Community Involvement in Primary School Governance in Cambodia

－ School support committees －

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Abstract: This study investigates the role of school support committees (SSCs) in primary school governance in Cambodia by addressing three research questions: (a) what are the characteristics of SSCs in primary school governance; (b) to what extent do SSCs become involved in managing their own schools; and (c) to what extent is SSC involvement in school governance related to school outcomes? Through the analyses of the dataset derived from the questionnaire surveys with 229 SSC members and interviews with 75 local stakeholders including SSC members, school principals, and other local educational authorities conducted in the central part of Cambodia, the results of the study indicate that SSC involvement in school governance is moderate, considering the fact that SSCs became more involved in internal school governance affairs beyond conventional financial contribution to schools. Apparently, the imposition of SSCs in school governance through formal endorsement of financial expenditure plans and implementation of school development plans has deepen the role of SSCs in the management of the internal school affairs. However, the survey results of this study found that there are some significant challenges facing school and SSCs regarding the use of school funds. Irregular flow of money and strict guidelines laid down on each priority area may prevent SSCs from any initiative to meet school's priority needs. This study suggests that efforts to improve school funding mechanism may contribute to resolve such negative effects. One way, presumably, is to allow educational authorities at school level, most importantly SSCs, more discretion in how to use school funds.

Key words: Cambodia, primary education, school governance, school support committee involvement

1．Introduction

Community involvement in education has become so prevalent worldwide that it has been referred to as an institutional standard, as many schools encourage community members to involve in children's schooling (Bray, 2001, 2003; Pellini, 2005; Shaeffer, 1992). More recently, educational reform in both developed and developing countries has been accompanied by a shift to local management of schools, which has established new roles and responsibilities for school community (Daun, 2007; Fiske, 1996; Gelsthorpe & Burnham, 2003).

In most countries, responsibility for providing primary and secondary education has resided with central governments. However, a growing number of such countries have transferred this

responsibility to local governments, typically as a part of broader reform to decentralize government functions (Bray, 2003; Daun, 2007; Fiske, 1996). The promise of decentralization lies in giving more voice and power to local stakeholders including community members. By giving more voice and decision making power to these local stakeholders, decentralization can improve educational outcomes (UNESCO, 2007). New programs aimed at delegating power to schools have been introduced or are being introduced in most developing countries. The delegation of selected responsibilities to individual school community is also evident in Cambodia.

Cambodian government's guiding statement of educational policy, the education strategic plan (ESP) 2006–2010 (MoEYS, 2005a), makes reference to the importance of education decentralization. The ESP is based on an assumption of increased involvement of all stakeholders in defining priorities, implementing them and monitoring how effective the programs have been. A subsequent document, the education sector support program (ESSP) 2006–2010 (MoEYS, 2005b), sets out a five-year plan for investment in education and reiterates the commitment to decentralization by stressing the importance of partnership in education between government agencies, NGOs and civil society. Thus, the ESP and ESSP appear to mark a turning point for the MoEYS in educational planning and investment in Cambodia (Turner, 2002). The decentralization of educational decision-making authority from central government to school community generally occurs through the establishment of school support committee (SSC) in each school, which is explored in the section below.

In order to establish a close link among all educational stakeholders at the level of individual schools, it is required for each school to establish a school support committee (MoEYS, 2002). Based on the official guidelines of MoEYS (2002), the roles and responsibilities of SSC are: (a) raising community contributions, (b) strengthening interactions revolving around student learning, (c) making school plans pertinent to children's basic learning needs, (d) preventing pupil repetition and drop out, (e) making decisions on school expenditure, (f) developing plans for purchasing school materials, (g) establishing friendly school environment, (h) monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and (i) supervising the spending of school funds. Based on this legal framework, SSC members have wide-ranging responsibilities from budgeting management to internal educational governance.

Drawing upon a combination of data from questionnaire surveys and interviews, this study investigates the role of SSCs in primary school governance in Cambodia with emphasis on three research questions: (a) what are the characteristics of SSCs in primary school governance; (b) to what extent SSCs become involved in managing their own school; and (c) to what extent is SSC involvement in school governance related to school outcomes?

2. Data and Method
2.1. Sample
Data obtained for this study was collected by the author from March to April 2011 in Kampong Chhnang Province, Cambodia. Kampong Chhnang was selected for its typical characteristics as a rural province which generally reflects Cambodia as a whole. It is worth mentioning about one specific characteristic of education of this province in that the net enrolment of primary school students is relatively high compared to that of the whole country on average and of the capital city, 97.2%, 93.3%, and 91.3% respectively (MoEYS, 2008). On the contrary, the net enrolment of the secondary school students is not so high compared to that in the country on average and much lower than that in the capital city. The figure indicates that students in the rural province do not further their study in secondary schools once they have graduated from primary schools.

To obtain information about SSC involvement practices at school level, the field survey was conducted in five districts of the province. The districts were randomly sampled from a list of all the districts in the province. To develop primary school sample, the author, with the assistance of

provincial and district educational officials, prepared lists of schools with school support committees in the five districts. A total of 65 primary schools were sampled in this study. The sampling strategy adopted for selecting SSC members was stratified random sampling. A total of 229 SSC members were covered in the surveys. Different questionnaires for SSC members and school principals were distributed in each school by the author with three other assistants from district education offices who were familiar with the districts. Each assistant was trained on questionnaire administration after which they conducted approximately five days of on-site data collection in each of their assigned districts. For SSC members, the questionnaires asked SSC members to provide answers regarding their personal background, their frequency of involvement in school activities, as well as their perceptions about their school outcomes.

2.2. Variables

School outcomes, the dependent variable in this study, are measured with two variables: teaching and learning materials and school learning environment. Teaching and learning materials are measured by SSC's responses to the statement: this school provides necessary teaching and learning materials to its students. Responses to this question range from 1=disagree strongly to 2= disagree somewhat to 3= neither agree nor disagree to 4= agree somewhat to 5= agree strongly. For school learning environment, the School Learning Environment Scale by Marjoribanks (1994, 2002) was adopted to assess SSC's perceptions of their school learning environment. From the Marjoribanks' School Learning Environment Scale I selected 12 items that capture different dimensions of school learning environment on the basis of content analysis and empirical evidence. The 12 items were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1=disagree strongly to 2= disagree somewhat to 3= neither agree nor disagree to 4= agree somewhat to 5= agree strongly. With these 12 items, a principal components analysis with a varimax rotation was conducted to classify these 12 items into some meaningful factors. The analysis resulted in two distinct factors which were referred to as learning context and learning process. Furthermore, on the basis of extracted factors scores, these two indices of school learning environment were constructed to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. A composite variable is created by adding the two variables to measure the school outcomes. The variable was treated as a continuous variable in the regression analyses since the distribution of this variable approaches normality with a slight positive skewness (0.66).

SSC involvement is measured with ten variables: developing school improvement plans; attending school meetings; attending school events; involving in fund-raising activities; discussing educational problems; managing and using school funds; disseminating school-related information to parents; providing support to children of poor families; monitoring teachers' performance; and providing skills/training to students. The questionnaire filled out by SSC members was used to assess the frequency of their involvement. Each member of SSCs was asked to estimate how often they got involved in each of the activities. Their responses range from 1= never to 5= always. These variables are included in the regression analysis to predict school outcomes. Data from these field surveys were input and analyzed using SPSS to produce means and frequencies. Finally, the data was processed by using multiple regression analysis.

3. Data Analysis and Findings
3.1. Characteristics of SSCs in Primary School Governance

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of SSC respondents. The characteristics of SSC include sex, age, educational level, and occupation status. As shown in Table 1, the mean age is 56.4 years for men and 51.6 for women. The mean age is relatively high, considering the average life expectancy for a Cambodian is 62 years (UNCEF, 2009). Based on the interviews and observation,

this figure suggests that SSC members tend to be elder and well-respected individual people and some of them also serve in pagoda committees. With regard to the educational level, it is worth noting that SSC members who have received less than primary and who have completed primary education make up more than 83% while the percentage of members with secondary education is merely 17%. These figures indicate that the majority of the SSC members have received little formal schooling. With respect to occupation distribution, 73.3% of the respondents are farmers, 19.6% are self-employed, and only 7.1% are government officials. According to MoEYS statistics, about 88.5 per cent of the 366 of schools in the province of Kampong Chnnang have a school support committee or parental association[1], with a high percentage in districts with remote areas and sparse population such as Kampong Leaeng, Chulkiri, Teuk Phos, Samaki and Meanchey where the need to support local school seems greater (Table 2). The province of Kampong Chnnang is in the mid-range of the country average (88.0 %). The highest percentage of SSCs is in Kep (94.3 %) and the lowest is in Phnom Penh and the province of Pailin, 77.1% and 62.5% respectively[2].

Table 1. Characteristics of the sampled SSC members

	N=229 Mean or percentage
Gender	
Male	84%
Female	16%
Age	
Male	56.4
Female	51.6
Education	
Less than primary	37.8%
Primary	45.8%
Lower secondary	13.8%
Upper secondary or above	2.6%
Occupation	
Farmer	73.3%
Self-employed	19.6%
Government official	7.1%

Table 2. Percentage of SSC Distribution within the districts of Kampong Chhnang

Districts	Number of schools	No. of Schools With SSC	Percentage
Kampong Leaeng	37	35	94.6
Kompong Tralach	59	55	93.2
Chulkiri	27	24	88.9
Teuk Phos	51	45	88.2
Samaki Meanchey	40	35	87.5
Kampong Chhnang	16	13	81.2
Rolea Pa-ir	93	73	78.5
Baribo	43	33	76.7
Whole Province	*366*	*313*	*85.5*
Urban area	16	13	81.2
Rural Area	350	300	85.7
Whole country	*9,431*	*8,296*	*88.0*

Source: MoEYS (Education Statistics and Indicators, 2007/2008)

The survey results of this study indicate that the membership of a typical SSC includes commune chiefs, elders, village leaders, school principals, teachers, villagers, monks, village development committee representatives, women group leaders, and sometimes students (Figure 1). These findings suggest that SSCs include not only the relatively influential and educated persons in the community such as commune chiefs and village leaders but also those of low social economic status, i.e. farmers, despite their low literacy level as indicated earlier in Table 1. Figure 1 shows that villagers are mentioned with a relatively high percentage (18.5 per cent), followed by village leaders (15.3 per cent) and school principals (11.5 per cent). Although villagers were referred to as the dominant group in the committee membership, it is not clear the extent to which parental interests are adequately represented in SSCs. The results further suggest that community authorities such as commune chief and village leaders are also important members and form a larger group of SSCs (about 27%), reflecting the importance of *traditional* leaders for educational initiatives in the community. Based on the interviews with SSC members, the survey results found that about 80% of SSC members say that they represent parents. However, it is again not clear

whether those from low-SES backgrounds can really exert influence over decision making processes on an equal basis. This may link to two elements: first in rural areas, most individuals are involved in farming; second, not all of the committee members are active in the same way and some act more as observers and exert a limited influence on decision making process. The interviews and observation reveal that SSC heads are more active and involved in almost all school affairs.

The majority of the 65 school committees found in the survey of this study has an average of 11 members, with a range between five and 31 members (Figure 2). These SSC members are described as being respected and trusted members of the community. Regarding the selection of SSC members, about 86% of SSC members are elected. However, on average, only about 30 per cent of the candidates are parents attending these elections. The evidence from the interviews with SSC members, school principals and teachers suggests that, in general practice, whoever gets nominated is elected, and in more than 50% of the elections it is the school principal who nominates SSC members. Women involve in just about 67 per cent of the 65 target school committees with the majority of the committees having only one female member. Only 111 or 15.6% of the total number of 715 SSC members found in the surveys are women. Thus, the empirical evidence from this study suggests that female representation in SSCs is still very low. Although women do involve in SSCs, in most schools they are under-represented, a pattern that reinforces the status quo regarding level of gender inequality. The finding of this study confirms the evidence from the study of decentralization and development in Cambodia in 2005 which found that merely 8.5% of women were involved in the elections of commune councilors (for review, see, for example, Blunt and Turner, 2005).
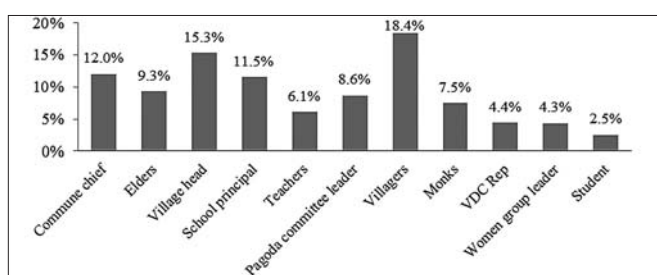

Figure 1. Percentage of Representatives on SSCs

Note: VCD Rep= village development committee representative
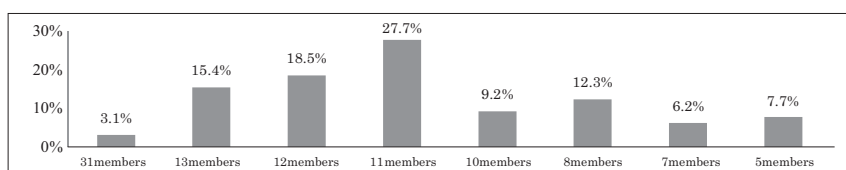

Figure 2. Percentage of SSC members

3.2. Functions Performed by SSCs[3]

Before presenting the results of the analysis, there is a need to elaborate the implication of each activity conducted by SSCs. As mentioned earlier, SSC has a wide-ranging of functions, including enhancing local contributions, attending school events, attending school meetings, and providing skills/training to students etc. Almost all SSCs covered in this study were involved in mobilizing resources for school improvement (i.e. construction, repair, maintenance etc.) by means of holding religious contribution ceremonies (bun phka samki), seeking financial support from rich individual community members or donor organizations inside and outside the community to cover expenses which are not covered by PAP funds such as expensive maintenance and rehabilitation. Although the majority of the target schools requested community contributions, in some cases

school principals were reluctant to admit that they were asking for such contributions because they feared that this was not allowed under PAP funding mechanism. Discussions with SSC members revealed that they were actively involving in collecting contributions from parents and the community. The average value of the contribution was about 5 million riels, equivalent to about US$1,250, with a large variation across schools. Among schools receiving contributions, the average contribution is larger than PAP 2.1 funds[4], although when taking into account schools not receiving these contributions, the overall contribution is actually smaller. Single contributions with values over 100 million riels usually come in the form of school constructions. These big contributions are usually the result of joint support from people in the community and people who used to be part of the community and now live in outside (including overseas). Contribution from the community in the form of labor is also common. However, labor contribution is not included in the calculations.

Regarding attending school events, SSCs are required to attend all festive and ritual events held in school. These events may include school opening ceremony generally held on October 1st, Children's Day on June 1st, Teachers' Day on October 5th, school exhibitions, as well as awarding ceremonies. It is through these public gatherings that SSCs build rapport with and exchange thoughts and ideas about children's education with parents or vice versa. With regard to attending school meetings, schools hold meeting with SSCs, on a monthly-quarterly-semesterly basis, to report on what have been achieved and not achieved. The issues raised in the meetings generally include pupils' absenteeism, irregular attendance, and other behavior problems. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss with SSC members how to best solve these educational problems. Concerning the provision of skills/training to students, SSCs have become involved in offering skills/training to pupils since the implementation of the policy for curriculum development 2005–09. In this curriculum reform policy, a new subject called local life skill program (LLSP) was introduced. Life skills are defined as skills to make decisions based on information, effective communication, intellectual, personal, interpersonal, and vocational skills, and self-management skills that are essential for leading a healthy and productive life (MoEYS, 2004). The introduction of this life skill program became a significant turning point in the promotion of SSC involvement in teaching skills that are relevant to life in their village.

Results of the analysis indicate that SSC involvement is moderate, considering the fact that SSC becomes more involved in internal school governance affairs beyond physical contributions such as money, materials, and labor to schools, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Functions of SSCs perceived by Principals and SSC members

Functions of SSCs	Principals	SSCs
Developing school improvement plans with school personnel	4.49	4.47
Attending school meetings	4.01	4.39
Attending school events	4.22	4.23
Involving in fund-raising activities for school improvement	3.74	4.01
Discussing educational problems with academic staff	3.76	4.00
Managing and using school funds	4.01	3.92
Communicating information from school to parents	3.94	3.90
Providing support to children of poor families	3.68	3.82
Monitoring teachers' performance	3.92	2.77
Providing skills/training to students	3.22	2.73
Other functions in relation to school affairs (home visits, activity reports)	2.78	2.22

According to SSC members, the most important involvement activity performed by SSCs is developing school improvement plans with academic staff, which is one of the intended focuses of the government's reform policy of increasing community involvement in internal school affairs. In this regard, it is widely expected that school planning with local community members can lead to increase the chances of plans being implemented. Bray (2001), in relation to educational planning at the local level, pointed out that the involvement of local community bodies is seen as a way to improve relevance and accuracy of planning. The empirical evidence from this study suggests that

most SSC members recognized a need for suitable planning to fit local school needs. That is the reason behind their prioritized involvement in school improvement planning. In addition, SSCs generally consider attending school meetings, attending school events, assisting in fund-raising activities, and discussing educational problems with academic staff as their other priority tasks. The results of the analysis of the data derived from school principal questionnaire survey support these findings. In other words, the results are not biased in the sense that SSC members demonstrated a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in managing their own schools, as school principals also listed the most important functions in almost the same order (Table 3). These findings indicate that SSC members are substantially aware of their role and responsibilities for managing their own schools. The finding from this study of more active involvement of SSC members in school governance affairs supports the ideas that community members have had new roles and responsibilities in managing their own schools which were formerly the exclusive domain of educationally specialized administrators (for review, see also, Keng, 2009; Pak, 2004; Shoraku, 2008).

3.3. Effects of SSC Involvement on the Perceived School Outcomes

Results of the regression analysis of SSC members' perceptions on their involvement to predict their perception of school outcomes yielded an F of 8.510 (P<0.001) and an R of 0.375. The analysis explained 33% of the variation in perceptions of overall school performance (Table 4). Table 5 shows the relationships between SSC involvement and school outcomes. Schools that more often mobilize its SSC members in attending school meetings, monitoring teacher performance, developing school improvement plans, and providing skills/additional training to students show higher level of performance compared to schools which less frequently involve its SSC in these functions.

Attending school meetings has been found to have a positive and statistically significant relationship with school outcomes (r=0.236, p<0.05). Monitoring teachers' performance is positively associated with school outcomes (r=0.294, p< 0.05). The positive finding indicates that SSC involvement in the monitoring of teachers' performance may serve as the basis of strengthening teachers' attendance as well as their punctuality. It is possible that the SSC members who are deeply committed to school affairs and who are usually present in school will be seen by teachers as supervisors to check their performance. The positive effect for monitoring teachers' performance is consistent with previous studies showing that community empowerment can positively influence teacher attendance (see, for example, Nielsen, 2007). This is a significant issue given the fact that teacher attendance influences student attendance and ultimately raise children's learning outcomes.

Likewise, the result of the regression analysis reveals the positive and strongly significant relationship between involving in developing school improvement plans and the perceived school outcomes. The setting up of SSCs in Cambodian schools is based on the belief that school community members would intervene in the school planning process. This belief seems to be shared by both SSC members and school principals. As mentioned earlier in Table 3, involvement in developing school improvement plans was ranked by SSCs and school principals as the first priority of the SSCs. The finding of the positive relationship between involving in school planning and the perceived school outcomes lends support to educational decentralization policy, which gives more voice and decision making power to community members who appear to have better understanding of local conditions and are in the best position to make decisions about how to meet school needs. It is possible that the community members who are actively involved in schools will make their utmost efforts to improve schools where their children are attending. Ultimately, their sincere efforts to involve in school affairs would bring about better school outcomes.

SSC involvement in providing skills/additional training to students is also found to have a positive relationship with school quality. Schools that often involve SSCs in providing training to

students tend to have better school outcomes, despite its coefficient is weaker in comparison to the effects of other involvement variables.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 4, the result of the regression analysis also reveals that SSC involvement in fund-raising activities is not an important factor in improving school outcomes, despite its negative coefficient. Judging from this result, a policy of collecting parental contribution has little ground. Financial contribution from parents can theoretically act as a mechanism to augment government's low school financing; however, in practice, parents' informal contribution of money to schools may cause another burden on poor households. Based on previous work by Bray & Bunly (2005), out-of-pocket expenditures by households impose heavy economic burdens on parents from poor households in particular. This is a critical question since the informal fee collection mechanism may be subject to abuse by school and SSC executive members who may use it to reward the children whose parents are able to contribute and punish the poor ones whose parents cannot afford to contribute. There is also a possibility that students whose parents more often contribute to schools are treated well by teachers while children whose parents never or rarely provide financial contribution to schools tend to be poorly treated by teachers. Interestingly enough, the data further shows the negative and statistically significant relationship between involvement in managing and using school funds and the perceived school quality.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of SSC Involvement to Predict School Quality

Variables	Stand. beta	t	P
Involving in fund-raising activities for school development	-.115	-1.215	.226
Attending school meetings	.236	2.617	.010
Attending school events	-0.91	-.875	.383
Communicating information from school to parents	.176	1.632	.105
Monitoring teachers' performance	.294	2.471	.015
Managing and using school budgets	-.422	-2.278	.004
Discussing educational problems with school staff	.198	1.682	.095
Developing school improvement plans with school staff	.465	3.143	.002
Providing learning materials and other support to poor families	-.266	-1.630	.105
Providing skills/additional training to students	.149	2.125	.035
Other functions (home visits, activities reports...)	.119	1.000	.319

4. Discussion

The finding of a negative relationship between SSC involvement in 'managing and using school funds' and their perceptions on school performance was an unexpected finding with interesting implications. Cambodian educational reform policy demands that SSCs oversee the implementation of school development plans and endorse all expenditure plans before they are submitted to educational authorities at the district level. This decentralized reform policy represented a major change in the sense that decision making authority on school management and budget expenditure rests with school and the community. However, the observation in field reveals that SSC involvement in managing and using school funds faces two main constraints. First, the guidelines on school expenditure funds, i.e. PAP funds, were found to be too rigid and pre-decided by the central education authority, leaving little room for SSC's initiation of their own priority needs. Once PAP funds are approved, educational authorities at school level are only supposed to conform to the approved PAP budget at the end of the fiscal year. In other words, school funding for operational expenditures is not left at the discretion of school authorities. PAP funds are strictly earmarked for each PAP priority area, indicating that if the funds under one priority area run out in the middle of school year, even if there is surplus under another priority area, it is basically impossible to re-allocate these funds. According to Pak (2004), all primary schools, regardless of their conditions and needs, receive the same amount of fund. This amount only varies according to the number of pupils. This funding arrangement involves some problems. Obviously, the needs of

each school differ in terms of the amount and types of resources. Some need to spend more on repairs while others need to spend more on teaching and learning materials. The observation at most schools in this study shows that not all SSCs could use fund to meet their needs in an appropriate timing. For SSCs, although they have been granted power and control over PAP funds, they saw their involvement in school expenditure planning as merely to fulfill the requirement of spending procedure under PAP scheme rather than as an opportunity to voice their concerns over the educational needs of their children[5]. Second, the failure to provide a smooth flow of cash makes it impossible for SSCs and schools to reach consensus on fund utilization. Further, when school funds are dispersed unexpectedly, an ad hoc meeting with school staff and SSC is usually called upon and decision making is usually hastily made by school principals and teachers. Based on interviews and observation, to deal with the cash constraints resulting from inadequate and unpredictable fund flows, schools and SSCs have to rely on community contributions collected through donations and other religious ceremonies. In cases where schools suffering from scarcity of cash do not engage in collecting contributions from communities, certain planned activities are foregone. In particular, if a school needs at least R700, 000 to start up the new school year, but only receives R70, 000, it either has to collect contributions or forego some planned activities. Thus, the unpredictability of fund flows leads to inefficiencies in the use of school funds by making it hard for schools and SSCs to plan ahead and to implement existing school development plans.

5. Conclusion

In general, the findings of this study have indeed shown a substantial level of SSC involvement in school-related matters including involving in formulating school plans. This considerable level of involvement may reflect Cambodia's educational policy which stresses community involvement in schools as an important strategy to enhance school quality in Cambodian schools. However, in the interviews with school principals, it was found that more than half of school principals were worried about the possible interference to school's technical-related matters from SSCs. As pointed out by Shaeffer (1992), it is possible that community members who are deeply committed to schools may be seen as intruders threatening the power structure of the schools. According to the interviews with SSCs, the majority of SSC members did not intend to take part in school technical affairs including staffing and routine teaching. In the survey, SSC's lack of time was rated as the greatest difficulties by SSCs in all cases. The non-intervening intention of SSCs was also shown among provincial and district educational authorities. The reluctance of school personnel and educational authorities to involve SSCs in staffing and routine teaching may be due to their low efficacy belief about SSC members. In the eyes of the majority of principals and educational authorities, SSC members are not interested in technical matters and do not understand technical issues.

Another important finding is concerned with the problems of the school financing. There are still some pressing challenges faced by schools and SSCs. Irregular flow of money and strict guidelines laid down on each priority area may prevent SSCs from any initiative to meet schools' real needs. This study suggests that efforts to reconsider school funding mechanism may contribute to resolve such negative effects. One way, presumably, is to allow educational authorities at school level, most importantly SSCs, more discretion concerning how to spend PAP funds. As indicated above, each school has its unique needs. In order to meet each school's priority needs, SSC should have more authority to manage and use school funds for school improvement simply because SSC might have a better understanding of the condition of their own schools and thus they might be in the best position to oversee their own initiation of how to improve their own school.

Footnotes

(1) SSC in some places is called Parental Association or Parent Committee or Parent Teacher Committee. Traditionally, SSCs have worked very closely with pagodas, which functioned as schools while monks served as teachers.

(2) Cambodia is organized into provinces and municipalities. Provinces are divided into districts (srok) and districts into communes (khum). Municipalities are divided into *khan* (urban sector) and *sangkat* (urban commune). The country comprises 20 provinces, 4 municipalities and 1,621 communes and *sangkats*, of which 1510 are rural communes. The municipalities of Phnom Penh, Kep, Pailin and Sihanoukville have 111 *sangkats*. The 13,409 villages are not considered to be administrative units, but rather as administrative arms of the communes. The number of communes per province varies between 173 in Kampong Cham and 21 in Mondolkiri.

(3) In order to understand what functions SSC members are frequently involved in running their own school, each SSC members was given a list of functions stated in the government official document indicated in the *introduction* part. Each SSC member was asked to estimate the frequency they got involved in each of the function. Responses for these items ranged from 'never' = 1 to 'always'= 5.

(4) Funds provided for schools' operational budgets and accounts for over one quarter of the entire PAP budget in education

(5) Interviews with SSC representatives during the field study from February 5 to March 22, 2011.

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