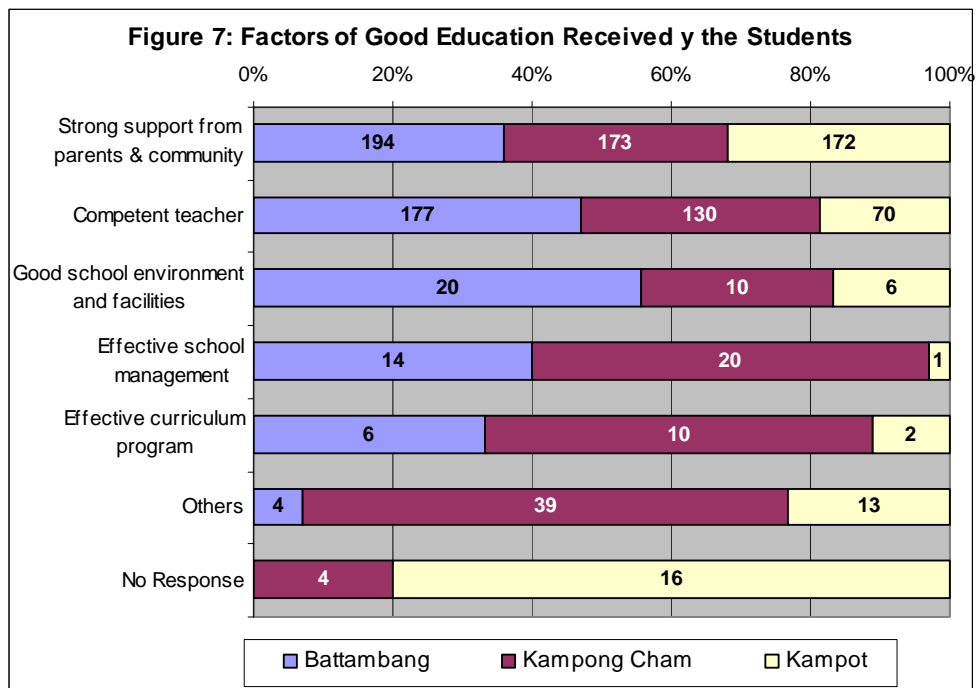
5. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO GOOD QUALITY EDUCATION

The majority of the household-respondents in the three provinces believe that their children are getting good education at present due to **strong support from parents and community** as well as having **competent teachers** in school as was shown in the previous table (refer to table 3, figure 4) on the strengths of the school. The parents acknowledged that it is important for them to support their children in their learning endeavors. According to them, support from parents should be translated into: parents guiding their children and reminding them to study at home and do their homework, help and guide their children with their homework, remind them most of the time to study their lesson, and encourage, and motivate their children to study hard to become a good student and inculcate in them the value and importance of education.

This only means that, those parents think of themselves as role models for their children each and every day. The level of parental support and encouragement directly influences student motivation and feelings towards learning. The home environment that a child is a part of is also crucial to their academic achievement. A series of previous investigations by Caldwell, Bradley and Elardo has revealed a strong relation between aspects of a child's home environment and their intellectual and

language development during their first three years. Findings of their study showed that there is evidence that children's early cognitive development is associated with such family environment factors as the language stimulation available to the child, responsiveness of parents, emotional support given by parents, number of stimulation toys and objects available, extent to which the home is organized and safe, and the variety of out-of-home experiences provided to the child. Such findings are in keeping with Piagetian (Jean Piaget) notions about development of sensorimotor and pre-operational thinking, theories of attachments, Erickson's theory of psycho-social development and theories of intrinsic motivation, (Bradley, et. Al 2005)

Children model their parents' behavior and are likely to share many of the same views towards issues such as education as their parents. Furthermore, parents are the main support group for their children when they are having trouble in school or any other problems, and the level of encouragement students receive from their parents' affects much more than their academic achievement. The household-respondents also put a lot of trust and confidence to teachers' competency on how it can become a factor or contributor to acquiring good education for their children.



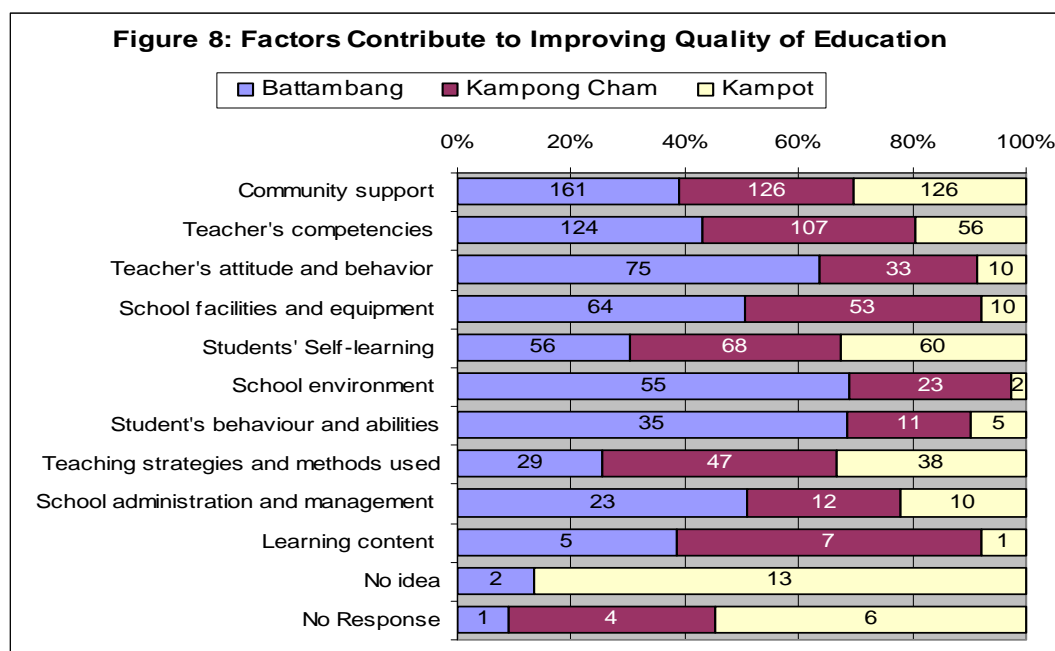
As for the teachers, in order to build and develop a relationship of trust with the parents, a teacher's first contact with parents is crucial. A relatively simple action; contacting each parent during the first week of school, to let parents know how their child is adjusting, can set the stage for a year of communication and collaboration. According to a research study on teachers' responsibilities in the parent-teacher partnership by Karol A. Keyes, while the value of the home/school partnership is universally accepted, it is not always easy to promote or maintain. As we have moved from small communities with intimate connections to a very diverse mobile culture, the increasing complexity of relationships, roles and functions has often complicated the collaborations. The research paper also focused on the needs to be a two-way dynamic to work, "teachers are really the glue that holds the home/school partnerships together" (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999, p. 36).

Most teachers think about having a good relationship with parents. However, just as images of teaching and learning environments vary, so do images of "good" parent-teacher relationships. At one end of the spectrum, the image of a good relationship is an effective separation of roles and functions between home and school, an optimal social distance combined with mutual respect. The family meets the school's expectations efficiently, and the school effectively educates the child without undue demands on the home (Henry, 1996; Epstein, 1995; Powell, 2009; Lortie, 2005). At the other end of the spectrum is the image of the school functioning as an extended family, a more open system. Family and school intersect around the life of the child (Powell, 2009; Galinsky, 2007; Taylor, 2005).

There were some teachers who were interviewed that communicated with the parents when a need arises such as: following up with some parents regarding matters that directly concern their children, (e.g. in cases where the child is absent, late, or have poor academic performance). Evidently, this is one good example on how both teachers and parents can work together in order to acknowledge their care for the child and the school.

6. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The two major factors from the graph below showed, among the list that contributed in improving the quality of education according to the household-respondents. The household-respondents from the 3 provinces chose **community support** (413 household-respondents out of 600) as the major factor that contributed to improving the quality of education. Second in the ranking was **teacher competency** (287 household-respondents out of 600). Those two factors appeared to be consistent in terms of their view on the quality of education and the strength of their respective primary schools. This may mean that, the majority of the household-respondents acknowledge the roles they must play in attaining a positive learning outcome of their children. While it was mentioned that the parents support their children by reminding their children to do their homework and/or study their lessons, it is also significant for parents to consider engaging themselves in school activities (i.e. school development planning, ceremonies or relevant events and meeting).



More importantly, parents should be able to engage themselves to become a part of the decision-making process in the school development and activities. Involved

parents are also setting a good example for their children. Parents' involvement in school demonstrates the importance of school and education. This message will influence their child's attitude toward school throughout their child's educational journey. It is important to find the right outlet for a parent's participation.

Parents play key roles as educational stakeholders. Parents' primary objective is the assurance that their children will receive a quality education, which will enable the children to lead productive rewarding lives as adults in a global society (Cotton and Wikelund, 2001). Parents bring a valuable quality to the educational experience of their children because they may better understand their own children and can influence significantly student behaviors such as time management and study habits, eating practices, and their personal safety and general welfare. Parents as educational stakeholders provide additional resources for the school to assist with student achievement and to enhance a sense of community pride and commitment, which may be influential in the overall success of the school. For instance, parent involvement with their children's educational process through attending school functions, participating in the decision making process, encouraging students to manage their social and academic time wisely, and modeling desirable behavior for their children represent a valuable resource for schools across this nation, according to Cotton and Wikelund. In addition, parents have the right and the responsibility to be involved in their children's educational process (Department for Education and Children's Services, 1996). Legislation such as Public Law 93-380 encourages and enhances parent involvement in their children's education (Essex, 2005).

Parents are very important stakeholders to the educational decision making process. As suggested by Essex (2005), many parents' decisions on educational issues are significantly influenced by their values and beliefs rather than school law. In addition, each geographical area is subject to present different beliefs and values. Therefore, the parent's position on the nativity scene may be dependent on his or her value system or the area he or she lives.

It is a given fact that teachers play a vital role in the learning outcome of their students. Their knowledge, skills and experience (which make up their competencies) in this case, are given a lot of weight by the community and the parents as well, since teachers spend most of their time with the children. Teachers can also make or break the trust and confidence of a certain child or of the parents by how much they are able to demonstrate and translate learning into the child's capabilities. And according to the report from The Education Sector in Cambodia, it was stressed that, “ ***the most important factor in improving the quality of students learning is the quality of the teacher***” A Diagnostic Review for ESP/ESSP 2009-2013 (Quinn, 2009).

7. GUIDANCE AND PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

7.1 Family Members Providing Support on their Children's Studies

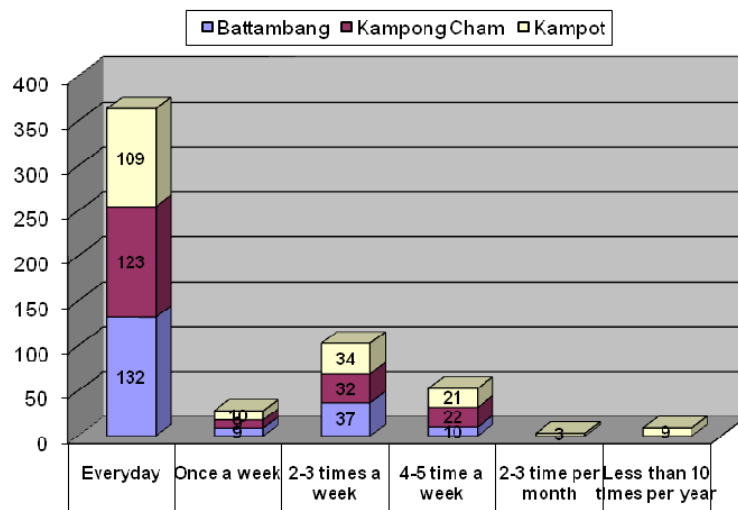


Figure 9: Frequency of family members in providing support for children's studies

The graph above illustrated that 364 or 60.67% of the total number of household-respondents or members of the family, whether parents, siblings or relatives frequently provide support on their child's studies. Again, the support categorically implies reminding the children to do their homework, study or review their lessons (e.g. when there are questions or lessons that their children don't understand) and to tell them to always be a good student by being respectful and

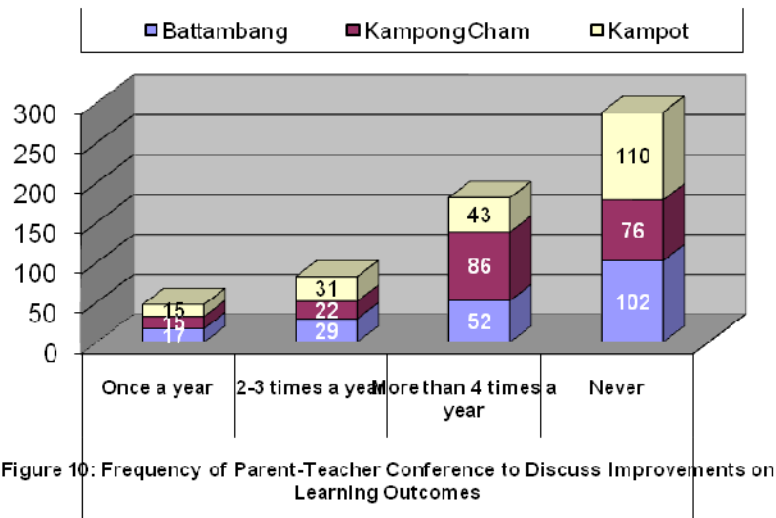
polite to elders and their teachers. Although this kind of support is not suffice to affect the entirety of the academic achievement of the child, it can be regarded as one step forward for those members of the family in engaging themselves in their child's learning.

However, it is not enough that the members of the family especially the parents only limit themselves in reminding their children to do their homework and study their lessons. More importantly, parents should be able to also guide their children while they study or even better, teach and facilitate their learning – particularly during the early formation years (0-6 years old). The limited level and extent of support that members of the family provided maybe lacking due to some significant factors: their educational background and occupation.

Majority of the parents of the children only reached either grades 8 and 9 while the others cannot even read or write. This is one big challenge if we are to encourage parents to involve in their children's learning. As regards to the main source of income, 458 or 76.33% of parents' work as farmers (this does not necessarily mean that those parents own the land they farm). In many cases, most household-respondents are hired only to farm the land they till. This however, make the parents spend most of their time in the farm field, and when at home, parents are either tired or still have to do some domestic work (e.g. cook food, wash clothes, clean the house, etc.). For this reason, parents are unable to follow-up thoroughly on their children's learning. In some cases, children are even asked to assist their parents in domestic work or household chores.

7.2 Parent-Teacher Meeting on the Learning Outcome Improvements of Children

The graph below showed that 288 or 48% household-respondents out of 600 never meet with their children's teacher and 181 or 30.17% household-respondents meet with the teacher at least more than four times in a year to discuss about their children's learning outcome but does not necessarily imply that the parents with the teacher deliberately.



The reason primarily given by the household-respondents was because of their work and the idea that it is not necessary for them to entail themselves in their children's learning outcome (e.g. academic achievement, participation in extra-curricular activities in the school of their children).

In retrospect, the household-respondents are unable to provide time with regard to their children's academic progress or concern in the school, (if there is any); like children having some difficulties coping with school environment, interest and motivation, and addressing those concern of their children with the teacher.

Yet again, this kind of pressing issue was mentioned in section 1.5.1, where the household-respondents are pre-occupied with their farm work and do not fully recognize the value of meeting with the teachers to talk about matters regarding their children's learning. But some parents are able to informally meet with their children's teacher since both the parents and the teacher are living in the same community. If community engagement should play a role in the positive learning outcome of the children, both parents and teachers must find a way to establish ¹⁰mechanisms in order to effectively communicate with each other.

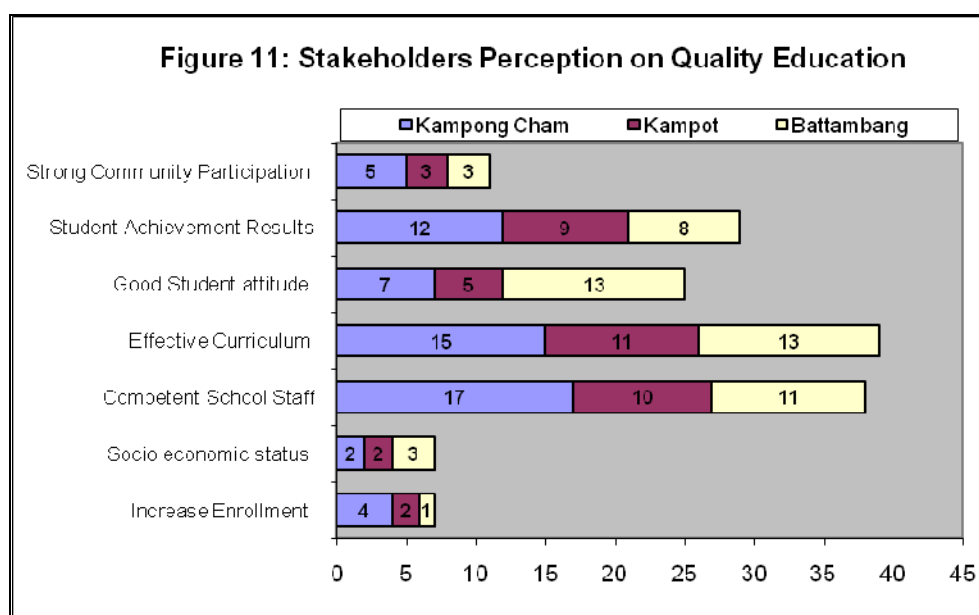
¹⁰ See recommendation Chapter XX p. XX

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

1. STAKEHOLDERS PERCEPTION ON MEASURING QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Quality education can be measured and define in so many ways depending on the context and perception of each stakeholders. According to UNICEF document “Quality Education for All”, there are five general dimensions that can help in understanding quality education: what learners bring, learning environment, content, process and outcomes. These dimensions include what goes on inside and outside of schools and what could it bring for the future. This section aims to identify a common perception among the different stakeholders (teachers, school management, PoE/DoE, and students) on what is quality education. This is important to understand what each stakeholder expects in order to motivate them in improving the quality of education to achieve the goal of quality education for all.

Seven indicators were developed to identify and categorize the responses of each focus group discussion. The indicators were based on the Education Sector Strategic Plan document in measuring quality education in Cambodia. Figure 11 shows that majority of the stakeholders from each province reported Effective Curriculum as a vital measurement of the quality of education.



The groups specify curriculum as good learning environment, good facilities and enough learning materials. Very few groups mentioned content of curriculum, teacher-student ratio and number of class hours.

Quality education is also measured by the stakeholders in terms of the competency of the teachers and school staff in teaching the students and managing school activities and the learning environment. In each province, competency does not include skills or capability alone; it is accompanied by good attitude. Only few groups consider strong community involvement as an indicator of good education. The following chapter differentiates the specific perception and valuing of each province on measuring quality of education.

A. KAMPONG CHAM PROVINCE

In Kampong Cham province majority of the group stakeholders consider **competent school staff** as the main indicator of quality education. Competency not only comprises of capacity and skills but respondents consider attitude as an important factor as well. According to the groups, good quality education is achieved by having teachers who are committed to their teaching, effective in providing knowledge to the students, capable of developing learning materials and keen to continuously improve their technical capacity.

Teachers, school management and PoE/DoE groups consider student achievement results as vital in assessing quality education. Good result of student' exams and high learning outcomes are specific indicators that the students have received good education. Good result means that students increased or gain knowledge and skills in reading, writing and numeracy. School management and teachers believe that quality education can also be measured through the positive changes on the attitude of the students towards learning and studying. Students who are receiving good quality education are capable of putting into practice what they learn from school and can study on their own with little help and reminder from their parents. However, for the students who participated in the focus group discussions,

they consider good learning environment, easy access and location of the school, and enough facilities and learning materials as essential parts of the curriculum. One group of students said: *“We like going to our school everyday because it has nice trees for shade, beautiful gardens, playground and big space where we can play with our friends and read book.”*

B. KAMPOT PROVINCE

Students, teachers and PoE/DoE who participated in focus group discussion believe that **effective curriculum** is one of the most important indicators in evaluating quality education in Kampot. Students, specifically, think that good school environment that is conducive for study and learning as well as good facilities are the specific markers for effective curriculum. Classrooms in good condition, accessible library, enough desks for students and enough learning materials are facilities that they consider important in terms of learning and motivation. Other groups such as teachers, school management and PoE/DoE considers good teacher - student ratio in the class and effective implementation of the Child Friendly School as important measures for effective curriculum.

Student achievement result is the second most vital measurement of quality education. Students who gain knowledge and skills to enable them to proceed to the next grade level or find good job in the future is the most important indicator of good education. The school should be able to provide them with opportunities to gain knowledge and life skills so that they will become good citizens. Good education can stimulate children to have full capacity to learn and understand.

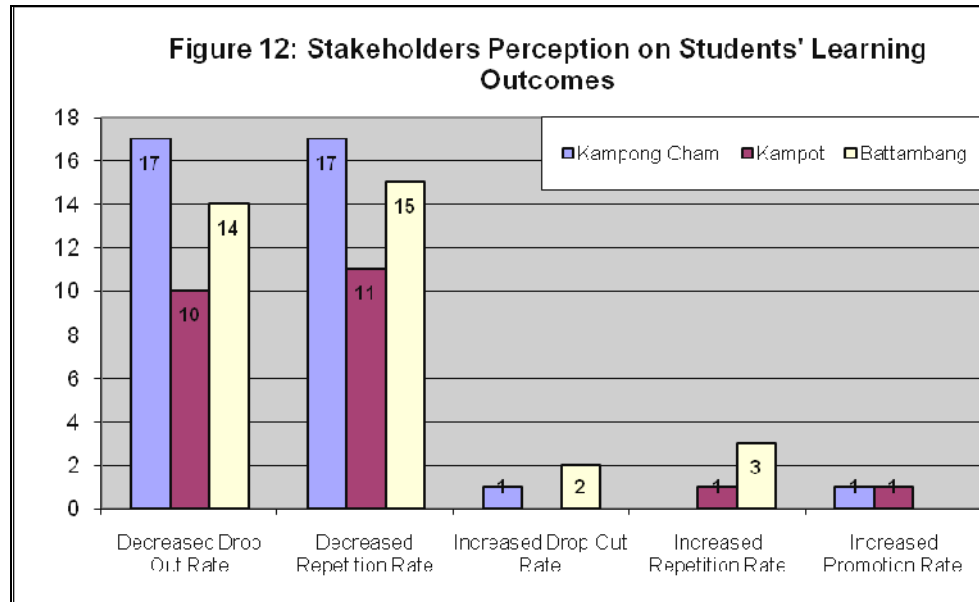
C. BATTAMBANG PROVINCE

Students who participated in the focus group discussions in Battambang think that **good school environment** that is conducive for learning, enough school facilities and school location are important measures of quality education. Schools with good facilities like water supply, toilet, library and safe school buildings are believed to be

able to provide the students with good learning environment. Teachers and school management think that effective use of learning materials and enough number of teachers are also important indicators for effective curriculum. Other groups such as teachers, school management and PoE/DoE believe that good quality education creates positive change on **students' attitude** towards their studies and life in general. It transforms students into respectful, responsible, active, committed and independent individuals. After school, students who have good education can apply their skills and knowledge in improving themselves and their lives.

2. PERCEPTION ON LEARNING OUTCOME RESULTS OF EACH SCHOOL

Learning outcomes are the measurable indicator use to assess the progress and learning of the students after every school year. Majority of the group stakeholders in the three provinces reported a positive perception on the result of students' learning outcomes in their schools. Majority of the groups said that there was a **decrease in drop out and repetition rates** last school year (see figure 12 below). A number of teachers mentioned that good education is not quantity but more of quality. Monitoring the progress of each student and their learning outcomes is important in sustaining and improving students' learning. These outcomes are reported to the parents through school record books, household visits or school meetings.



A. Kampong Cham Province

According to the Provincial Office of Education in Kampong Cham, there was a decrease in repetition rate from 8% on (2007-2008) to 6.4% on (2008-2009) and a decrease in dropout rate from 6% (2007-08) to 2.44% (2008-09) in all primary schools at provincial level. There is also a positive change in terms of promotion rate which increased by two percent from 89% to 91%. All primary schools in Bateay District presented a minimal decrease (8% to 7%) in repetition rate from SY 2007-2008 to SY 2008-2009. The PoE and DoE staffs identified the implementation of the child friendly school as the main factor that brought these positive changes. The teachers on the other hand believe that regular communication and collaboration with parents in monitoring and assessing students' learning through school record books and household visits are factors that contributed to the improvement of the learning outcomes.

B. Kampot Province

The Provincial Office of Education (PoE) in Kampot reported that in general, reports and outcomes from all primary schools indicate a decrease in repetition and dropout rates from SY 2007-2008 to SY 2008-2009. This change is the result of a better

understanding and awareness of the parents and the community on the importance of education in their children's future. As more parents realized the value of education, more children will be enrolling to schools to learn and more students will be attending the classes regularly. In Kampot, the schools are also focusing on the follow up of students and their parents who have poor attendance and unsatisfactory grades through communication letters, household visits or meetings with teachers and village chiefs. Another indicator of gradual success in terms of education in Kampot is the increase in the test result scores of the students in the primary schools.

One of the issues that came up during the FGD was differentiating dropout students from transferred students. There are students who transferred to another school but reported as dropout students in their previous school.

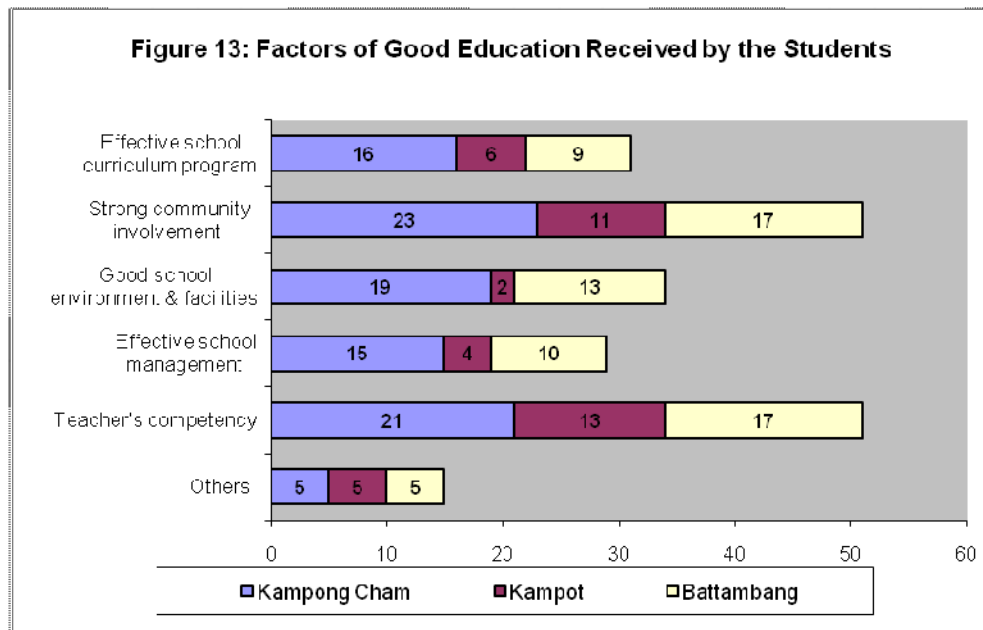
C. Battambang Province

The learning outcomes of the schools in Battambang province in 2008-2009 is better than the previous school year, yet according to the Provincial Office of Education it did not achieve the national plan requirement. The District Office of Education (DoE) said that there was a decrease in drop out and repetition rates in the district due to improved and new teaching techniques and methods used by the teachers that they learnt from trainings. The schools understand the importance of monitoring the students' learning outcomes so that the parents and teachers can identify the areas that the students need to improve. Few of the schools included in the study do not have the normal school record books used to report the students' learning and result to the parents. What the teachers do is post the result in the classroom and announce during the class and it is up to the students if they want to inform their parents about the result.

3. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO GOOD EDUCATION

Majority of the stakeholder groups in Kampong Cham, Kampot and Battambang provinces gave strong community involvement and teacher's

competency as two main factors that contributed to good quality education in their community. In their opinion community, involvement specifically pertains to parents' commitment in sending their children to school, guiding and monitoring children's learning at home and supporting school development activities. School Management and teachers also consider parents' participation in school meetings, enrolment campaigns and ceremonies as indicators of strong engagement of the community.



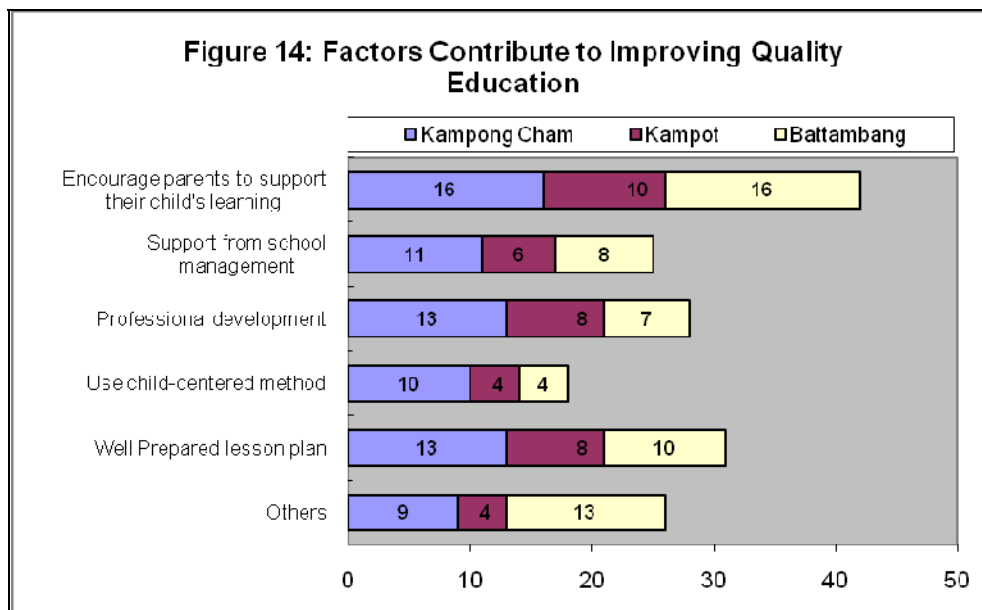
Capacity to prepare effective lesson plan, use of innovative and interactive teaching methods, teach the curriculum effectively, assessing learning outcomes understanding students' learning needs, capacity, academic background and attitude, and develop teaching materials are among the factors included in teachers' competency. Positive attitude and commitment to teaching in terms of regular attendance, punctuality in going to class and monitoring student's progress are also considered very important in improving the quality of education. Aside from these skills, competent teachers also have positive attitude (respect, encouragement, positive feelings) towards students, parents, colleagues and others in the community. They show enthusiasm and initiative in all aspects of professional activities. Moreover, build good communication with parents especially in giving feedbacks about the

students' learning through monthly reports or meetings. These issues came up during the focus group discussion.

Good school environment is another factor considered to have contributed to good education. Majority of the participants from the three provinces define good learning environment as having enough facilities (water supply, latrines, safe playground, gardens, etc) and adequate learning materials (books, storybooks, visual aids, maps, puzzles, etc) that will reinforce effective learning and developing skills among students. Effective school curriculum, specifically use of child-centered method, integrating life skills and health promotion into school activities, good teacher-student ratio and enough updated learning materials were also mentioned as important factors in improving the quality of education.

4. FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The groups in the three provinces have identified other factors that will help to improve the quality of education. Figure 14 above indicates that **encouraging more support from parents on the child's learning and well-prepared lesson plan** are the most frequent responses by the different groups of stakeholders in Kampong Cham, Kampot and Battambang provinces. This shows that the surveyed groups understand the importance of the participation of the parents and the community in the learning of the students and strengthening this factor will help improve the quality of education. More support from the parents means ensuring time management between study and play/work of the students at home and helping children to do their homework and review their lessons at home. Another way where parents can support their child's education is by building good communication and collaboration with teachers and school management to discuss students' learning outcome and school activities.



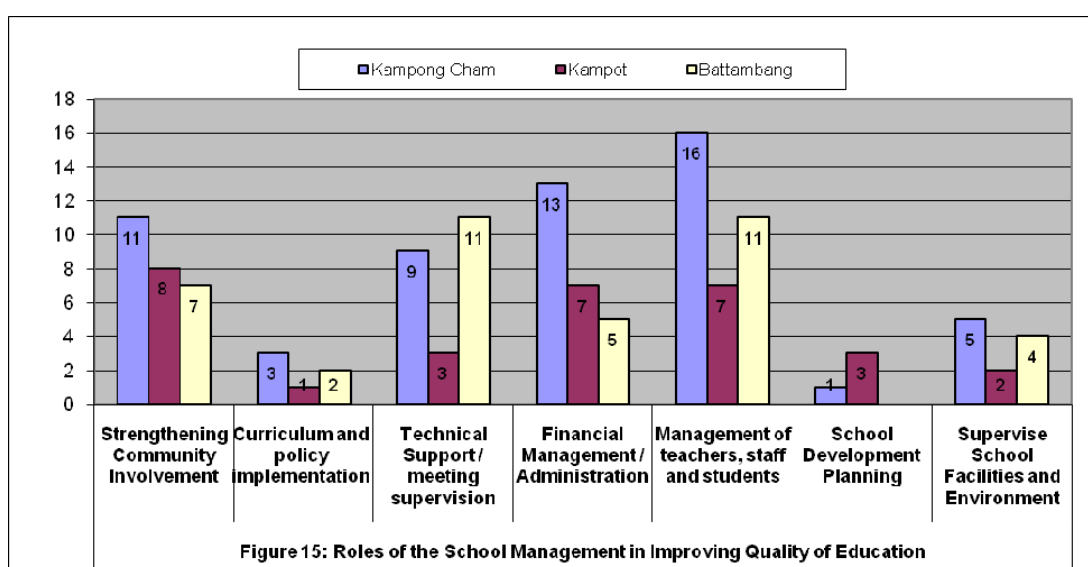
The stakeholder groups also consider well-prepared lesson plan as vital factor in the effective teaching of the curriculum to the students. Teachers should continue attending professional development trainings (ETL and GTL) to improve their skills and methods in teaching such as preparing lesson plan, using and developing effective teaching activities and understanding and implementing MoEYS guidelines / curriculum. Other suggested factors that the stakeholder groups believe to help in improving the quality of education in their communities are: increasing class hours and use of child centered teaching methods and effective school management that monitors the teachers' methods.

5. ROLES OF DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS IN PROMOTING QUALITY EDUCATION

It is important to understand how each stakeholder perceives his or her roles in promoting and improving quality education. The interaction among these groups is vital in achieving the goals of effective learning. This study highlighted the roles of the three important stakeholders in education: the school management, the school support committee and the parents/community. By discussing the roles of these groups, we can identify the depth of their understanding in what they can do to improve quality education.

5.1 Roles of School Management

School management plays an important role in promoting quality of education through ensuring effective teaching and learning in their schools. These responsibilities encompass teachers, students and the community. In this section, seven main roles were developed and used to categorize the responses of each group of stakeholders when asked about the roles of the school management in improving the quality of education.

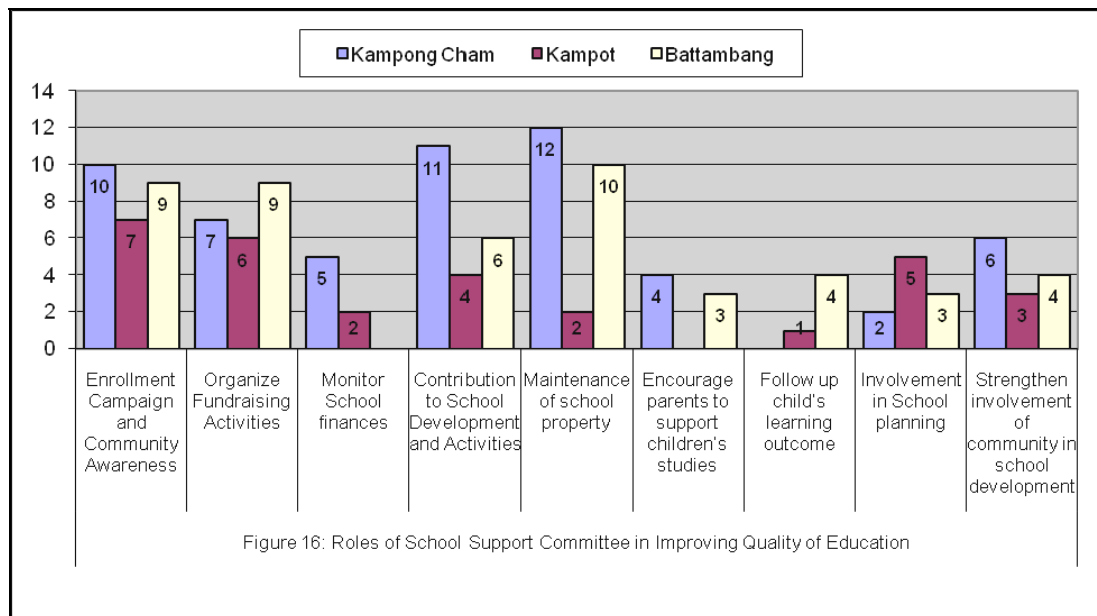


For Kampong Cham and Battambang provinces, the main role of the school management is the supervision of the teachers, staff and students. Supervision pertains to ensuring regular attendance and punctuality, monitoring work performance of the staff and teachers, motivating students to study hard and facilitate good collaboration among teachers, staff and students. Kampot province, on the other hand, believes that strengthening the community involvement is the main responsibility of the school directors in improving the quality of education. This means that school directors should have good communication with the community and the parents and invite them to participate in school activities.

The chart shows that the least identified roles by the groups in Kampong Cham, Battambang and Kampot are organizing and facilitating planning for school

development, and curriculum and policy implementation. These roles are important because planning can guide the schools and stakeholders on identifying issues and solutions to further improve the quality of education provided to the students.

5.2 Roles of School Support Committee



School support committee (SSC) is a vital representative of the community who directly works with the schools in improving and providing good education to the children in their communities. The committees were created to channel ideas and opinions from the communities to the school and vice versa in how to develop and improve the process of learning for the students. Most of the members of SSC who participated in this study reveal that the main motivating factor for them in joining the committee is that they want all children in their community to be able to go to school and receive better education to become good and productive citizens in the future.

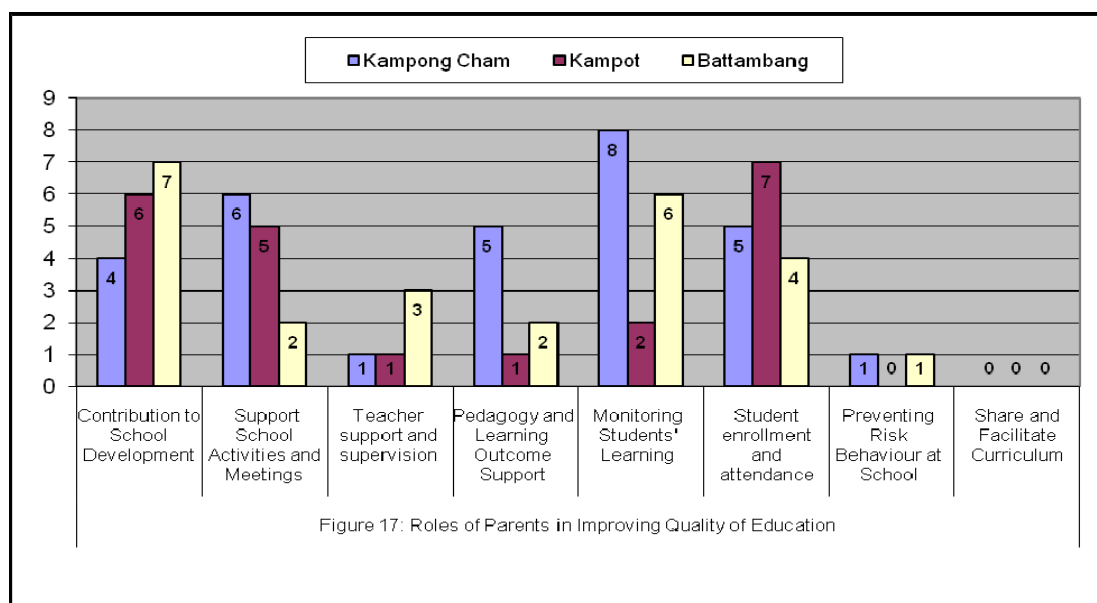
The chart shows that in Kampong Cham and Battambang provinces, the main role of the school support committee identified by the stakeholders (both in practice and perspective) and the SSC themselves is the **maintenance of the school property**. This demonstrates responsibility on the repairs and preservation of school facilities, equipments and the environment. In Kampot province, the main role of the SSC is on

the enrolment campaign and community awareness activities. This means making sure that all children of age 6 and up in the community will enroll in schools. This can be done through constant discussion with the community especially the parents on the importance of education. In Kampong Cham, one of the important tasks identified by the stakeholders is the contribution of the SSC in the implementation of the school development activities. Although few groups have said that they should get involved in the school development planning.

In the three provinces, the role of the school support committee in organizing fundraising activities is important. They have the responsibility of helping the school management and local authority to look for and secure resources both internally and externally through active collaboration and networking with groups and organizations to encourage them to support the school activities.

The study shows that there is limited awareness among stakeholders in terms of the role of SSC in broader areas such as participation and involvement in terms of decision-making and planning school development, and monitoring school finances and expenses.

5.3. Roles of Parents and the Community



Based on the Child Friendly School and according to the stakeholders responses, this study identified 8 general roles for the parents in improving quality education in their community and providing their children with opportunity to gain knowledge and life skills that they can use in the future.

The study finds an interesting difference among the studied provinces on their perceived role of the parents in promoting quality education. In Kampong Cham (8 groups) and Battambang (4 groups) province, stakeholders believe that parents are responsible for monitoring and guiding their children's learning at home and helping them with homework if they can. However, in Kampot province only two groups identified monitoring students learning as the role of the parents while 7 groups prioritize parents' role in improving students' enrolment through their commitment in sending their children to school regularly. This shows that stakeholders prioritize the parents' roles on activities outside of the school.

Although few groups think that parents and teachers should work together in providing better quality education to the students, the reality says otherwise. Some teachers still think that some parents are not interested to engage in their children's learning.

A. Kampong Cham Province

In Kampong Cham province, parents are the main actors in improving students' learning at home or outside of school. Only four groups mentioned support and contribution (monetary and labor) to school improvement as the role of the parents. Most of the stakeholders in this province proposed more roles that the parents should be playing in terms of providing better quality education to their children especially in terms of involvement with the school activities. One local authority group stated that parents should be involved in decision making in school activities while other groups said that they should actively involved in school development planning and implementation.

B. Kampot Province

According to the chart above, the teachers, school management and the local authority in Kampot prioritize parents' role in improving students' enrolment among other roles developed for this study. They believe that the main role of the parents is to send their children to school regularly to improve the quality of education and to contribute and participate in school development in terms of labor, monetary support and ideas. Only few groups of stakeholder mentioned the responsibility of the parents in monitoring and guiding children to study and learn at home.

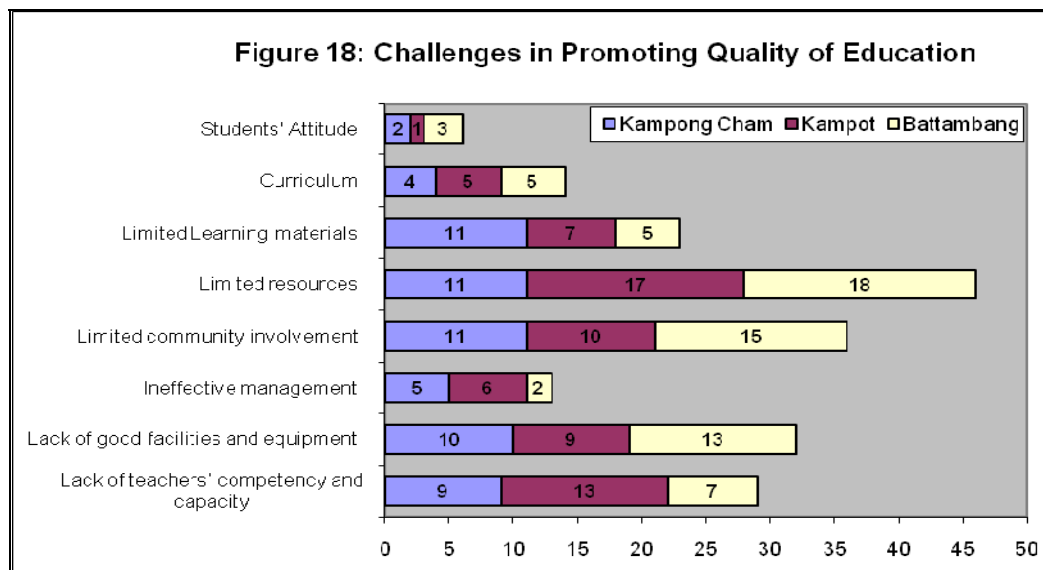
C. Battambang Province

Parents' role in terms of contributing to the development of the schools to provide better learning environment to the students is the most common response among stakeholder groups in Battambang. Contribution not only pertains to monetary donation but also the ideas and services that the parents rendered. They also believe that parent's guidance and support in terms of strengthening study habits of their children at home is another vital responsibility of the parents. Only Battambang groups prioritize parents' role in collaborating and supporting teachers in providing education to their children. Teachers saw the importance of regular communication and discussion with the parents in order to improve students' learning outcome.

6. CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Many interventions and strategies were developed and implemented in Cambodia to improve the quality of education and reach the goals of Education for All. There have been some improvements, policy reforms and strengthening of collaboration between the government and NGOs in education sector to pave the way to reaching the goals. In this study the relevant stakeholders are working hard together to strengthen and improve the quality of education they provide to the children in their communities. Even with the achievements there are still challenges experienced by these stakeholders making it difficult to attain their goal. The research

defined 8 categories of challenges based on the responses of the studied group and the factors that contribute to improving quality education.



6.1 Limited Resources

The chart above shows that in Kampong Cham, Kampot and Battambang provinces, the relevant stakeholders identified limited resources or poverty - lack of income, job, and assets (land, capital, etc), as the main issue that hinders their work in promoting quality education in their communities. This affects the accessibility of the children to have good education because poor families cannot afford to send their children to school. Even in Cambodia where school is free, low-income families still struggle to find extra money to send their children to private class or to buy school materials (notebooks, pens, books, uniform, etc) so that the students can participate actively in class. Due to poverty, most poor parents opted to have their children help out with farm work and household work to supplement the family income instead of sending the children to school regularly.

Limited resources in the three provinces also denote limited fund and support to school development plan and activities and most schools have difficulty asking for help from the community, as most families are poor. In Battambang province,

teachers receive very low salary and to augment their family income they look for a second job. This is becoming a problem because they cannot focus and commit 100% into their teaching job that entails preparing lesson plan, going to class regularly and develop learning materials.

6.2 Limited Community Involvement

Although stakeholder groups in Kampong Cham, Kampot and Battambang acknowledge the importance of the role of parents especially in involving in school activities, reality still needs strengthening and improvement. Limited community involvement is another challenge they encounter in improving quality education in their communities. According to them, most parents have no interest and no time to help and guide their children with their study at home and discuss with teachers about their children's learning. Parents and community are still perceived by the studied groups in the three provinces to have limited understanding on the value and importance of education in their children's future.

6.3 Lack of Good School Facilities

In previous part of this report, the studied groups identified factors that they think are important in quality education and one of them is how learning environment is vital in effective learning. One of the many challenges that these studied schools have in common is their struggle in providing a good school environment that is conducive for learning to their students. This is due to lack of good school facilities such as latrines for girls, water source, desks, safe classrooms, enough materials in the library, gardens and playgrounds. Good school environment needs to be a place where students feel safe and secure to learn. The lack of pre-schools have also been indentified as part of limited school facilities since children below six years old have been attending primary classes. This situation creates problem such as teachers' difficulty in managing classes with different age levels and not having enough time to finish the curriculum on time.

6.4 Lack of Teachers' Competency

Another challenged identified by 29 groups of relevant stakeholders is that teachers in their school still have limited and outdated capacity and teaching methods due to limited capacity building trainings. This is a vital challenge because the teachers are important channel / actor in imparting knowledge to the students. As mentioned earlier in this report, teachers' competency is very important in providing good quality education to the younger generation. Other specific issues are: limited skills in class management where students have different learning capacity, lack of motivation due to low salary, lack of commitment and respect for teaching hours, limited capacity and time in developing teaching materials and teacher shortage.

6.5 Limited Learning Materials

Not enough learning materials for teachers and students hinder the schools in implementing and achieving MoEYS standard in education according to the studied groups in Kampong Cham, Kampot and Battambang. In addition, outdated and insufficient teaching materials are challenges that the teachers are struggling to overcome so that they can effectively teach the curriculum to the students. In some schools in Battambang who have limited lesson books, the students share the books and they take turns in bringing it home to study and do their homework.

6.6 Ineffective School Management

Only 13 groups of stakeholders mentioned ineffective management as a challenge in providing good quality education. School directors in some of the schools have limited management skills, ineffective communication skills and poor time management, which make it difficult to implement school activities and development plans.

6.7 Ineffective Curriculum

In the three provinces, 14 groups identified limited class hours as a challenge especially for the teachers in teaching and finishing the curriculum content effectively within the school year. Other specific issues that contributed to ineffective curriculum are: poor teacher-student ratio, low survival rate, students' performance is poor, difficulty in promoting students with special needs, and high dropout rate during harvest season.

CONCLUSION

Community participation in many developing countries is being mobilized in order to timely respond to the universal goal in education: the Education for All. Within the broader framework of Education for All, the Civil Society Education Fund and Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASBAE) through NGO Education Partnership (NEP) pursued the research study on participation by children, families, and communities that will aid in the effective implementation of Child Friendly School Framework that was clearly stipulated in one of the six dimensions of Child Friendly School Program in order to achieve the desired quality education set forth within the ESP/ESSP 2009-2013. The preliminary survey was conducted to develop a better understanding of family involvement in education - an issue that many educational researchers, teachers, parents, and corporate leaders say is the most important ingredient in a good education.

Over time, implementers and decision-makers of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport were faced with difficult quality issues that required the reinforcement of community involvement. Parents had to understand what quality of education meant to them and how they could influence it; that teachers needed qualifications and training; that curriculum and the language of instruction had to be made relevant to their needs; that relationships with education officials had to be established to obtain pedagogical support and be officially recognized.

The extent of the involvement of the parents and education stakeholders' in promoting children's learning outcome is pivotal. Household-respondents and stakeholders explored the existing contribution of the community in many aspects of the students' education and about how the schools keep them involved. Evidently, it can be told based on the findings that majority of the respondents that were surveyed have increased awareness on the importance of having their children educated and the lifelong positive impact of education it can provide into the lives of their children.

In conclusion, it is evident that a number of initiatives involving the community are taking place, often with the support of international donors and NGOs some of which are modeled on examples from South East Asian experience. Evidence based on rigorous analysis is patchy, but suggests at least that community involvement now exist in schools where parents previously did not have active participation to schooling opportunities and events, and that improvements in the perception on the quality of education their children receives based on the composition of enrolment in these schools are evident partly due to massive enrolment campaigns initiated by MoEYS, as well as to other programs aimed at encouraging children's enrolment in school. Based on the evidence available, it is not, however, possible to determine whether these improvements are attributable to community participation *per se*, or whether government schools in the same location and with the same resources could result in an identical outcome.

Furthermore, concerns are raised about whether community schools established as alternatives to the state system are creating a two-tier system, with limited opportunities for children attending these schools to continue with their education in the state system. As an end in itself, community participation in schooling appears to have resulted in an entrenchment and reinforcement of school-community relations, rather than empowering those traditionally excluded from more genuine aspects of participation.

Referring to the responses gathered from the survey evidence suggests that, of the range of forms that participation can take, in practice it is often mainly confined

to contribution of resources for building and maintenance. However, some community-school models do attempt to involve communities in a broader range of activities in a genuinely-participatory way. Even in these examples, genuine participation in decision-making is most frequently undertaken by men in the community, while women's role is confined to a pseudo-participatory one, in terms of providing their unpaid time for school construction activities, for example. However, it is possible that improvements in access and performance in schooling by school actors as a result of greater community involvement in schooling could have an impact on school-community relations in the longer term, if this is genuinely desired and addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Supportive families and social support within communities contribute to students' success. When children feel valued they are more likely to develop healthy skills, avoid risky behaviors and remain in school. When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnical/racial background, or the parents' education level (Parental Involvement Improves Student Achievement, 2003 and Action steps were updated (2003). The more extensive the parents' involvement, the higher the students' achievement is. Negative student behaviors, such as alcohol and substance abuse, violence, and antisocial behavior decrease as parent involvement increases. Students are less likely to succeed when communities are economically deprived, disorganized, and lack opportunities for employment or youth involvement; when families do not set clear expectations, monitor children's behavior, or model appropriate behaviors; and when schools present a negative climate and do not involve students and their families.

The research study on the perception of the community on the current quality of education suggests the following recommendation to reinforce community involvement:

Actions for MoEYS / Schools / School Districts

- Involve parents and other family members in planning, curriculum and policy development, and decision making related to school development by creating an environment in which they can feel valued and welcome.
- Disseminate information on school reforms, policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools and school goals, and include parents in any related decision-making process.
- Strengthen communication between school staff (teachers and administrative staff) and parents through regular conferences or update meetings about students' behavior, achievements, misbehavior or failure.

Actions for Parents and Communities

- More effort in communicating with teachers and administration staff regarding the child behavior, achievements and progress in school
- Be pro-active in participating in any school activities and decision making activities regarding school policies
- Nurture relationship with teachers for continuous exchange of ideas and support on improving the child's education

Actions for NGOs

- Demonstrate commitment by developing infrastructures that support the school and community, meeting with families and community groups to encourage their support, publicizing innovative models and exemplary programs, and encouraging
- Encourage more active family and community involvement by educating them about its relation to children's academic achievement.

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