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## **Influenced Factors on Teacher Accountability to Enhance Student Learning Outcomes at Lower Secondary School in Cambodia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Teacher accountability is a critical factor in improving student learning outcomes, yet its influencing factors remain underexplored in Cambodian lower secondary schools. This study addresses the gap by investigating both internal and external factors, such as self-motivation, self-commitment, professional development, peer collaboration, school leadership, policy and regulation, feedback, teaching efficacy, social fund and community engagement that shape teacher accountability. The purpose of the research was to examine the extent to which these factors contribute to teachers' responsibility in enhancing student achievement. A qualitative approach was employed from document study, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with 77 participants, including school management teams, teachers, parents, and students from two provinces. Data were thematically analyzed using NVivo software. Findings revealed that self-motivation and self-commitment strongly drive teacher accountability, fostering persistence, innovation, and professional responsibility. External factors, particularly professional development, peer collaboration, supportive leadership, and active community involvement, further reinforce accountability by providing resources, guidance, and shared responsibility for learning. The study concludes that fostering both intrinsic motivation and supportive external environments is essential for sustaining teacher accountability and improving student learning outcomes in Cambodian lower secondary schools.*

**Keywords:** *Lower Secondary School, Student Learning Outcomes, Teacher Accountability*

## INTRODUCTION

The Royal Government of Cambodia as well as Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport has put their effort to reform education in Cambodia. Teacher salaries in Cambodia have increased significantly over the last decade (WB,2025). Teachers has been upgraded to Bachelor's degree through the pilot projects called Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP 2017-2022) and General Education Improvement Project (GEIP 2022-2026) (MoEYS,2021). School improvement has been remarkably noticed. Still, some schools face challenges.Cambodian teachers play a pivotal role in the nation's efforts to enhance education quality within the context of ongoing social and economic development (Soeurn, 2025). Despite this central position, persistent challenges continue to impede progress, including limited access to quality training, inadequate salaries, and weak accountability structures (World Bank, 2014). Although reforms such as the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) and General Education Improvement Project (GEIP) have been designed to elevate teacher standards and advance professional development, many educators continue to face constraints that compromise their classroom effectiveness (Beng, 2021).

Contemporary educational expectations require teachers to cultivate not only academic knowledge but also critical thinking, creativity, and inclusive pedagogical practices (Bhuttah et al., 2024). However, weak accountability mechanisms have contributed to several systemic issues, including the prevalence of unofficial tutoring, inequitable learning opportunities, and persistently low student achievement. Chenga (2022) believes to address these concerns, policies such as School-Based Management (SBM) and the 3A framework (accountability, assessment, autonomy), later expanded to the 6A framework (incorporating attention to early childhood, attention to teachers, and attention to school culture and values), have been introduced (Patrinos et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these initiatives remains contingent upon more robust implementation and comprehensive support systems.

A critical component in achieving these educational objectives is teacher accountability, which ensures that educators fulfill their professional responsibilities and actively contribute to student success. Teacher accountability encompasses multiple dimensions, including classroom instruction, student engagement, curriculum implementation, and adherence to institutional policies (Darling et al., 2017; Khath & Tan, 2024). Rather than focusing solely on individual performance, accountability reflects a broader institutional commitment to fostering collaborative, results-oriented school cultures. The concept has evolved historically from informal moral expectations toward structured professional standards supported by data-driven assessment mechanisms.

In Cambodia, education reforms including the Education Strategic Plan and national curriculum revisions have underscored the necessity for strengthened

teacher accountability. Despite these policy initiatives, challenges such as limited resources, inconsistent policy implementation, and low teacher motivation continue to affect educational outcomes (MoEYS, 2021). Recent evidence indicates that while School-Based Management (SBM) initiatives have been piloted in selected locations, implementation remains inconsistent and coverage limited, particularly in rural areas (World Bank, 2022). Factors such as leadership capacity, clarity of school mission, and learning climate have been shown to significantly influence teacher commitment and accountability, yet substantial variation exists across provinces (Khan et al., 2024).

The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) has implemented several policy initiatives designed to improve teacher accountability, though challenges persist in their comprehensive implementation. The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2019-2023 established goals for enhancing teacher quality and strengthening monitoring systems (MoEYS, 2019). The Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP), launched in 2015, emphasizes standardized approaches to teacher recruitment, retention, and performance appraisal with the objective of linking teacher effectiveness to student outcomes (MoEYS, 2019; World Bank, 2022). The School-Based Management (SBM) framework was designed to empower schools to manage operations more autonomously, with particular emphasis on community involvement in teacher accountability (Bo, 2019; Setiawan & Maskan, 2017). However, the impact of these policies has been constrained by weak school leadership, insufficient community engagement, limited training, and uneven program implementation (Angrist et al., 2025; MoEYS, 2023).

Teacher accountability in Cambodia has direct implications for student outcomes, with issues such as low literacy and numeracy performance, elevated dropout rates, and widening educational inequality attributed partly to weak accountability systems (Chhy & Kawai, 2025). Accountability is influenced by both internal factors, including teacher motivation and professional ethics, and external influences such as leadership quality, policy frameworks, and community engagement (Cochran-Smith, 2021; Şenol & Taş, 2024). This study addresses a timely and original research gap by focusing specifically on the multidimensional nature of teacher accountability in Cambodian lower secondary schools. By gathering primary data directly from teachers and school leaders, the study provides a bottom-up perspective that is rarely found in existing literature, offering empirical evidence to inform the development of more effective, context-sensitive accountability frameworks.

A fundamental challenge within Cambodia's education system is the shortage of high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers, which limits their capacity to adopt contemporary teaching methods and address diverse student needs. Weak institutional and administrative support further diminishes teacher motivation and accountability, while accountability structures remain vague and inconsistently applied, leaving teachers uncertain about their professional roles and

responsibilities. Teacher accountability is shaped by internal factors such as motivation and professional commitment, as well as external factors including community involvement, professional development opportunities, peer collaboration, leadership quality, policy frameworks, and teaching efficacy. Based on these identified problems, this research study seeks to address two key questions: first, to what extent do self-motivation and self-commitment influence teacher accountability in lower secondary schools? Second, how do external factors such as professional development, peer collaboration, school leadership, and community engagement influence teacher accountability in lower secondary schools? This research aims to identify the factors that influence teacher accountability with the ultimate goal of improving student learning outcomes.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are statements that specify what students will know, be able to do, or demonstrate at the end of a course or program and should be action-driven, observable, and measurable (ACCSC, 2022). Alignment between intended learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment is essential: teaching and assessment practices should be designed to measure and advance the stated outcomes rather than inadvertently testing unrelated content. Constructive alignment—the approach of starting with clearly defined outcomes and aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment to those outcomes—is a foundational theory that guides modern outcomes-based curriculum design. Assessment quality research shows that misalignment undermines validity and can be systematically detected and remedied through document analysis, item review, and faculty development. Bloom's Taxonomy remains widely used as a practical framework to classify cognitive demand and to design measurable SLOs—especially when instructors map learning tasks and assessment items to lower and higher cognitive levels—though recent empirical work urges careful use and empirical checking of whether item cognitive levels match intended higher-order outcomes.

### **Teacher Accountability: Conceptual Framework**

Teacher accountability is a multifaceted concept essential for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of education. It encompasses expectations for teachers to demonstrate their impact on student learning, often assessed through performance indicators such as evaluations and assessments (Jerrim & Sims, 2022; Kraft et al., 2020). Beyond academic results, accountability includes professional duties like lesson planning, classroom delivery, and student assessment (Lim et al., 2022). It also involves a moral dimension, requiring educators to justify decisions to students, families, and society (Hwa, 2023). Teacher accountability includes internal accountability (personal values and institutional norms), external

accountability (expectation from school leaders and communities), and personal accountability (self-driven improvement) (Geletu & Mihiretie, 2023). This multidimensional accountability is influenced by factors like professional development, stakeholder engagement, classroom environment, assessment practices, and leadership style (Chitpin, 2016; Smith & Benavot, 2019).

### **Factors Influencing Teacher Accountability**

#### 1. Internal Accountability: Self-Motivation and Self-Commitment

Self-determination theory remains a grand theory, explaining that intrinsic motivation—driven by autonomy, competence, and relatedness—enhances teacher commitment and performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Recent research confirms that when teachers' basic psychological needs are met, they exhibit higher engagement, persistence, and satisfaction in their work (Uysal, 2023). Teachers with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater resilience and lower burnout, which in turn strengthens their sense of accountability toward student outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Professional commitment fosters a moral obligation toward student success, with studies showing that committed teachers are more likely to adapt strategies for diverse learner needs (Day & Gu, 2014). The concept of grit—perseverance and passion for long-term goals—remains important; recent evidence links teacher grit to improved classroom management and persistence through instructional challenges (Credé et al., 2017).

#### 2. External Accountability Factors

##### a. Professional Development and Assessment

Ongoing professional development directly influences teacher accountability by improving instructional quality and fostering reflective practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Recent evidence indicates that collaborative learning communities and needs-based training help teachers align their practice with school improvement goals (Killion & Harrison, 2017). Assessment practices remain a critical driver of accountability. While high-stakes testing can undermine teacher autonomy and creativity, balanced formative assessments provide constructive feedback that supports growth and promotes professional responsibility (Lai & Hwang, 2016).

##### b. Stakeholder Engagement and Support Systems

Parental involvement and community engagement enhance teacher accountability by building shared responsibility for student learning (Jeynes, 2018). Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence theory remains a grand theory, framing how school, family, and community partnerships create synergistic effects on educational outcomes (Epstein, 2018). Teacher collaboration and partnerships

with school leaders and community organizations cultivate mutual support, thereby improving teaching quality and performance accountability (Maele & Houtte, 2015). Effective leadership—particularly transformational leadership—has been shown to motivate teachers to take greater ownership of student learning outcomes (Santos et al., 2024). Additionally, adequate resources and open communication from administrators are vital in sustaining teacher motivation and meeting accountability expectations (Bauer & El-Sayed, 2025).

c. **Autonomy, Reflection, and Collaboration**

Teachers' sense of control over curriculum and instruction boosts motivation and responsibility when paired with transparent accountability frameworks (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Reflective practice theory is a grand theory, highlighting the value of self-regulation and continuous professional improvement. Recent research shows that teacher reflection, when embedded in professional learning communities, significantly improves problem-solving and shared accountability (Hairon et al., 2017; Schön, 2017). Collaborative cultures promote collective responsibility, enabling teachers to co-design solutions for instructional challenges (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

d. **School Leadership**

Effective school leadership remains a central factor shaping teacher accountability. Instructional leadership theory is a grand theory describing how principals influence teaching quality through clear expectations, performance monitoring, and constructive feedback (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Recent meta-analyses confirm that principals who adopt instructional and transformational leadership styles foster teacher motivation, professional growth, and commitment to accountability (Beverborg, 2024; Tan et al., 2024). Leadership that cultivates collaboration and a culture of continuous improvement enhances intrinsic motivation and strengthens teachers' professional standards (Santos et al., 2024).

e. **Policy and Regulatory Frameworks**

National and institutional policies that define teacher standards, evaluation mechanisms, and consequences for performance or non-performance heavily influence accountability practices. In Cambodia, for example, reforms under the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and the General Education Improvement Project (GEIP) have introduced mechanisms for performance-based teacher evaluation and school-based management (MoEYS, 2019).

In short, teacher accountability at the lower secondary level is shaped by complex, interrelated factors—including policy frameworks, professional motivation, assessment, leadership, and community engagement. Effective accountability systems must support teacher autonomy and development while ensuring responsibility for student learning outcomes. In Cambodia, reforms such as the General Education Improvement Project and the School Community Strategy provide frameworks that reinforce these principles (MoEYS, 2021). Further research is needed to explore how these accountability mechanisms function across diverse school contexts to promote lasting educational improvements.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach, which was particularly suited to exploring the influencing factors in the context of teacher accountability (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The research was conducted in a selection of schools within Mithona High School in Takeo Province and Prektaten High School and Sampan Lower Secondary School in Kandal Province in Cambodia.

**Table 1** School's Name and Number of Participants

Name of school	Number of Participants				
	Principal	Vice principal	Teacher	Student	Parent
1 Mithona	1	2	4	12	12
Prektaten	1	1	4	08	08
Sampan	1	0	4	09	10

**Source:** Author's Database (2025)

These schools were chosen based on their alignment with Standard 2 of the School Community Strategy (SCS) framework, which includes five standards focusing 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.

The purposive sampling technique was applied to specifically select individuals who were most likely to provide valuable insights into teacher accountability and influencing factors on teacher accountability. The school 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, were selected. This selection process ensured

that the sample represented a broad yet focused range of stakeholders who could contribute to the research objectives.

**Table 2** Participant 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

**Source:** Author's Database (2025)

The research employed a combination of document study, in-depth interviews, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as data collection tools. Document study was used to review official records, policies, and other relevant materials, focusing on teacher accountability at the school level. This helped identify the formal expectations and policies guiding teacher accountability within the school system. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, school management team members, and other stakeholders to explore the fulfillment of the influencing factors on teacher accountability. These interviews were designed to examine the influence factors in depth. Focus Group Discussion was employed to explore the effect of teacher accountability on student achievement. During these sessions, the school management team, teachers, students, and parents discussed the influencing factors on teacher accountability that improve student learning outcomes.

The researcher obtained permission from the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) and prioritized participant welfare before, during, and after the study. Ethical standards were strictly followed, ensuring participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, scope, and potential risks. Participation was voluntary, with the right to skip questions or withdraw at any time. All responses were kept confidential between the researcher and participants.

Data collection began with securing approval from RUPP. Research tools were prepared, reviewed, and validated by the advisor. Upon approval, interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions were conducted with school management, teachers, students, and parents. Questionnaires were designed for each group to gather information on factors affecting learning achievement. Interview data were cleaned and analyzed using NVivo 15. Files were organized, coded, and grouped into themes and sub-themes. Analysis focused on identifying factors influencing teacher accountability practices that enhance student achievement in lower secondary schools.

Trustworthiness was ensured through multiple instruments—observation forms and semi-structured questionnaires—validated by experts, school management, students, and parents. All tools were thoroughly reviewed and tested before use to ensure accuracy and relevance. The study covered Mithona High School in Takeo Province and Prektaten Secondary School and Sampan Lower

Secondary School in Kandal Province, with 77 participants (6 school managers, 12 teachers, 30 parents, and 29 students). Findings are specific to these locations and cannot be generalized to all Cambodian secondary schools.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings derived from the data collected during the research. The results are organized based on the main research objectives and questions. Each finding is supported by relevant evidence, including statistical analysis and participant responses, to ensure clarity and reliability. These findings provide insights into the core issues under investigation and serve as the basis for discussion and interpretation in the following sections.

### Student Learning Outcomes

The study examined student learning achievement from three schools in the study area. Table 3 presents the academic performance of students during the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year.

**Table 3** Student Learning Outcomes on Semester 2 from 3 Schools

No	Name of student	Sex	Grade	Score semester II	Rank
School A Upper Secondary School					
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
School B Lower Secondary School					
13	ST13	M	9	39.64	
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
School C Upper Secondary School					
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

No	Name of student	Sex	Grade	Score semester II	Rank
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:** Author's Database from 3 Schools

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

Table 3 shows the achievement of students who participated in this study during Semester II. Most students achieved rankings between fairly good and good in their learning. According to MoEYS grading criteria, the average mark ranks are defined as follows: Good (40 to 50), Fairly Good (32.50 to 39.99), Fair (25.00 to 32.49), and Fail (under 25). To calculate the semester result, teachers sum all ten or more subjects as allowed and implemented by MoEYS, then divide the total mark by the number of subjects. Based on these results, student learning outcomes for Semester 2 in academic year 2023-2024 ranged from good to fairly good.

To understand these outcomes, researchers conducted observations from the beginning to the end of Semester 2, monitoring teacher activities both inside and outside the classroom. The student learning outcomes can be attributed significantly to teacher performance, providing a valuable measure of teacher accountability and student learning activities. Students who participated in the study revealed that the teacher is the primary factor generating quality learning through effective involvement in teaching and learning processes. They noted that teachers provide support, guidance, facilitation, encouragement, and motivation across all learning circumstances. Students mentioned that teachers demonstrate clear content knowledge, teaching methodologies, and pedagogical knowledge in their profession. Additionally, teachers consistently employ varied teaching and learning methodologies both inside and outside the classroom, including cooperative learning, group work, presentation skills, lesson study, and student-led research. Consequently, students in the class reported enjoyment and active participation in learning. Teachers also consistently support, guide, facilitate, encourage, and motivate every student, particularly when students encounter difficulties in learning or face personal concerns.

The findings reveal that a combination of internal and external factors significantly shapes teachers' sense of responsibility and performance in enhancing student learning outcomes. Teacher accountability is a crucial element in ensuring quality education and improving student learning outcomes. In the context of lower secondary schools in Cambodia, both internal and external factors significantly shape how teachers fulfill their professional responsibilities. Internally, self-motivation and self-commitment empower teachers to remain dedicated, overcome challenges, and strive for excellence in their roles. Externally, factors such as professional development, peer collaboration, school leadership, policies, feedback,

and community involvement create supportive environments that enhance teacher performance. Exploring the extent to which these internal and external influences affect teacher accountability provides valuable insights for educational improvement in Cambodia.

**Internal Factors: Self-Motivation and Self-Commitment**

Teacher accountability plays a critical role in improving student learning outcomes and overall school effectiveness. In this study, internal factors such as self-motivation and self-commitment emerged as key drivers of teacher accountability. These personal qualities empower teachers to take initiative, persist through challenges, and remain dedicated to their professional duties. Understanding the extent to which these internal factors influence accountability is essential for designing strategies that support teacher development and enhance educational quality in Cambodia.

**Table 4** Internal Influence Factors on Teacher Accountability

Theme	Sub-Theme	Code
Internal	Self-Motivation	<u>Continue to work with all stakeholders</u> <u>Seek out new professional development</u> <u>Help to thrive and adapt to evolving aspects of education</u> <u>Maintain positive attitude</u> <u>Think positively to all the tasks</u> <u>Learn to appreciate what we have and what are we doing</u> <u>Encounter problems</u> <u>Make right decision to work</u>
	Self-Commitment	<u>Make us to help others</u> <u>Help us to determine to block difficulties and encounter negative activities</u> <u>Be sharp in imparting knowledge to students</u> <u>Be beneficial to responsibilities</u>

**Source:** Author’s Findings from In-Depth Interview (2025)

According to Table 4, self-motivation significantly influences teacher accountability, with nearly half of the participants emphasizing its role. Teachers who are self-motivated are more likely to take initiative in their professional development, embrace continuous learning, and respond effectively to new educational challenges. This internal drive helps them remain committed even without external encouragement, leading to consistent and effective classroom performance.

Self-motivated teachers often display a strong sense of responsibility, resilience, and a positive outlook. One teacher noted that self-motivation builds self-worth and reduces the need for constant comparison with others. This mindset helps them overcome discouragement and stay focused on student needs. Additionally, motivated teachers are more open to collaboration, make thoughtful decisions, and take ownership of their duties. They also tend to manage stress better,

maintaining their mental health, which is essential for sustained engagement and for supporting students' academic and emotional growth.

[...]. I think that self-motivation is beneficial to my responsibilities, such as having a strong will to provide knowledge to students, a resource for the next generation without hiding knowledge, and a conscience in committing to helping my students have brighter knowledge [...] (P8, P10, P17 and P18).

[...]. I think self-motivation is a factor on me as teacher because it helps me to continue to work with all stakeholders and think positively about others [...] (P8, P10 & P12). [...]. Self-motivation can help me to learn to appreciate what we have and what are we doing [...] (P7, and P9). [...]. Self-motivation helps me to seek out new professional development, make the right decision and encounter the problems [...] (P8, P1, P13 and P14).

[...]. Self-commitment is another factor on me it motivates me to help others, especially, to help my students to study and do not drop out of school [...] (P8, P11, P18). [...]. Helping us to determine to block difficulties and encounter negative activities because of self-commitment [...] (P12, P15). [...]. [...]. Self-motivation is definitely sharp in imparting knowledge to students and be beneficial to responsibilities [...] (P7, P9, P10 and P14).

Self-commitment also significantly contributes to teacher accountability, with respondents acknowledging its influence. Teachers who demonstrate a strong sense of self-commitment consistently go beyond their routine responsibilities. Their commitment is reflected in their dedication to student learning, their willingness to invest extra time, and their determination to meet both personal and institutional goals.

Self-committed teachers are deeply invested in the success of their students. They actively seek out innovative teaching methods, adapt to learners' needs, and strive to maintain a positive and inclusive classroom environment. This personal drive encourages teachers to uphold professional standards and take ownership of their performance, even in the absence of external pressure or monitoring. Moreover, teachers with high levels of commitment tend to collaborate more effectively with peers, stay engaged in school improvement efforts, and remain resilient in the face of challenges. Their inner drive often leads them to pursue continuous improvement, reflect on their practices, and welcome constructive feedback. One of the key outcomes of self-commitment is its influence on student achievement: committed teachers serve as role models, instilling perseverance, responsibility, and a strong work ethic in their students. Finally, self-commitment reinforces a teacher's emotional and professional stability, helps manage burnout, and strengthens their long-term contribution to the school community. As such, it is a vital factor in building sustainable teacher accountability.

Based on the findings, self-motivation and self-commitment have a strong and direct influence on teacher accountability in lower secondary schools. Nearly half of the participants identified self-motivation as a critical factor, highlighting that intrinsically driven teachers are more likely to take initiative, engage in

continuous professional development, and maintain consistent classroom performance even without external pressure. Similarly, self-commitment emerged as a major contributor, with committed teachers demonstrating a willingness to go beyond routine duties by investing extra time, adopting innovative teaching methods, and actively addressing student needs. These traits strengthen accountability by ensuring that teachers uphold professional standards, adapt to diverse learners, and remain resilient in the face of challenges. Overall, the findings indicate that when teachers possess high levels of self-motivation and self-commitment, their accountability is not only sustained but also self-regulated, leading to improved teaching quality and enhanced student learning outcomes in lower secondary schools.

### **External Factors Influencing Teacher Accountability**

External factors influencing teacher accountability include professional development, peer collaboration, supportive leadership, clear policies, feedback, teaching efficacy, and communication. These elements, though beyond teachers' direct control, significantly shape their sense of responsibility. This study found that such support systems help teachers feel more confident, motivated, and committed, ultimately leading to better student outcomes.

**Table 5** External Influenced Factors on Teacher Accountability

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Code</b>
<b>External</b>	<b>Professional development</b>	Effect and fulfil the teacher's role Gain more knowledge, skills and techniques in teaching Develop qualification Help teacher to find the ways and techniques to help students in learning
	<b>Peer collaboration and support</b>	Encourage co-learning as team Give opportunity to share and discuss Offer support, guidance and advice Develop positive relationship Develop mindset Reinforce student's growth Help each other Team work
	<b>School leadership and administrative support</b>	Monitor student progress Help ease – non teaching staff and teachers Focus better on teaching Provide new learning opportunity
	<b>Policy and school regulation</b>	Clear definition of teacher responsibility Do the job properly Enable teacher to be conscientious
	<b>Feedback</b>	Encourage extensive studying Prepare student's clear schedule

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
		Allow students to identify good point, weak point and point to improve Cultivate of spirit of hard work
	<b>Teaching efficacy</b>	Set clear goal of teaching Clearly think about extra activities to teach Help students be better in learning Improve quality of teacher in teaching
	<b>Community communication</b>	Help and manage teacher go to school on time Involve and provide information on time Make students and teachers are closed
	<b>Social Fund</b>	Fund raising in and outdoor activities

**Source:** Author's Findings from In-Depth Interview (2025)

Based on Table 5, professional development stands out as a major external factor influencing teacher accountability. Teachers and school management teams agree that training workshops, technical meetings, and continuous learning opportunities improve teaching effectiveness. These experiences equip teachers with better instructional methods, deeper subject knowledge, and classroom management skills. As a result, teachers gain confidence, feel more responsible, and are motivated to improve student learning, as evidenced by a rise in national exam pass rates.

[...]. I think that teachers participate in qualification training at Royal University of Phnom Penh or in somewhere or in school gain more knowledge and can help students to learn more by using new teaching methods, such as providing self-study sheets before meeting with teachers [...] (P6). [...]. Teachers who attend training course; they ensure that they have sufficient administrative work to manage effectively [...] (P6).

[...] Teachers can teach students according to their abilities—encouraging quick learners to accelerate their learning and provide support to students who learn slowly, helping them catch up with those who are progressing quickly [...]. (P6).

[...]. The development of my qualifications has had a positive impact on my role. I have learned many things, including teaching methods, how to identify student abilities, and how to build discipline [...] (P16).

[...]. Professional development enables me to develop and test new techniques that can be used effectively in the classroom, focusing on specific student needs.

[...]. Professional development encourages me to reflect on my teaching practices, evaluate my effectiveness, and make necessary adjustments [...] (P15)

Peer collaboration also plays a crucial role, with many teachers noting that teamwork enhances their accountability. Sharing experiences, co-planning lessons, and supporting one another promotes a professional culture focused on student success.

[...]. Other factor that influence on teacher accountability is maintain a 100% good and united relationship within the organization. [...]. Teacher have to show tolerance for teachers who encounter problems and provide support as needed [...]. (P4). [...]. Strong management promotes a collaborative environment where teachers can share resources, ideas and best practices. This teamwork strengthens professional development and creates a supportive culture that benefits both teachers and students [...]. (P9).

Strong school leadership and administrative support are equally important. Clear expectations, regular monitoring, and logistical support reduce teachers' non-instructional burdens, allowing them to focus more on teaching. When leaders are encouraging and supportive, teachers respond with increased dedication and professionalism.

[...]. The practice of classroom administration is important during the school year, with administrative discipline, with the chairperson, vice chairperson supervising the student learning process, practicing lessons, practicing in class and at home [...] (P2). [...]. To ensure students receive the support I need to improve their academic performance, I carry out administrative tasks such as monitoring my progress and reporting it to the principal and their guardians [...] (P4). [...]. Management helps maintain order, discipline and work standards, and leadership inspires the activities and dynamics of teachers [...]. (P7)

Clear policies and regulations guide teacher behavior and reinforce professional standards. Most teachers reported that consistent enforcement of rules fosters discipline and helps them stay aligned with school goals.

[...]. My school has discipline, the school management performs its duties well by respecting the principle of not being arrogant, which is a factor that leads me to fulfil my duties of teaching students well, leading students to enjoy learning [...] (P15). [...]. To fulfil my role effectively, several factors such as policy and school regulation must be in place, including political stability, peace, approval from the ministry, and support from various other bodies [...] (P16).

Feedback from students and stakeholders further strengthens accountability. When teachers receive input on their teaching, they adjust their methods to better meet student needs, which improves engagement and reduces failure rates.

[...]. In the case of my request, my teacher taught important points and shared various tips, assigning exercises for me to practice and correctly, and my teacher agreed and taught according to my request to improve my academic achievement [...] (P38). [...]. After I provided feedback/requests, I received positive responses in participating in all the activities that the teacher provided and help my child, and additionally guiding my child on studying, respecting time, and working hard [...] (P51).

Teaching efficacy—the belief in one's ability to teach effectively—encourages goal-setting, responsiveness to student needs, and high expectations. Teachers who feel capable are more accountable and committed.

[...]. According my observation, I noticed that my teacher worked hard to fulfil her responsibilities, coming to teach regularly during full hours and participating in school or community activities [...] (P20). [...] My teacher provided extra activities for me and my friends who learn slowly or are facing difficulties in their studies by paying extra attention to them and teaching them one-on-one so that students can understand. Then, the teacher continues teaching other students, without charging any money [(P33). [...] In learning and teaching, my teacher assigned various tasks for me to do to help me study and develop ideas further by carefully exploring the tasks [...] (P21). Provide students with self-study worksheets for all four levels before meeting with the teacher. [...] Have students self-assess their learning outcomes based on the lessons covered in the worksheets and implement project-based learning methods to enhance understanding and application of concepts [...] (P6).

Community and parental involvement builds a shared sense of responsibility. When parents support schools and monitor their children's progress, teachers feel more valued and motivated, while student attendance and behavior improve.

[...]. The importance of parental or community involvement has led to improved student learning outcomes. This involvement has led students to strive to learn more, with parents helping to motivate them [...] (P13). [...] With the cooperation of parents, the community, the school, and the teachers, it makes the teachers strive to fulfil their duties with responsibility in their teaching profession [...] (P48). [...] Encourage and motivate student to study hard. Try to monitor their children's studies and provide opportunities for children to express their difficulties [...] (P77).

Social funds, established to help students achieve better results, provide budgets for supporting students through community involvement.

[...]. In order for me to work to achieve results, the school has a mechanism to support the creation of social funds that make the school have a budget that can help society help students achieve good results [...] (P9).

In short, external factors such as professional development, peer collaboration, school leadership, and community engagement play a vital role in strengthening teacher accountability in lower secondary schools. Professional development equips teachers with updated teaching methods and boosts their confidence, leading to more effective classroom practices. Peer collaboration fosters teamwork, shared responsibility, and problem-solving, which enhance teachers' professional commitment. Supportive school leadership provides clear expectations, reduces non-teaching burdens, and motivates teachers to focus on student learning. Meanwhile, active community and parental involvement reinforces teachers' sense of responsibility, as they feel valued and supported. Together, these factors create an environment where teachers are more accountable, motivated, and committed to improving student outcomes.

The findings align with Self-Determination Theory, which asserts that intrinsic motivation enhances professional engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Nearly half of the participants highlighted self-motivation as a driver of teacher accountability, confirming that meeting teachers' basic psychological needs leads to greater persistence and performance (Uysal, 2023). Self-motivated teachers demonstrated initiative in professional development and consistent classroom effectiveness, supporting research linking high self-efficacy to resilience and reduced burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). The study also confirms that grit is linked to sustained effort in classroom management and instructional challenges, with teachers reporting that self-motivation helped them overcome discouragement and focus on student needs despite obstacles (Credé et al., 2017).

Self-commitment emerged as a major contributor to accountability, with committed teachers going beyond routine duties by investing additional time and adopting innovative teaching methods. This aligns with research showing that teacher commitment predicts student achievement and school improvement (Day & Gu, 2014). Both self-motivation and self-commitment have direct implications for student outcomes, as teachers' intrinsic drive serves as a role model, cultivating positive learning culture and improving academic performance while reducing teacher turnover.

Professional development emerged as one of the most influential external factors, with teachers reporting that training equips them with updated teaching methods and stronger classroom management skills. This aligns with research emphasizing that ongoing, needs-based professional development improves instructional quality and fosters reflective practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Killion & Harrison, 2017). Peer collaboration also proved crucial, with sharing resources and co-planning lessons improving professional culture and problem-solving capacity, consistent with findings on collaborative learning communities (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Supportive leadership was consistently linked to stronger teacher accountability through clear expectations, regular supervision, and assistance with non-instructional tasks. This aligns with Instructional Leadership Theory and recent findings that transformational leadership styles enhance teacher motivation and commitment (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Tan et al., 2024). Clear policies and regulations were identified as stabilizing factors that reinforce professional standards, consistent with MoEYS (2021) reforms under the ESP and GEIP.

Constructive feedback from students and stakeholders was highlighted as essential for refining teaching practices, supporting the view that formative assessment drives professional growth (Lai & Hwang, 2016). Teaching efficacy emerged as a strong motivator, with high self-efficacy teachers setting clear goals and providing targeted support, reflecting findings that teacher autonomy and confidence foster greater ownership of learning outcomes (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020).

Active engagement from parents and the community was seen as enhancing teacher motivation and accountability. Teachers noted that when parents monitor

student progress, encourage attendance, and support learning at home, they feel more valued and driven to perform well. This aligns with Epstein's (2018) *Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory* and Jeynes's (2018) findings that school-family-community partnerships improve student achievement and strengthen teachers' sense of shared responsibility.

The presence of social funds, raised through school and community efforts, was reported to directly support student needs and indirectly strengthen teacher accountability. By providing resources for learning activities and student support, these funds enable teachers to focus more on instruction and less on material constraints. This illustrates the role of resource availability, as discussed by Bauer and El-Sayed (2025), in sustaining motivation and meeting accountability expectations.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study confirms that self-motivation and self-commitment are key drivers of teacher accountability. Teachers who are intrinsically motivated and committed to their profession demonstrate greater resilience, engagement, and effectiveness in the classroom. These traits not only enhance their well-being but also positively impact student learning outcomes. Strengthening these qualities through targeted support and professional development is essential for building a more accountable, empowered, and high-performing teaching workforce.

On the one hand, this study concludes that enhancing teacher accountability requires both internal motivation and strong institutional support. When teachers are empowered through continuous professional development, collaborative environments, effective leadership, clear policies, and meaningful community engagement, they are more committed, responsive, and effective. A balanced, supportive system that nurtures both personal growth and professional responsibility is key to improving teaching quality and student outcomes in lower secondary schools.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and discussion, this study proposes several recommendations to enhance teacher accountability and improve student learning outcomes in lower secondary schools in Cambodia. These recommendations address both internal motivational factors and external systemic supports that shape teacher performance.

To strengthen internal accountability, schools and policymakers should support teachers in setting personal and professional goals while providing structured opportunities for self-reflection, fostering ownership of their work. Teachers should be given greater autonomy in instructional decisions, including freedom to design lessons, choose strategies, and adapt materials to match student

needs, which boosts intrinsic motivation. Recognition and celebration of teachers' extra contributions, both formally and informally, can reinforce their commitment and dedication. Opportunities for professional growth through workshops, peer learning, and advanced training that align with teachers' interests and strengths should be facilitated. Finally, promoting a supportive school culture where collaboration, trust, and open communication are valued helps sustain teachers' internal drive and long-term dedication.

For external accountability factors, professional development programs should be continuous, needs-based, and explicitly linked to school improvement goals, incorporating training on differentiated instruction, reflective practice, and classroom management. Collaborative structures such as lesson study groups and peer mentoring programs should be formalized, while encouraging a school culture that values teamwork, resource sharing, and mutual support. School leaders should provide clear expectations and consistent performance monitoring paired with constructive feedback, while reducing administrative burdens to allow teachers to prioritize teaching. Consistent enforcement of school policies promotes stability and professionalism, and accountability standards should be integrated into teacher evaluation systems without undermining teacher autonomy.

Regular feedback channels between teachers, students, and parents should be established, and teachers should receive training to use feedback constructively for instructional adjustments. Coaching and mentoring programs can build teacher confidence in addressing diverse learner needs, while recognition of teachers who demonstrate innovation and adaptability reinforces positive behaviors. School-family partnerships should be strengthened through regular meetings, workshops, and joint activities, with parents involved in school decision-making to increase shared responsibility. Finally, transparent and sustainable community fundraising efforts should be encouraged, with funds directed toward targeted student support to relieve teachers of resource shortages and enable them to focus on core instructional responsibilities.

These recommendations, if implemented systematically and sustainably, can create an educational environment in Cambodia where teacher accountability is both internally driven and externally supported, ultimately leading to improved teaching quality and enhanced student learning outcomes.

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