

Quality Education through Standards: Model Primary School Standards (MPSS) and Student Learning Outcomes in Cambodian Primary Schools

Theara Tang¹ and Thearom Ret²

^{1,2}National University of Battambang, Cambodia

Introduction: The continuous enhancement of the quality of primary education continues in Cambodia, one of the central aims of the Education Strategic Plan 2024–2028, which emphasizes inclusive access to knowledge, skills, ethics, health, and lifelong learning. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport introduced the Model Primary School Standards (MPSS) in response to inevitable challenges for academic achievement and school leadership and effectiveness. With the aim of highlighting context-specific evidence to inform educational policy and school-level reform, this study examines the relationship between MPSS implementation and student learning outcomes.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative research design to collect the data through diverse sessions of five focus group discussions and eight in-depth interviews with 52 participants (17 women). Participants comprised school principals, teachers, school management committee members, and parents or guardians from four primary schools in Pailin province, Cambodia. Situated in the western region near the Thai border, Pailin is one of the country's least populous provinces, which is essential for this study.

Results: Thematic content analysis revealed seven core factors contributing to the practicality and smoothness of the success of MPSS implementation. These themes involve mainly student learning outcomes, teaching quality and attitudes, the necessity of parental involvement and community engagement, effective school management and staff development, and innovation in teaching methods and materials. Based on the primary findings, implementing MPSS has been improving student learning outcomes through the enhancement of instructional quality, promoting school-community collaboration, and strengthening school leadership.

Conclusion: This study provides empirical insights into how the MPSS framework can enhance educational quality in Cambodian primary schools. The relationship between MPSS and improved student learning outcomes indicates the importance of a standards-based approach to education reform that is both systematic and locally responsive. Teacher professional development and the integration of contextualized teaching resources further supported these outcomes. Nevertheless, challenges such as resource limitations and varying stakeholder engagement levels remain the concern for the program's success, both at the provincial and national levels.

Practical Value: This study has provided practical recommendations for relevant policymakers and school leaders to strengthen the smoothness and effectiveness of implementing the MPSS framework in Cambodian primary educational improvement. It also discussed the mechanisms through which MPSS supports student learning, indicating the necessity of standards-based and contextualized reforms in achieving equitable and sustainable educational outcomes in Cambodia.

Direction for Future Research: This study's primary results support the finalization of the quantitative phase for the following research, aiming to evaluate some key indicators of the MPSS implementation in Pailin's primary education. Future large-scale studies are needed to complement the comprehensiveness of the findings and continue to effectively examine the long-term sustainability of MPSS-related improvements, assess the scalability of best practices across different provinces in the country, and evaluate the role of school infrastructure and policy alignment in enhancing and sustaining student achievement. Therefore, comparative studies between MPSS and non-MPSS schools could further illuminate critical success factors and inform nationwide reform efforts.

Keywords: educational management, student learning outcomes, Model Primary School Standards (MPSS), quality education, Cambodia

CORRESPONDENCE: tangtheara76@gmail.com