



## Teacher Accountability and Student Learning Outcomes: Administrative Work, Teaching and Learning Processes, and Communication in Rural Lower Secondary Schools



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### Abstract

This study explores teacher accountability to enhance student learning outcomes in Cambodian lower secondary schools. The findings show that teacher accountability is enacted through three key domains: administrative work, teaching and learning processes, and communication with stakeholders. Teachers demonstrated accountability through structured planning, instructional preparation, active classroom practices, and collaboration with school leaders, colleagues, students, and parents. Schools with stronger accountability practices showed more consistent and positive student learning outcomes. It employed the qualitative research methodology. The study included 77 respondents selected through purposive sampling, including 6 school management teams, 12 teachers, 30 parents/guardians, and 29 students. Based on the standard 2 in the school-based community, the study area focuses on school A in Takeo province, and schools B and C in Kandal Province. This study used document study, classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). NVivo was used to code data into themes, sub-themes, and activities. The researcher recommended that the school management team and teachers complete administrative tasks properly and adopt new teaching and learning methods to improve active teaching and learning. Additionally, the School Management Team (SMT), teachers, parents/guardians, and authorities cooperate to provide financial and material resources to improve students' achievement in lower secondary school.

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## Introduction

Over the past three decades, Cambodia's education system has undergone a major transformation shaped by post-conflict reconstruction and national development goals (Heng et al., 2023). In the 1980s-1990s, efforts focused on rebuilding schools and restoring basic education, with teacher accountability remaining informal and centered on classroom access rather than instructional quality (Tan et al., 2012). From 2000 to 2015, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) introduced the Education for All and School-Based Management (SBM) frameworks to expand access, enhance autonomy, and foster community involvement in accountability (Chet et al., 2023; Tan, 2012). Despite progress, challenges such as weak leadership and low engagement persisted, prompting additional reforms, such as the 3A/6A frameworks, which emphasize accountability, assessment, autonomy, and school culture (Patrinos et al., 2017). These initiatives contributed to improved outcomes, with primary completion rates rising from 53.1% in 2020-2021 to 58.3% in 2023-2024, and dropout rates falling from 18.2% to 10.3% (MoEYS, 2022). Since 2015, Cambodia's alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV (2019-2023) has further strengthened efforts toward equitable and quality education (Chet et al., 2023). Yet, persistent issues such as limited resources, uneven policy implementation, and low teacher motivation continue to hinder progress, underscoring the need for stronger community participation and consistent accountability practices (Vannak, 2019).

The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) in Cambodia has implemented various policies to improve teacher accountability, although challenges remain in their full implementation (MoEYS, 2019). The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2024-2028 sets goals to enhance teacher quality, complete professional development, and improve monitoring systems (MoEYS, 2019). The Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP), launched in 2015 as a follow-up to the 2013 Teacher Policy, emphasizes standardized teacher recruitment, retention, and performance appraisals to link teacher effectiveness with student outcomes (MoEYS, 2019; Tando, 2015). Initiatives such as New Generation Schools (NGS) have also piloted stricter accountability systems by linking teacher autonomy with rigorous monitoring, peer observation, and prohibition of private tutoring (Tan, 2012). These reforms reflect a growing recognition that accountability must be embedded not only in administrative compliance but also in pedagogical practice, professional growth, and community engagement.

In Cambodia, multiple educational reforms and policies have been introduced to promote teacher accountability; however, their implementation and impact at the school level remain insufficiently examined.

According to No et al. (2015), several questions persist regarding how teachers understand and interpret accountability, how school leaders promote and support it, and how community and broader systemic factors influence its effectiveness. The study also highlights key challenges such as uneven policy implementation across different regions, limited capacity for monitoring teacher performance, and a shortage of resources necessary to support effective accountability practices in schools. While accountability systems exist, insufficient professional development opportunities for teachers and the limited capacity of school leaders to effectively supervise staff continue to hinder progress (MoEYS, 2019). Addressing these gaps through sustained investment in school leadership, teacher training, and monitoring systems is essential to cultivating a culture of accountability that enhances both teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

Despite these strategies, key issues remain. Persistent challenges include teacher absenteeism, inequitable teacher deployment, and widespread private tutoring, which undermine public trust in teachers' professional accountability (Bray et al., 2016). Moreover, many teachers view accountability measures as compliance-driven—focused on fulfilling administrative reporting—rather than as opportunities for professional growth (Brehm et al., 2017). Limited resources, insufficient in-service training, and weak school leadership further constrain the effective implementation of accountability frameworks (Benveniste et al., 2008). At the community level, mechanisms such as School Support Committees (SSCs) are designed to promote local accountability, yet their effectiveness is inconsistent due to limited training and resources (Chea et al., 2022).

Teacher training for lower secondary school education was transferred from system hours as 7+1 to 12 +2 from 1980 to 1997. During training, all the trainees have to study coursework, do an assessment and do a practicum.

Understanding the significance of teacher capacity, MoEYS piloted the Teacher Upgrading Programme (TUP) through the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP 2017-2022) and General Education Improvement Project (GEIP 2022-2026). It is an in-service training for lower secondary school teachers who hold an associate's degree equivalent to be upgraded as bachelor of Education. These programs aim to strengthen teachers' professional knowledge, teaching skills, and understanding of modern pedagogy. When teachers receive higher education and professional training, they become better prepared to design effective lesson plans, use student-centered teaching methods, and assess student learning more accurately. At classroom, teachers become more responsible for meeting educational standards and supporting student achievement. Therefore, upgrading teachers' qualifications through SEIP and GEIP contributes

to stronger teacher accountability, improved teaching quality, and better learning outcomes in lower secondary schools (WB,2017;2023).

At present, in Cambodia, there are approximately 94,718 teaching staff working in a total of 13,681 schools, including preschools, primary schools, lower secondary schools (Grades 7-9), and upper secondary schools (Grades 10-12, including combined lower and upper secondary schools) (MoEYS, 2022). Among them, 42,940 lower secondary school teachers are responsible for teaching 1,004,028 students (MoEYS, 2022). In summary, the number of teaching staff in lower secondary schools is not commensurate with the number of students; therefore, teachers must take responsibility for the number of students by providing them with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become global citizens. The number of teaching staff for lower secondary schools is not appropriate to the number of students. Therefore, teachers have to take responsibility for the number of students by providing them with knowledge, skills, and attitude.

Previous research highlights the need for systemic reforms to strengthen teacher accountability in Cambodia. Dy (2017) found that while teachers are held accountable for student outcomes, challenges such as resource shortages and limited professional development persist. Teacher accountability is crucial for enhancing student learning outcomes. Previous research has examined assessment practices, engagement, and professional responsibilities, but little is documented on lower secondary schools. Yet, teacher accountability is not documented for lower secondary schools. Hence, this study explores teachers' accountability practices to enhance student learning outcomes in lower secondary schools in Cambodia.

The objective of this study is to explore teachers' accountability in improving student learning outcomes at the lower secondary school level. In addition, the study seeks to provide relevant documents and evidence to guide education stakeholders in planning, organizing, and implementing strategies to strengthen teaching and learning processes and teacher communication, with the ultimate goal of enhancing students' academic achievement in lower secondary schools.

### Conceptualising Teacher Accountability

Historically, teacher accountability originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through school inspection and supervision, emphasizing adherence to moral conduct, classroom management, and instructional routines (Jewell, 2015). During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, educational bureaucracies introduced more formalized evaluation systems that focused on efficiency and compliance within schools (Hutt et al., 2014). In the 1980s and 1990s, many countries, notably the United States and the United Kingdom,

adopted performance-based accountability reforms, including national curriculum standards, standardized assessments, and public reporting of school performance (Figlio, 2011). These reforms reflected managerial approaches that tied measurable student outcomes to judgments of school and teacher effectiveness.

The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) in the United States marked a significant shift toward test-based accountability. Schools were required to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on standardized tests, indirectly placing pressure on teachers to improve student performance (Dee & Jacob, 2010). Subsequent reforms introduced value-added models to evaluate teacher contributions to student learning, though such measures have been critiqued for statistical limitations and fairness concerns (Kraft et al., 2018). Internationally, accountability policies were widely diffused in the 2010s, with variations across league tables, performance pay, and inspection frameworks. While these approaches aimed to improve learning outcomes, scholars emphasized the need to balance accountability with professional development and teacher autonomy (UNESCO, 2017).

Research consistently highlights the role of accountability systems in improving teaching quality, student learning outcomes, and fostering collaboration among educators. Darling et al. (2020) underscore the importance of accountability in professional practices, including teaching efficacy, adherence to standards, and student engagement. Educational reforms worldwide have incorporated various accountability mechanisms, including performance evaluations, professional development programs, and community engagement initiatives. Various factors, including educational policies, assessment methods, and administrative supervision, influence this accountability (Sanders, 1998). Teacher accountability is a fundamental aspect of high-quality education, directly influencing student learning outcomes, school effectiveness, and broader societal progress (Darling, 2020). Essentially, teacher accountability signifies educators' obligation to uphold specific performance and effectiveness standards in their instructional practices (Darling, 2020).

Teacher accountability refers to educators' responsibility for their teaching practices and students' academic progress (Rash, 2023). It encompasses the expectation that teachers uphold professional standards and demonstrate effectiveness in their instructional methods (Rash, 2023). Additionally, teacher accountability is closely linked to professional integrity and occupational responsibility (Öztuzcu et al., 2021). Öztuzcu et al. (2021) further assert that accountability is integral to teacher professionalism, underscoring the need to enhance teachers' occupational awareness. Establishing a tailored supervisory system for educators can foster

greater professionalism and career consciousness, making accountability a key mechanism for strengthening teaching quality and professional growth.

Killion (2016) describes teacher accountability as a dedication to ongoing improvement in instructional methods, motivated by the goal of enhancing student learning. This involves adopting innovative teaching approaches and assessment techniques to align with professional standards. Similarly, Smith and Benavot (2019) highlight the importance of balancing trust in individuals, the teaching profession, and institutional processes in maintaining accountability. They argue that cultivating a culture of trust within schools is crucial to fostering accountability, promoting professional development, and supporting effective teaching practices.

Chitpin (2016) emphasizes the significance of reflective practice in teacher accountability, asserting that educators should critically assess their teaching strategies and make necessary adjustments to align with both educational objectives and societal demands. Similarly, Bedard (2015) underscores the need to balance autonomy with accountability, arguing that while teachers must have the flexibility to innovate in their instructional methods, they are ultimately responsible for ensuring a high-quality education that produces measurable student outcomes.

Ross et al. (2019) examine accountability reforms, particularly in the U.S., where teacher performance is assessed through measures such as student growth and professional development requirements to improve educational quality. Similarly, Bredenberg (2002) highlights the importance of continuous professional development in strengthening teacher accountability. The study reveals that when teachers engage in ongoing training, their commitment to meeting educational standards and enhancing student achievement is significantly strengthened. Together, these studies underscore the crucial role of performance evaluation and professional growth in ensuring teacher accountability and improving overall educational outcomes.

Symeonidis (2015) examined the impact of national policies on teacher accountability, revealing that, despite their existence, inconsistent implementation undermines teacher performance and accountability. Similarly, Kreng (2015) explored the role of community involvement in boosting teacher accountability, finding that community participation in school activities significantly improves teacher accountability and student performance. Vannak (2019) investigated the challenges, including low salaries, insufficient resources, and a lack of support from educational authorities.

While the literature extensively discusses teacher accountability regarding professional standards, student outcomes, and educational policies, a significant gap remains in understanding how teacher accountability is

adapted to diverse educational contexts and individual teacher needs. Much of the current research focuses on measurable outcomes and systemic reforms (Ross et al., 2019; Sanders, 1998), but often overlooks the nuanced balance between teacher autonomy and personalized accountability systems (Bedard, 2015; Öztüzcu, 2021). Exploring how contextualized approaches to teacher accountability can foster professional growth, maintain trust within educational systems, and enhance instructional effectiveness (Smith & Benavot, 2019).

Teacher accountability refers to the professional responsibility of teachers to demonstrate commitment, ethical conduct, and effective performance in fulfilling their roles toward students, the school, and society. It encompasses teachers' contributions to organizational goals, the regulation of emotions in professional interactions, and continuous personal development (Öztüzcu, 2021). Through accountability, teachers strengthen their sense of belonging to the school's mission, show empathy and care in teaching, and engage in reflective practices that promote ongoing growth and occupational awareness.

## Research Methodology

*This part covered the research design, sample and sampling, instruments, data analysis, scope, and limitations of the study below*

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach, which is particularly suited to exploring the cultural and social dynamics within schools, enabling a deep understanding of teacher practices and the context of accountability at different levels. Ethnography allowed the researcher to immerse themselves in the school environments, observing the interactions, roles, and responsibilities of teachers as they navigated their professional duties within the classroom and the broader school community.

*The research was conducted in a selection of schools*

1 Mithona Upper Secondary School in Takeo province, Prekaten Upper Secondary School, and Sampan Lower Secondary School in Kandal province, Cambodia.

These schools were chosen for their alignment with Standard 2 of the School Community Strategy (SCS) framework, which includes five standards focused on teacher accountability and educational effectiveness. Standard 2 emphasizes the quality of teaching practices and teacher performance in fostering an effective learning environment. The schools selected for the study achieved the highest scores in this standard, making them ideal candidates for investigating best practices in teacher accountability.

Purposive sampling was used to select individuals most likely to provide valuable insights into teacher accountability (as shown in Table 1). The school

Table 1: Participants of the study

Participant	Sex		Role	Total
	Male	Female		
School Management Team	5	1	Director and Deputy Director	6
Teachers	6	6	Teachers	12
Students	10	19	Students	29
Parents	19	11	Civil servant, Business, and Citizen	30

management team, including directors, vice directors, and school management committees, as well as teachers, students, and parents who were directly involved in the school's educational processes, was selected. This selection process ensured that the sample represented a broad yet focused range of stakeholders who could contribute to the research's objectives.

A research tool employed a combination of document study, classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

#### *Document study*

A document study was conducted to review official records, policies, and other relevant documents, focusing on teachers' administrative roles at the school level. This helped identify the formal expectations and role of teacher accountability within the school system.

#### *Classroom Observation*

Classroom observations were conducted to gain insights into the teachers' roles in the teaching and learning process. These observations enabled exploration of teaching strategies, classroom management, and student engagement, providing valuable data on how teachers implement accountability in real-time teaching contexts. The observation criteria are divided into four main parts: preparing relevant documents for teaching and learning, the teaching and learning process, and the teacher's actions both inside and outside the classroom.

In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to explore how teachers fulfil their roles in community service and their engagement with the school's educational goals at the community level. These interviews aimed to understand teachers' perspectives on their responsibilities, the challenges they face in meeting accountability expectations, and the support they receive from the school and community.

A focus group discussion was employed to explore the effect of teachers' accountability on students' achievement. SMT, teachers, students and parents discussed how teachers' accountability improves students' learning outcomes.

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with school management teams, teachers, and parents to examine best practices for

teacher accountability in enhancing student achievement at the secondary level. The discussions focused on teachers' roles in administrative work, teaching and learning, and community engagement. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, significance, and ethical considerations to ensure their confidence and comfort in participation.

This study obtained permission from RUPP and prioritized participants' welfare and protection throughout the research process. Ethical standards were strictly followed, ensuring informed consent by clearly explaining the study's purpose, scope, and potential risks. Participants were assured of confidentiality, given the right to skip questions, and allowed to withdraw from the interview at any time to ensure their comfort and safety.

In this study, data collection followed several steps, beginning with obtaining permission from RUPP and having the advisor validate the semi-structured questionnaire. After approval, the researcher conducted interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions with school management teams, teachers, students, and parents. The school management interviews covered background information, teacher accountability, administrative work, teaching and learning, community roles, and influencing factors. Teacher questionnaires focused on accountability in administration, teaching, community engagement, and student achievement, while student questionnaires examined best practices of accountability and community relationships. Parent questionnaires addressed teachers' accountability in community involvement and factors affecting learning outcomes.

After the document study and classroom observation, the in-depth interview and focus group data were translated directly into English by the researcher, who is bilingual in Khmer and English. The data were cleaned and entered into NVivo software (version 15) for data organization. The data were imported, classified into files, and then thematically coded into sub-themes to facilitate detailed analysis and interpretation of the findings. The qualitative data describe how teachers' accountability improves students' learning outcomes in secondary schools. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used for this purpose. The process consists of six steps, including (1) familiarizing yourself with your data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for

themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

To ensure the data's trustworthiness and validity, the researcher employed a variety of research instruments, including observation forms and semi-structured questionnaires. These instruments were carefully reviewed and validated by experts in the field, the school management team, students, and parents. Before conducting the interviews, the research instruments were meticulously checked, edited, and validated to ensure they were relevant and accurate and appropriate for capturing the necessary data for the study.

The study area focuses on 1 Mitona in Takeo province, Sampan, and Prektaten secondary school in Kandal province. The sample size is 77, including 6 school management teams, 12 teachers, 30 parents, and 30 students at the school location mentioned above. Anyways, the results of the study cannot be generalized to the entire secondary school system in Cambodia.

## Results and Findings

### Teacher accountability is the completion of the teacher's role as administrative work at the school level.

Table 2 is the role of teachers in administrative work at the school level, emphasizing strategies, yearly responsibilities, and monthly and weekly tasks. At the strategic level, teachers are supported to perform effectively throughout the academic year by receiving guidance, attending technical meetings and providing

teaching and using material by monitoring and evaluation. These measures create an enabling environment where teachers are better equipped to align their instructional responsibilities with administrative expectations.

Based on the interview with the school management team reveal that the administrative duty of teachers is to support teachers in performing.

[...]. In the name of the school management team, I have to set up a technical group meeting before the academic year starts (P1). I have to encourage teachers to make a plan for materials and the tasks needed for their work. I have to make a group task and report to the school principal monthly and yearly (P5). [...]. On the one hand, teacher should be aware of their roles and responsible [...] (P4).

Based on interviews with six school management teams, the mechanisms they use to support teachers in their roles in teaching and learning administration at the school level include training teachers, allocating resources, conducting follow-ups, monitoring progress, evaluating performance, and providing feedback.

[...]. I have a mechanism to support teachers to complete the role at the administrative school level. At the beginning of each year, materials are distributed, trained, monitored, evaluated, and provided feedback by the end of the academic study year[...] (P1). [...] hold a meeting to demonstrate how to perform the task; training tasks to be performed and review, follow-up, and evaluate on the tasks performed [...] (P2).

Some of them shared their experiences of collaborating in groups to compile administrative documents required at the start of the academic year.

**Table 2:** Completion role of the teacher in administrative work at the school level

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Activity</i>
Administrative work	A strategy to support teachers to perform in the academic year	Technical group meeting, guidance, and support Encourage the teacher to plan materials Awareness of teacher roles Providing teaching materials to teachers Monitoring and evaluation of the administrative task
	Yearly for responsibility	Develop course syllabus and curriculum (week, month, and year) Develop teaching plans and lesson plans regularly Develop and implement project-based learning Achieve the internal and external inspection Classroom committees
	Monthly and weekly tasks	Develop a teaching and learning plan Prepare the lesson plan regularly Teach and support students in all circumstances Develop and implement any standard test Review and guide students' study plan Communicate and report to SMT and parents of the student's progress and points for improvement Develop and implement a standard test Lead student in learning (study plan) Manage and follow administrative tasks like attention, scoring, planning, parents, inspection books, etc

[...]. Classroom administration documents must be done once a year at the beginning of the school year and apart from the curriculum documents, student plans, and meeting books, all meeting books must be compiled until they are written [...] (P5).

Yearly, responsibilities and tasks focus more on the structured and long-term responsibilities of teachers. They include developing syllabi and curricula for different timeframes, preparing teaching and lesson plans, and implementing project-based learning, making classroom committees.

Some teachers share their experiences on how to compile administrative documents, which must be done at the beginning of the school year, by working in a group.

[...]. I have completed the classroom administration documents, which must be done once a year at the beginning of the school year, and apart from the curriculum documents, student plans, and meeting books, all meeting books must be compiled until they are written [...] (P9). [...]. I have to lead myself to take actions, including motivating myself to use textbooks and worksheets, directing teachers to make lesson plans, and student plans. I urge technical team meetings, conduct inspections, strengthen teachers' monasteries, conduct standard tests, teachers have the 5 administrative documents, and urge myself to develop my profession[...] (P12). [...]. [...]. There must be a division of my duties according to my role and specialty [...] (P13). In particular, the division of duties is overwhelming to each teacher [...]. [...]. And I have to participate in a technical group meeting and write a report with evidence to the school management team [...] (P15).

School management team respondents state that another administrative accountability of teachers is annual tasks for teachers to implementation.

[...]. Teachers have to develop and implementation teaching plan and curriculum, contract informal agreements, make an agreement on student learning outcomes, prepare a lesson plan with clear schedules and make announcements and be ready at the beginning of the academic year [...] (P4).

The interview with lower secondary school teachers from 3 different lower secondary schools. all of them highlighted that teacher accountability in various aspects, as well as school-level administration, including lesson planning, rolling 3-year planning and syllabus planning.

[...]. I have to do the yearly significant role as teaching plan, student plan, syllabus, rolling 3-year plan, lesson plan, administrative teaching and learning, and project-based learning and teaching [...] (P6).

One more construct is the monthly and weekly tasks

[...]. I have to prepare a lesson plan regularly, teach and support students in all circumstances, and communicate and report to SMT and parents [...] (P11).

In short, administrative-level teacher accountability ensures that teachers are supported and held accountable, leading to improved student learning outcomes. Yearly, monthly, and weekly responsibilities are also significant for the teacher in accounting for students' learning outcomes.

### Teacher accountability is the completion of the teacher's role in the teaching and learning process at the classroom level

Table 3 is the teacher's role in the teaching and learning process, divided into three stages: pre-teaching, while teaching, and post-teaching. In the pre-teaching stage, teachers prepare lesson plans, worksheets, tests, and supporting materials such as images, posters, and

**Table 3:** The completion of the teacher's role in the teaching and learning process at the classroom level

Theme	Sub-theme	Activity
Teaching and learning process	Pre-teaching	Develop teaching and learning materials such as lesson plans, worksheets, standard tests, and question-and-answer sets.
		Develop teaching and learning-supportive materials, such as pictures, images, posters, graphs, and experimental materials.
	While teaching	Follow the five steps based on the lesson plan
		Support modern learning by assigning tasks and providing students with opportunities for critical thinking, group work, project-based learning, and presentations.
		Play a facilitator, supporter, motivator, collaborator, etc.
	Post-teaching	Strengthen students' learning capacity by calling students to review the previous lesson or solve the exercises.
		Develop an assessment (oral test, weekly test, monthly test...)
		Support students in mental health and mind in self-study, and study hard and smart
		Develop a new teaching and learning plan Provide additional lessons and worksheets to students

experimental tools to ensure lessons are well-structured and engaging. In the pre-teaching step, the teacher should prepare all teaching and learning documents, such as lesson plans, students' worksheets, tests, question-and-answer sheets, and supportive materials, including pictures, images, posters, rulers, graphs, and experimental materials.

During the teaching stage, teachers follow lesson plans, promote critical thinking, use group work and project-based learning, and act as facilitators, motivators, and collaborators. They also strengthen learning through reviews, exercises, and assessments, such as oral, weekly, and monthly tests, ensuring students remain actively engaged. While teaching a step, the teacher follows the five steps of the lesson plan, presents a study problem or assigns students, and guides, facilitates, and supports students in studying and solving the problem effectively. Using project-based learning (PBL) techniques and distributing self-study worksheets to encourage student-centered learning and independent study, consistently being on time, following the five-step teaching model, providing worksheets, assigning homework, and providing feedback to ensure effective instruction, assessing by giving standardized tests and performing instructional and assessment roles, serving as counsellors and supporters, inspiring students, and attending to their individual learning needs are all important aspects of the teacher's completion role at the classroom level.

In the post-teaching stage, teachers support students in self-study, provide extra lessons or worksheets as needed, and adjust their teaching plans to improve. They also promote students' mental well-being and persistence in learning, ensuring both academic and personal development are addressed.

Interviews with school management teams and teachers also show that activities teachers typically use to enhance student learning outcomes include pre-teaching.

[...]. Before teaching, I usually see my teachers prepare the material, lesson plan, worksheet [...] (P5). [...] Of course, teachers usually come to teach on time, implement the 5-step teaching method, give students worksheets to complete, help students learn gradually, provide feedback on homework, and correct [...] (P2). [...] Teachers give students all 4 levels of self-study worksheets before meeting the teacher. Automatically evaluate students' learning outcomes covering lessons in worksheets and implement a PBL lesson with students [...] (P4). Before my class starts, I have to be ready for my 45-minute lesson by doing a lesson plan, material, and ... [...] (P18).

An interview with the school management team and teachers reveals that a teacher is an educator, instructor,

facilitator, supporter, and motivator.

[...]. My teacher strives to teach me as well as to educate me to do good deeds and to participate in school and community affairs. [...] (P5). PBL and the techniques used to teach students are a methodology to enhance student learning outcomes, too [...] (P6).

Interviews with teachers reveal that, to enhance student learning outcomes, teachers act as facilitators, particularly by adopting a student-centered approach.

[...]. I usually use Bloom's theory with students and tell them, "Don't learn by memory, learn to innovate." I used a student-centered method (65%) and a translation method (35%) to teach my students in class [...] (P17). [...] I use teaching method one, which has many hours, and use other methods that vary according to each lesson to teach students [...] (P15). [...] The most effective way to enhance my student learning outcomes is to recognize all students and be flexible in using material and techniques in teaching [...] (P11).

[...]. Full-day learning is also key to enhancing student learning, so we schedule time for teachers and students to learn at school or to do self-access work in the library or at home [...] (P9).

As assessors, teachers shared during interviews that they evaluate students using standardized tests, exercises, homework, monthly and semester exams, and worksheets.

[...]. I can strengthen in the fourth teaching step, give exercises, do tests in class, give homework, do monthly exams, and do semester exams [...] (P7). Work sheets are also important to motivate students to learn more; hence, we provide the fourth level of worksheets to our students [...] (P10). On the one hand, [...]. Early-year and end-of-year tests are significant for measuring our students' performance, so in our schools we conduct them as usual [...] (P11).

Interviews with students show that homework, exercise, and questions are the key to assessing student learning outcomes.

[...]. My teacher posted questions, exercises, homework, and recorded lesson content, and instructed us to complete tasks according to our levels [...] (P20). To support my progress, teachers put homework, exercises, and questions for us to do more research at home or in our free time. [...] (P32).

### *The third component is after teaching*

Interviews with SMTs indicate that the MoEYS standard test is the only test their students practice in their schools.

[...]. After teaching, my teacher has to administer the early-year, monthly, semester, and end-of-year tests using only the Ministry's test. The test procedure is a national standard [...] (P1). We conduct tests in our schools as

usual to assess our students' performance, and we can develop a plan to help teachers and students improve student learning outcomes [...] (P5).

Beyond teaching in class, teachers have to facilitate, support, and motivate students to learn, research, and self-study outside the classroom. This involves the school management team, teachers, and students' response.

[...]. After receiving the results, my teachers planned additional supplementary lessons to teach students in full-day learning and teaching [...] (P1) [...]. My teacher has allocated study clubs for discussions, discussion questions, exercises [...] (P4). Counsellor, supporter, and motivator are roles teachers play during teaching, based on interviews with students [...] (P4).

[...]. To support the growth and improvement of my studies. Both in the classroom and outside the classroom, teachers carried out activities such as striving to explain the lessons to us, again and again, when we did not clearly understand the content of the lessons. [...] (P45). On the one hand, during and after teaching, my teachers also counsel with my friends and me to ask more about our needs in terms of improving outcomes [...] (P55).

### Completion of the teacher's role in the teaching and learning process in the community communication

Teachers play a pivotal role not only in the classroom but also in the broader community, contributing to both students' educational development and the welfare of society. Their responsibilities extend beyond instructional duties to include promoting social, cultural, and moral values within the community.

Table 4 presents the theme of communication as a key element of teacher accountability, showing how teachers engage with different stakeholders in the school community. The sub-themes highlight four main areas of interaction: engagement with parents, colleagues, the school management team (SMT), and students. Each sub-theme is supported by specific practices, or "codes," that illustrate how teachers fulfil their communication responsibilities.

Engagement with parents involves informing them about students' progress and weaknesses, organizing group discussions through social media or phone calls, and creating classroom committees to strengthen collaboration. Engagement with colleagues emphasizes teamwork in developing curriculum and syllabi, peer teaching, solving problems related to school or student activities, and planning teaching and learning together. Engagement with the school management team focuses on obtaining support with regulations, resources, financing, workshops, and planning, as well as staying informed about school events and activities.

Finally, engagement with students highlights the teacher's role in addressing students' learning concerns, supporting their mental health and academic development, providing daily performance feedback, and guiding them effectively on their learning journey. Together, these practices show that communication is not only about information sharing but also about building networks of support and collaboration, both essential to improving teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. Communication between teachers and parents is another key to keeping them in touch and informing them about the student's progress and responses.

Table 4: Completion of the teacher's role in community communication

Theme	Sub-theme	Activity
Communication	Engagement with the parents of the students	Inform students' learning progress and weaknesses Create a group discussion via social media or phone. Create a classroom committee.
	Engagement with Colleagues	Develop the course curriculum and syllabus. Make core subjects technical and peer teaching. Solve any problem in school, a subject, or students' activities. Plan teaching and learning
	Engagement with the school management team	Get support from SMT on any concerns, such as regulations, supportive materials, financing, workshops, or planning, etc. Get all the information and events that happen in school.
	Engagement with Students	Understand the student's issues or concerns in learning. Support students in mental health, mind, and learning. Inform and provide feedback on the student's daily academic performance. Lead and guide students in learning effectively.

**Table 5:** Student learning outcomes for Semester II

No	Name of student	Sex	Grade	Result semester II	Rank
<i>School A Upper Secondary School (Takeo province)</i>					
1	ST1	F	7	46.21	Good
2	ST2	F	7	44.66	Good
3	ST3	F	7	43.73	Good
4	ST4	F	9	45.24	Good
5	ST5	F	9	44.35	Good
6	ST6	F	9	43.85	Good
7	ST7	M	7	44.32	Good
8	ST8	F	7	43.94	Good
9	ST9	M	7	43.06	Good
10	ST10	M	7	47.03	Good
11	ST11	F	7	42.51	Good
12	ST12	M	7	41.84	Good
<i>School B Lower Secondary School (Kondal Province)</i>					
13	ST13	M	9	39.64	Fairy Good
14	ST14	M	9	42.86	Good
15	ST15	M	9	42.62	Good
16	ST16	F	8	46.08	Good
17	ST17	M	8	47.23	Good
18	ST18	F	9	42.50	Good
19	ST19	M	9	42.25	Good
20	ST20	F	9	42.20	Good
<i>School C Upper Secondary School (Kondal Province)</i>					
21	ST21	F	9	41.37	Good
22	ST22	F	9	42.13	Good
23	ST23	F	9	41.38	Good
24	ST24	F	7	40.94	Good
25	ST25	F	7	39.49	Fairy Good
26	ST26	F	7	39.62	Fairy Good
27	ST27	F	7	38.64	Fairy Good
28	ST28	F	7	38.25	Fairy Good
29	ST29	M	7	38.50	Fairy Good

Source: The results for the second semester in the academic year 2023-2024 were taken from 3 schools

Rank: Good: 40 to 50, Fairy Good: 32.50 to 39.99, Fair: 25.00 to 32.49, Fall: under 25 (MoEYS)

[...] Teachers are responsible for collecting the phone numbers of guardians for students at all levels. They must regularly call to inform guardians about students who are absent or late and seek cooperation with the village head, commune head, and local authorities to address these issues [...] (P1). My teachers communicate with students' parents to inform them of the reason for their child's academic results and various needs and help their children develop good behaviour in life and achieve excellent academic results [...] (P6).

[...] Teachers and I have good communication in understanding to correct my child's mistakes when they do not perform well, providing reasons to them so they can easily understand and improve, and encouraging my child to be diligent and brave in their studies [...] (P66).

**Teachers also communicate with colleagues to share student information.**

[...] My teachers communicate with colleagues to show the results of their students' performance after each

test. [...]. Involve them in recognizing these results and understanding their child's progress. Collaborate to resolve any issues together with the relevant parties involved [...] (P4).

When principals actively engage with teachers, it can help teachers respond and improve school performance.

[...]. Teachers communicate with me because they need to be transparent in all processes and communications. Maintain good solidarity among colleagues. They come to school early and leave after hours to demonstrate commitment. Regularly, they need encouragement and support in their work [...] (P4).

[...]. Teachers need to clearly understand the tasks assigned to them according to their professional and specialized roles. Have a clear letter of instruction outlining their responsibilities and duties [...] (P6).

### Teachers communicating with students is another responsibility

[...]. My teachers usually guide students in developing life skills, such as raising animals, growing vegetables, saving money, and conducting research in the library and computer lab. [...] and they meet with the guardians of students who are late to school or at risk of dropping out to discuss solutions and provide support [...] (P1).

[...]. My teachers assist students with all questions and exercises, providing support both in person and through the class telegram group [...] (P6).

[...] my teachers encourage students to form self-study groups in nearby villages to support collaborative learning. Provide opportunities for students to visit other schools for exposure and learning exchange [...] (p5).

### Students' learning achievement

In this section, the researcher presents results on student learning achievement in the study area, including Schools A, B, and C.

Table 5 expresses the achievement of students who were involved in this study in semester II. Most of the students in the study achieve fairly good to good results in their learning. Based on MoEYS, the average mark ranks as Good: 40 to 50, Fairly Good: 32.50 to 39.99, Fair: 25.00 to 32.49, and Fail: under 25. For the semester result, the teacher has to sum up all the ten/ more than 10 subjects that MoEYS allowed and divide the total mark by 10/more than subjects. Based on this table, the student learning outcomes for semester 2 in academic year 2023- 2024 are good and fairly good. This study selects students who regularly come to class and study with teachers who have been selected to be observed. Some students are in the same class but with different teachers.

The table presents student achievement from three different schools in Takeo and Kandal provinces. School A, an upper secondary school in Takeo, shows consistently good results among Grade 7 and Grade 9 students.

Most students in this school achieved scores above 43, indicating strong academic performance. School B, a lower secondary school in Kandal, also shows mostly good results, except for one student who scored below 40. Grade 8 and Grade 9 students in School B generally performed well. School C, an upper secondary school in Kandal, displays a mix of good and fairly good results. Students in Grade 9 and Grade 7 from this school mostly scored around the low 40s. Several students in School C received "Fairly Good" ratings, showing room for improvement. Overall, the data suggests stronger performance in School A compared to the other schools. The table highlights variations in student achievement across provinces and grade levels.

## Discussion

This study discusses three themes of teacher accountability to enhance students' learning outcomes in lower secondary schools in Cambodia. Firstly, the findings of this study align closely with the conceptual framework of teacher accountability and occupational professionalism proposed by Öztüzcü (2021), which identifies contributions to the organization and to enhanced occupational awareness. In the Cambodian lower secondary school context, teacher accountability was found that administrative work has three constructs: strategy to support teachers to perform in the academic year, yearly for responsibility, and monthly and weekly tasks are responsibilities for teachers to account for student learning outcomes. Consistent with the contribution to the organization domain and administrative work, teachers demonstrated accountability through their involvement in school-level administrative planning and cooperation with school management teams. The interviews revealed that teachers actively participated in preparing technical group meetings, organizing materials, compiling administrative documents, and submitting reports. These activities reflect teachers' recognition of their roles in supporting the school's mission, fostering institutional success, and ensuring smooth academic operations.

Secondly, in this study teaching and learning process is a new domain which has three constructs: pre-teaching, while-teaching, and post-teaching to enhance student learning outcomes. Teachers develop lesson plans, design worksheets, prepare standard tests, and create supportive materials before instruction begins. These practices demonstrate accountability not only to student learning but also to the school's broader mission of school success. While Öztüzcü (2021) found that emotional labour refers to teachers' ability to regulate their emotions in professional interactions and strengthen empathy and care of teaching, which helps build empathy, care, and positive relationships within the school community. On the one hand, when teachers actively engage students in collaborative learning through group work, project-

based activities, and presentations, allowing learners to think critically and work cooperatively, it can enhance student learning outcomes. Öztüzcü's (2021) view is that accountability extends beyond technical compliance to include emotional engagement and professional sensitivity in daily classroom interactions. Teachers' willingness to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment demonstrates emotional responsibility and reinforces their professional identity.

Thirdly, in this study, communication with all stakeholders is a new theme. Based on the evident in teachers' engagement with colleagues and school management teams. Teachers collaborate with peers to prepare course syllabi, address issues that arise in syllabi, and address issues that arise in the classroom. Engaging with colleagues and management teams allows teachers to exchange ideas, gain new insights, and develop collaborative solutions to challenges in teaching and learning. Teachers' communication with school management teams to seek support on issues such as regulations, materials, or training demonstrates in school to solve and develop skills to enhance students' learning outcomes. One more construct is teachers' interaction with students and parents, teachers' responsibilities to inform parents about student progress, weaknesses, and achievements, as well as their initiative to establish communication via social media or classroom committees to get feedback and build trust. In contrast, Öztüzcü (2021) found that personal development emphasizes how accountability motivates teachers to engage in continuous professional growth through reflective practice and self-improvement to achieve occupational awareness.

Students in School A achieved consistently good results in Semester II, indicating a high level of teacher accountability. This consistency suggests that teachers in School A effectively fulfilled their administrative responsibilities, including structured annual, monthly, and weekly planning, participation in technical group meetings, and systematic monitoring of student progress. Strong administrative accountability enabled alignment between lesson planning, assessment practices, and school goals. In terms of teaching and learning processes, teachers in School A demonstrated accountability through thorough pre-teaching preparation, active instructional strategies during lessons, and post-teaching follow-up, such as review sessions and assessments. These practices likely contributed to stable learning outcomes across grades. Additionally, effective communication with school management teams, colleagues, students, and parents supported early identification of learning difficulties and timely instructional support. This comprehensive accountability across all domains explains the uniformly positive student learning outcomes in School A.

Most students in School B also achieved good results, with only one student rated as Fairly Good. This indicates that teachers generally demonstrated accountability,

particularly in instructional practices and communication. Teachers collaborated with colleagues to plan curricula, applied active teaching strategies, and maintained regular communication with school leaders and parents regarding student progress. However, the presence of minor variation in student achievement suggests that administrative accountability may be less consistently implemented than in School A. Possible gaps include uneven monitoring, follow-up, or differentiated support for lower-performing students. While accountability is evident, strengthening administrative coordination and targeted intervention could further improve learning outcomes.

In contrast, School C shows greater variation in student learning outcomes, with several students, particularly in Grade 7, classified as Fairly Good. This variation suggests comparatively weaker or inconsistent teacher accountability across one or more domains. Administratively, teachers in School C may face challenges in systematic planning, monitoring, or documentation, which can affect instructional coherence and follow-up. In the teaching and learning process, limited differentiation, reduced post-teaching support, or less effective assessment feedback may have contributed to lower student performance. Communication practices may also be less robust, particularly in engaging parents and coordinating with school management teams to address learning difficulties. Reduced feedback loops and support mechanisms can limit teachers' capacity to respond effectively to student needs, resulting in uneven learning outcomes.

For policy implications, it is recommended that clear documentation and guidelines on teacher accountability in lower secondary schools be strengthened to ensure consistent understanding and implementation. Educational policymakers should also consider integrating appropriate technology to help reduce teachers' administrative workload so that they can focus more on pedagogical practices that support student learning and innovation. In addition, reducing unnecessary tasks and ensuring that teachers' responsibilities are aligned with student learning goals would further support effective accountability practices. In terms of practice, schools should strengthen accountability in classroom-related tasks, particularly in planning, teaching, and assessing student learning. Teachers are also expected to fulfil all three professional roles: administrative responsibilities, effective classroom teaching and learning processes, and engagement with students and the school community to ensure accountability for student learning outcomes. For future research, it is recommended that the measurement items developed in this study be used in quantitative research to examine the accuracy and relationship between teacher accountability and student learning outcomes. Furthermore, future studies could investigate teacher accountability across different regions

or types of schools in Cambodia to better understand contextual differences and broaden the generalizability of the findings.

This study advances knowledge on teacher accountability by showing how accountability is practiced in Cambodian lower secondary schools and how it relates to student learning outcomes. The findings extend the framework of Öztüzücü by identifying three practical domains of teacher accountability in the Cambodian context: administrative work, teaching and learning processes, and communication with stakeholders. The study shows that teachers demonstrate accountability through systematic planning and administrative tasks, effective classroom practices including pre-teaching, while-teaching, and post-teaching activities, and active communication with colleagues, school leaders, students, and parents. When these domains are implemented consistently, as seen in School A, student learning outcomes tend to be more stable and positive, while weaker or inconsistent practices may lead to variation in student performance.

The study also has important policy implications. It suggests that teacher accountability policies should go beyond administrative compliance and emphasize effective teaching practices and collaboration with stakeholders. Strengthening school leadership, improving monitoring systems, and supporting teachers' professional development in these three domains can help improve the consistency of accountability practices across schools and contribute to better student learning outcomes in Cambodia.

## Conclusion

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that teacher accountability in Cambodian lower secondary schools extends beyond teaching and learning processes, which is supported by administrative work and meaningful communication with stakeholders. Administrative responsibilities, such as school planning, documentation, and coordination, were shown to strengthen teachers' contributions to school goals and enhance school effectiveness. Similarly, accountability in classroom processes, including pre-teaching preparation, instructional delivery, and post-teaching evaluation, reinforces teachers' professional commitment to improving student learning outcomes. Teachers' communication with colleagues, school leaders, students, and parents further highlights the social and collaborative dimension of accountability, which supports problem-solving, shared understanding, and transparency. These integrated domains illustrate that accountability in Cambodia operates through both structural duties and relational practices, ultimately strengthening occupational awareness and professional identity. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that

student learning outcomes are closely linked to teacher accountability across administrative, instructional, and communicative roles. Schools exhibiting stronger alignment among these domains show more consistent and higher student achievement. This supports the argument that teacher accountability is not limited to compliance with regulations but is a multidimensional professional practice that directly influences student learning outcomes. Strengthening leadership support, collaborative structures, and accountability mechanisms in these domains is therefore essential for improving educational quality in Cambodian lower secondary schools.

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## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The paper is prepared solely by Syna Sauth and Socheath Mam. This study explores teacher accountability to enhance student learning outcomes in Cambodian lower secondary schools. The findings show that teacher accountability is enacted through three key domains: administrative work, teaching and learning processes, and communication with stakeholders. The research provides qualitative insights into exploring teacher accountability to enhance student learning outcomes in Cambodian lower secondary schools.

## Credit authorship contribution statement

Conceptualization: Syna Sauth and Socheath Mam. Methodology: Syna Sauth and Socheath Mam. Data entry and cleaning: Syna Sauth. Data analysis: Syna Sauth. Writing—original draft preparation: Syna Sauth and Socheath Mam. Writing—review and editing: Syna Sauth and Socheath Mam. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Data availability statement

Data for this research are based on a document study, In-depth interview and focus group discussion to collect at three lower secondary schools in Takeo and Kandal. The data set can be shared upon request.

## Funding declaration

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