Syracuse University

Jayavarman VII High School: Addressing Lack of Study Abroad Participation

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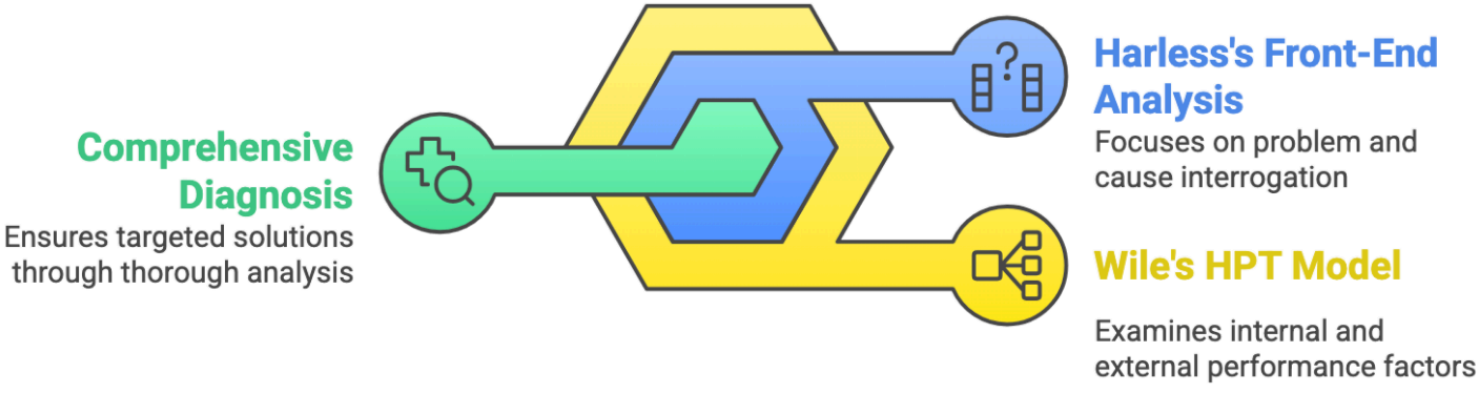
Human Performance Technology Models



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Jayavarman VII High School: Final Front-End Analysis (FEA) Report

I. Introduction

1.1 Mission and Vision of the Organization

Jayavarman VII High School, located in Kandal Province, Cambodia, is a public secondary institution committed to delivering high-quality education and empowering students to achieve future success. The school's mission is to provide students with strong academic foundations, critical thinking abilities, and core values that prepare them to make meaningful contributions to society. The school's vision is to become a leading educational institution that develops graduates equipped to thrive in a globalized world. Central to this vision is a focus on international readiness, with the goal of cultivating students who are globally competitive and prepared to seize opportunities beyond national borders. Through a commitment to academic excellence and personal growth, Jayavarman VII High School aims to inspire students to pursue higher education and take on meaningful roles both locally and internationally.

1.2 Context and Key Performance Challenges

Cambodia's educational context is one of rapid development but persistent challenges. Jayavarman VII High School serves a semi-urban community where many families have limited financial means and little history of higher education abroad. In recent years, there has been growing interest among Cambodian youth in international education opportunities. Despite this, study abroad participation remains exceptionally low. Nationally, only 6,983 Cambodian tertiary-level students were studying abroad in 2019, representing a mere 3.13% of total tertiary enrollment. By contrast, neighboring Vietnam, a country of similar population, had 126,059 students abroad as of 2019. This disparity underscores a significant performance challenge: students at Jayavarman VII High School (and Cambodia at large) are not pursuing higher education abroad at rates comparable to peers in the region. The school currently has zero 12th-grade students enrolled in overseas universities, even as interest in foreign study grows.

This low participation in international programs is the focal performance gap for the school. Key barriers are suspected to include limited awareness of opportunities, inadequate preparation (e.g., language skills), financial constraints, and socio-cultural apprehensions. These challenges align with broader national trends. For instance, in the 2019–2020 academic year, only 742 Cambodian students enrolled in U.S. universities, out of nearly 1.1 million international students in the U.S. Such underrepresentation suggests systemic issues that extend to Jayavarman VII High School's student population. The central performance challenge addressed in this report is increasing the number of Jayavarman VII High School students who successfully pursue higher education abroad. Achieving this goal requires identifying and addressing the barriers that currently hinder students from accessing international study opportunities.

1.3 Stakeholders Involved

Multiple stakeholders are involved in and affected by this performance issue. At the center are the students (primarily 9th and 12th graders) who are the potential applicants for study abroad programs. They are the performers whose decisions and abilities we aim to influence. Parents and families are critical stakeholders as well; their support (or concerns) can significantly impact a student's motivation to apply abroad. Many parents in the community may worry about financial burdens or cultural implications of sending a child overseas, and some may prefer their children to enter the workforce immediately after high school.

Within the school, the principal and teachers are key stakeholders. The principal provides leadership and can allocate resources or partnerships for study abroad initiatives. Teachers play a role in preparing students academically (e.g., building English proficiency) and encouraging ambitious academic and personal goals. Currently, Jayavarman VII High School lacks a dedicated guidance counselor for college advising, which is a notable gap. Thus, counselors or mentors (even if external) are potential stakeholders that could be introduced in order to guide students through complex application processes.

At the organizational and community level, the School Board Members or local education authorities have a stake in the school's performance outcomes and reputation. Their buy-in is important for implementing new support programs. District Education Officers and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) are stakeholders from a policy perspective. The government's strategic plan envisions a world-class higher education system for Cambodia's development, and improving international educational access at the high school level aligns with that national vision.

External stakeholders also include international scholarship providers (e.g., organizations or foreign universities offering scholarships to Cambodian students) and educational NGOs. For example, programs run by the U.S. Embassy's EducationUSA Advising Center or NGOs like SHE-CAN provide information and scholarships to students; these entities can partner with the school. Additionally, private education consultants or alumni who studied abroad can act as mentors or resource people. Each stakeholder group, including students, parents, school staff, community leaders, and external partners, has distinct perspectives and needs that must be considered in the FEA. Engaging all stakeholders will be crucial in understanding the root causes of the low study abroad rate and in designing effective, collaborative solutions.

II. Statement of the Performance Problem

2.1 Identification of the Problem

Performance Problem: *Despite growing community and national interests, Jayavarman VII High School students are not participating in higher education abroad, reflecting a significant performance gap.* The school has no current graduates studying overseas, and very few even attempting to apply. This problem is evident when comparing the current performance (zero students studying abroad from the latest graduating cohort) to the potential optimal performance

(at least one student annually pursuing international study opportunities). In other words, the opportunity to study abroad is being almost entirely missed by the school's graduates.

This issue is of high importance because it suggests that students are not reaching their full potential or taking advantage of available opportunities. Although many students at Jayavarman VII High School express a strong interest in studying abroad—dreaming of attending universities in countries such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, and neighboring nations—significant barriers prevent these aspirations from becoming reality. In short, while students have both the interest and potential, participation in international higher education programs remains very low. This highlights a clear performance need: bridging the gap between student ambition and actual enrollment in overseas institutions.

2.2 Current vs. Desired Performance with Measurable Goals

Current Performance: As of the latest academic year, zero of the 12th-grade students at Jayavarman VII High School enrolled in universities abroad upon graduation. Out of approximately 300 graduating seniors, went on to attend a foreign post-secondary institution. Students either continued to local universities or entered the workforce, often due to financial or informational constraints.

The Desired Performance is to have a sustainable increase in study abroad participation. A realistic initial target is to achieve *at least one student gaining admission to and attending an international university after one academic year*. This modest goal (one student in the next year) is measurable and significant, given the baseline of zero study abroad participation. Over the course of 5 years, the school aims to see continuous improvement of study abroad participation (i.e., five students out of a graduating class of three hundred study abroad by the fifth year).

This desired performance can be quantified through specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as: the number of overseas university applications submitted by students, the number of students accepted into international programs, and ultimately the number who enroll and attend. Another measurable outcome is improvement in readiness metrics. For instance, average English proficiency test scores (IELTS/TOEFL) among interested students, or scholarship awards received. Currently, with no students applying abroad, these metrics are effectively at zero; the goal is to raise them incrementally. For instance, by the end of the coming school year, the objective might be to have at least 5 students complete applications to foreign universities and 1 student secure admission (potentially with funding). In summary, the desired state is that *Jayavarman VII High School regularly produces graduates who not only aspire to study abroad but also successfully do so, measured by a rising count of applications, admissions, and enrollments in international institutions.*

2.3 Rationale for Addressing the Performance Gap

Addressing this performance gap is crucial for multiple reasons. **Firstly**, increasing study abroad participation aligns with the school's mission of empowering students through education. Additionally, gaining international education exposure can significantly broaden a student's

academic horizons, improve language and professional skills, and enhance future career prospects. These benefits extend beyond the individual: returning graduates can contribute advanced skills and global perspectives to the local community and country. In the long run, even a small increase in students studying abroad can have a ripple effect, building human capital for Cambodia's development. Studies have shown that nations benefit when students gain international qualifications and bring back knowledge and networks. For example, Cambodia's regional neighbors with higher outbound student numbers (like Vietnam) have leveraged international education to boost their economies and innovation capacity.

Secondly, there is an issue of equity and aspiration. Many Jayavarman VII students are talented and motivated; the lack of representation in overseas programs suggests they are not reaching opportunities available to their peers elsewhere. This could be due to remediable factors, including a lack of information or guidance. By addressing this gap, the school will fulfill students' potential and personal aspirations that otherwise remain unachieved. It also helps fulfill the national strategic vision for an educated youth ready to engage globally. Solving this issue can improve the school's reputation and stakeholder, SAT, and IELTS scores. Parents, families, and the community at large can take pride in their student's successes.

Finally, there is a clear need in terms of stakeholder expectations. Parents and students, once made aware of scholarships or programs, will expect the school's support. If the school does not respond to this need, students may continue to miss life-changing opportunities, and the cycle of limited higher education advancement will persist. Conversely, closing this performance gap will demonstrate the school's commitment to excellence and innovation in education. In summary, the rationale for action is strong: improving study abroad participation will expand educational access, empower individuals, and contribute to broader social and economic goals. It addresses a performance need that is currently unmet, and doing so is both educationally sound and ethically responsible in giving students the best possible chance to succeed.

III. Environmental Scanning with PESTLE Analysis

To fully understand the performance gap, we conducted an environmental scan using the PESTLE framework (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental factors). This analysis identifies external factors influencing students' ability or decision to study abroad.

3.1 Political Factors

Cambodia's political climate and government policies play a crucial role in shaping educational opportunities. The government, through the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), has demonstrated a commitment to enhancing higher education and promoting internationalization, as reflected in its strategic plans. However, practical support for study abroad at the high school level is limited. There are no formal government programs in secondary schools specifically promoting or facilitating international university enrollment. The absence of school-based college counseling (due to a policy or funding gap) means students rely on ad-hoc resources. That said, Cambodia enjoys stable diplomatic relations with many countries, and government scholarships exist (e.g., agreements with countries like China, the

USA, or regional exchange programs), but information about these can be hard to access at the local school level. Additionally, any shifts in government focus (e.g., prioritizing domestic technical training over academic study abroad) could influence available support.

Another political factor is the emphasis on preventing "brain drain." While not a formal law, there might be concerns among policymakers about students not returning after studying abroad. However, Cambodia has generally encouraged developing human resources abroad to some extent, as evidenced by participation in programs such as Fulbright, Chevening, Australian Award, New Zealand Award, or ASEAN scholarships. Also, the political stability of Cambodia means students can plan long-term education without domestic disruption, but they must navigate the political climate of destination countries, too. For example, changes in U.S. visa policies or geopolitical issues can affect Cambodian applicants (such as heightened scrutiny or changing scholarship quotas). Overall, politically, the environment is moderately supportive but lacks direct initiatives, meaning the school and partners will need to take the initiative to bridge this gap.

3.2 Economic Factors

Economic factors form one of the biggest barriers in this case. Cambodia remains a low to middle-income country, and many families at Jayavarman VII High School are of modest means. The cost of studying abroad is prohibitive for most families when considering tuition, travel, and living expenses in countries such as the U.S., Canada, England, Germany, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Australia. Average household income levels make it nearly impossible to afford international education without substantial scholarships. Even application costs (exam fees, application fees) can be burdensome. Financial constraints were identified as a top reason students do not pursue higher education overseas. A related factor is the opportunity cost, which means some families need their teenage children to start working after high school to contribute income, rather than invest in further studies. Indeed, it is not uncommon for families facing financial hardship to prefer a child to earn money immediately rather than support an uncertain, expensive educational venture.

Funding opportunities do exist (e.g., some foreign government scholarships or NGO programs), but awareness and access are limited. Additionally, even with a full tuition scholarship, students often need funds for travel or visas. Lack of savings or credit means they cannot cover these upfront costs. On a broader scale, Cambodia's lower economic development means there's less state or institutional funding for study abroad compared to wealthier neighboring countries. The school itself has a limited budget, so any support programs, such as test prep or counseling, need creative resourcing or external funding. The economic factor is thus a critical part of the performance problem. Any solution must address how to minimize costs or provide financial support; otherwise, even highly qualified and motivated students will be unable to act on their study abroad ambitions.

3.3 Social Factors

Social and cultural factors strongly influence student aspirations and decisions. In Cambodian society, higher education is valued, but studying abroad is a relatively novel and daunting concept for many families in this community. Cultural attitudes may include apprehension about young people, especially daughters living far from home. Parents worry about children adapting to foreign cultures or losing touch with their own. There can also be a fear for their safety and well-being in unfamiliar countries. Moreover, if no one in the family or immediate community has studied abroad before (which is often the case), there is a lack of social precedent or encouragement. It's challenging to embark on a path that seems extraordinary or risky in one's social circle. This can affect student confidence, and they might internalize doubts about whether someone "like them" can succeed abroad.

Additionally, societal expectations can pressure graduates toward more immediate, practical paths. For instance, some families might expect students to start working locally or to get a local university degree and then work, considering study abroad as an unnecessary detour. There's also the issue of community awareness. Currently, there may not be strong advocacy in the school's community highlighting the value of international education. On the other hand, Cambodian society is rapidly changing. The youth are increasingly exposed to global media and success stories of those who went abroad. Peer influence is a factor too; if one or two students succeed in going abroad, it can inspire others by making it seem achievable. Thus, social factors present both barriers (tradition, fear of the unknown, community norms) and potential motivators (pride, aspiration, peer examples). Effective solutions will need to engage and educate the community and parents, not just the students, to shift social perceptions toward supporting study abroad.

3.4 Technological Factors

Technology plays a role primarily in terms of access to information and preparation resources. For students to learn about international programs, scholarships, and application procedures, internet access is crucial. In Cambodia, internet penetration has improved, but still about 40% of the population lacks regular internet access. Many students in rural or semi-urban areas rely on smartphones with limited data for the internet. At Jayavarman VII High School, there may be a computer lab or some Chromebooks (the extant data suggests Chromebook usage was an initiative), but effective use depends on teacher support and electricity/connectivity. Inadequate access to online information can mean students simply do not know what opportunities exist or how to pursue them. For example, if a student cannot easily research university requirements or doesn't use platforms like EducationUSA's online resources, they remain in the dark about study abroad processes.

Technology also matters in preparation for applications. Taking tests like TOEFL, researching colleges, or even completing online applications all assume a level of digital access and literacy. Students who lack computer skills or reliable internet may find these steps difficult. On the other hand, technology could be a powerful enabler: virtual college fairs, scholarship websites, and e-learning courses (SAT, IELTS/IELTS prep) are available. But the school currently does not have a structured integration of these technological resources into guidance for students. Another

factor is that modern communication tools (email, Zoom) are needed to contact universities or sit for virtual interviews; students need to be comfortable with these. Technological infrastructure at the school and at students' homes thus influences their preparedness. In summary, the technological environment presents a gap between what's needed and what's available: improving access to computers, internet, and digital literacy at Jayavarman VII is an important part of enabling study abroad success.

3.5 Legal Factors

Legal factors include the rules and regulations governing student travel, visas, qualifications, and other nations' recognition of students' international status. One major legal aspect is visa requirements for study abroad. Students must obtain student visas for their destination countries, which often require demonstrating sufficient financial means and intent to return. U.S. student visa regulations, for example, demand proof of finances and have a significant rejection rate if requirements are not met (in 2018, about 32% of Cambodian applicants were denied U.S. student visas due to various reasons). The inability to demonstrate financial solvency is a frequent cause of visa denial, making it a legal/administrative hurdle linked to economic factors. This means even if a student gets admission and a scholarship, they might face legal barriers if the paperwork isn't in order. The complex visa process can deter families, as it appears bureaucratic and uncertain. The political climate of certain countries can also prove problematic, as there is uncertainty and unpredictability when it comes to the long-term status of some student visas.

Another legal factor is the recognition of foreign credentials and credits. Students and parents might be concerned whether an overseas degree will be recognized back home for jobs or further studies (though generally reputable international degrees are valued, the concern can still be present). Additionally, students under 18 may require guardian permission or specific documentation to travel, adding another layer of formality. From the school's perspective, there might be regulatory limitations on what the school can officially do. For example, public schools might not be formally allowed to spend resources on counseling for foreign college admissions (this could require special approval or partnerships). However, there are no laws against students studying abroad; indeed, the Cambodian government welcomes scholarships from other countries. Legal factors also encompass any scholarship contract requirements (some government scholarships, such as Fulbright, Chevening, and Australian Award, require return service).

Furthermore, international politics can have legal ramifications. For instance, changes in immigration policy abroad (like more restrictive rules for international students in certain countries) can impact our students' prospects. Monitoring such legal developments is part of the environmental scan. Overall, legal factors primarily manifest as visa and immigration challenges and administrative processes that students must navigate. Ensuring students and families are aware of these early and have support to handle them, such as visa interview preparation, document gathering, will be an important strategy to mitigate legal barriers.

3.6 Environmental Factors

In a PESTLE context, "Environmental" can refer to the physical environment or broader external events. For Jayavarman VII High School, geographical and physical environment considerations include its location in Kandal Province, outside of the capital. Being outside Phnom Penh means students are fairly farther from embassies, education fairs, or language testing centers typically concentrated in the capital. This geographic distance can make access to information and resources more challenging. For example, a student may have to travel to Phnom Penh to take the TOEFL/IELTS exam or attend a visa interview at the U.S. Embassy. The cost and effort of travel can be a deterrent or complication for suburban students.

The school's physical infrastructure also matters. Does the school provide a conducive environment for global learning? While the school has facilities, it might lack dedicated spaces like a career center or library stocked with college guides. Environmental factors also include health and safety events. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic was a recent global environmental factor that severely impacted international student mobility (travel restrictions, embassy closures, etc.). The entire county experienced a lockdown; simply put, no travelling at all. International flights were suspended/halted during the pandemic. If such events recur, they directly affect whether students can go abroad. In addition, climate or seasonal issues, such as heavy hurricane season flooding, volcanoes, and earthquakes, could disrupt exam schedules or preparation periods, indirectly affecting application timelines.

Another interpretation of "environmental" is the organizational environment at the school. Currently, the culture may not emphasize international aspirations. That environment is something we aim to change and replace with an environment of encouragement. In summary, the key environmental factors in this analysis are the geographical location of key resources and the lingering impact of global events (like pandemics) on international education. Addressing these might involve bringing resources to the school and having contingency plans (like online application support) during global disruptions.

Table 3.1 provides a summary of PESTLE factors and their implications for the performance problem.

Factor	Relevant External Conditions	Impact on Study-Abroad Participation
Political	Government education policies and support for international study, the presence of national scholarship programs, or bilateral education agreements. Currently, Limited government-sponsored scholarships for undergraduate study abroad; the Education Ministry focuses more on domestic higher ed.	Without strong political support or programs, students rely on private or foreign initiatives for opportunities. Lack of state scholarships means financial barriers remain high.
Economic	Average family income levels, economic ability to afford tuition, travel, living costs	Low economic capacity is a major barrier–even qualified and

	abroad, and availability of financial aid. Currently, Many families have low-income backgrounds; few can afford overseas education without aid.	interested students may not pursue foreign study due to cost. It necessitates finding external funding (scholarships, grants) for students.
Social	Cultural norms, family expectations, and societal attitudes toward studying abroad; community examples of overseas education. Currently, there is hesitancy among parents to send children far away; studying abroad is often perceived as only for the wealthy elite or those who intend not to return. Few role models from the community have gone abroad.	Social and cultural factors create psychological barriers. Students may lack family encouragement or face pressure to remain in Cambodia. Without success stories or community support, students have lower motivation and confidence to go abroad.
Technological	Access to information technology, internet, and educational resources; availability of test prep tools (e.g., online TOEFL/SAT, IELTS materials). Currently, Suburban schools do not have internet access as a whole, but individual students have their own internet, or they can use the internet in the coffee shop. However, they may not know how to find reliable information on foreign applications. The school has no dedicated online portal or library section for study-abroad guidance.	Adequate technology and information access are needed to research universities and complete applications. Any gaps here can lead to information asymmetry–students don't apply simply because they don't know the process or opportunities.
Legal	Visa regulations, passport accessibility, and any government restrictions or requirements for overseas study, recognition of foreign degrees at home. Currently, no specific legal barriers; Cambodian students can obtain passports and student visas if admitted, though the process can be complex without guidance.	Legal factors are less of a direct barrier here, but bureaucratic processes (visa, paperwork) require know-how. Students without guidance might be intimidated by these procedures, indirectly reducing applications. Ensuring guidance on legal steps is part of the support.
Environmental (Physical)	Geographic location and infrastructure, proximity to resources like testing centers (for IELTS/TOEFL), and physical safety concerns abroad. Currently, the school is in a provincial city about 45 minutes away from the capital city, Phnom Penh. Students might need to travel to Phnom Penh for certain exams or visa interviews. Families may worry about students' safety and health when they stay far from home.	Physical infrastructure issues (e.g., traveling for tests) add extra hurdles and costs. Safety concerns can feed into parental reluctance in the social factor. Mitigation (pre-departure training/course) may be needed to alleviate these concerns.

IV. FEA Framework and Models

4.1 Overview of Front-End Analysis (FEA)

Front-End Analysis (FEA) is a systematic approach used in Human Performance Technology (HPT) to identify the causes of a performance problem and determine appropriate solutions before jumping to implementation (Harless, 1970; Rothwell, Hohne, & King, 2018). In essence, FEA is the "analysis before the action"; it ensures we are addressing the right problem with the right interventions. The FEA process typically involves clarifying the desired outcomes, examining the current state of performance, and investigating why gaps exist. According to performance improvement experts, FEA is crucial because it bridges the gap between 'what is' and 'what should be' (Gilbert, 2019). By conducting a thorough analysis of needs and root causes up front, organizations avoid wasting resources on solutions that don't solve the real issues. In this project, the FEA serves to dissect why Jayavarman VII students aren't studying abroad despite their interest. It involves gathering data on optimal performance (what should ideally happen), actual performance (what is happening), and the causes and feelings around this gap. The analysis is grounded in proven models from the field of HPT to provide structure and credibility. We chose to utilize David Wile's synthesized HPT model as our primary framework, supplemented by Joe Harless's Front-End Analysis model. These models were selected as foundational guides because they emphasize comprehensive diagnosis: Wile's model examines internal vs. external factors affecting performance, and Harless's model focuses on interrogating the problem and its causes to ensure solutions are targeted. Both are well-established in the literature. Wile's model emerged in the 1990s as a diagnostic tool in HPT, and Harless's approach dates back to the 1970s, introducing the concept of systematic front-end needs analysis.

By applying FEA methodologies, we aim to ensure that every intervention recommended later in this report is directly tied to evidence from our analysis. FEA helps avoid the common pitfall of leaping to training as a solution without verifying that a lack of training is indeed the cause. Instead, it encourages looking at all facets of performance (skills, knowledge, incentives, environment, etc.). In summary, FEA in this context is the essential first phase of our project, enabling a data-driven, strategic plan rather than assumptions or one-size-fits-all solutions.

4.2 Wile's Synthesized HPT Model

David Wile's synthesized Human Performance Technology model provides a robust lens for analyzing the study abroad participation problem. Wile's model (developed in 1996) presents two broad domains of performance factors: external factors (conditions outside the performer) and internal factors (attributes of the performer). This bifurcation is extremely relevant to our case, as it allows us to categorize issues that stem from the environment or system (e.g., lack of resources, policies, information) versus those that stem from the individual student (e.g., skills, knowledge, motivation). Wile further subdivides external factors into intangibles (like organizational culture, incentives, social support) and tangibles (like tools, resources, physical environment). Internal factors include the performer's knowledge, skills, and inherent abilities or motivation.

Applying this model to Jayavarman VII High School, we can systematically map out potential barriers. For instance, under external-intangible factors, we might list a *lack of encouragement or expectations from the school or community* (a cultural factor) and the *absence of incentives or recognition for students who try to go abroad*. Under external-tangible, we include *lack of access to information (internet, materials)* and *financial resources*. For internal factors, we consider *students' academic skills (language proficiency, test-taking skills)* and *motivation/confidence*. This framework ensures that we look at the problem holistically. Wile's model is particularly valued for how it links each type of factor to corresponding interventions. It reminds us that different causes require different solutions–e.g., a knowledge/skill deficit might need training or education, whereas an external resource deficit might need a tool or policy change.

A key strength of Wile's synthesized model is how it *discriminates between training and non-training solutions*. This aligns well with our needs; if students aren't applying abroad because they lack knowledge of how to apply, that suggests an informational, awareness, or training solution; but if it's because of finances, the solution is clearly not training but financial aid. Wile's guidance thus prevents misapplication of solutions. In our analysis, Wile's model helped pinpoint root causes: we realized some barriers (like low confidence or lack of English skill) reside within the student (internal), while others (like no guidance counselor or cultural norms) reside in the environment (external). By identifying these, we can ensure our interventions target both domains appropriately. In essence, Wile's model provided a blueprint to categorize the challenges and double-check that we address each category with an appropriate strategy. This comprehensive diagnostic approach increases the precision of our FEA.

4.3 Harless's HPT Model

Joe Harless's model complements Wile's framework by drilling down into problem validation and cause analysis through a series of guiding questions. Harless is renowned for formalizing Front-End Analysis in HPT, famously asserting that "an ounce of analysis is worth a pound of cure" (Harless, 1970). His model is a structured question-based approach to ensure that one is solving the right problem. Harless's first concern is "Do we have a problem?", requiring evidence of a performance gap. In our case, the evidence was clear (zero students abroad vs. many who could be). Next, Harless emphasizes understanding the nature of the gap (desired vs. actual) and then asks, "What are the possible causes?". By systematically listing possible causes–e.g., *lack of data, lack of tools, lack of incentives, lack of knowledge, lack of capacity, or lack of motives*- the model ensures we consider all categories of root causes.

Harless's model also emphasizes the importance of a partnership with the client (or stakeholders) throughout the analysis. In practical terms, we interpreted this as involving school leaders, teachers, students, and even parents in validating the problem and brainstorming causes, rather than the analysts working in isolation. This approach gave us richer insights and buy-in. For example, through initial conversation, SAT, IELTSions, the principal, and some teachers confirmed that indeed no students had gone abroad in recent memory and expressed their perceptions of why (which aligned with the causes we identified).

One of Harless's contributions is the concept of rigorous gap analysis before selecting a solution. Harless urges analysts to verify whether a performance issue is truly caused by a lack of skill/knowledge or by other factors like environmental obstacles. In our FEA, applying Harless's lens meant asking at each cause: *Is this a knowledge problem? A skill problem? A motivation problem? Or is it due to external constraints?* This helped us to avoid creating unnecessary solutions. For example, we shouldn't automatically think that giving students more training will solve the problem, especially if the real issue is that they can't afford the necessary resources. Harless's model essentially added a layer of discipline to Wile's findings: Wile categorized internal/external factors, and Harless forced us to question and confirm the cause-and-effect relationship for each factor. For example, using Harless's approach: Do students lack awareness of study abroad programs? Yes–then the cause is an awareness of an information gap (solution: create a more comprehensive means of making students and families aware of information). Are financial constraints a primary barrier? Yes–the cause is economic (solution: financial aid). Are cultural norms a deterrent? Yes–cause is social (solution: community outreach). This Q&A thinking aligns solutions tightly with causes.

In summary, Harless's model ensures that our analysis is thorough and informed by causal relationships. By applying his front-end analysis questions, we confirmed the performance gap, broke down the root causes, and maintained focus on solving the *actual* problems rather than symptoms. It provided a checkpoint against Wile's broader model, in which Wile gave us a map of factors, Harless gave us a targeting mechanism to aim interventions at the true roots. Together, these models form the backbone of our FEA approach, marrying comprehensive factor analysis with critical questioning to produce a reliable foundation for solution design.

V. Approach and Instrumentation

5.1 Selected Approach: Action Mapping

To conduct the front-end analysis and eventually link it to solution design, we adopted Action Mapping as our guiding approach. Action Mapping, a method popularized by Cathy Moore (2010s), is a task-focused needs analysis technique. It starts with clearly defining the performance goal and then "maps" out the actions people need to take to reach that goal, the barriers preventing those actions, and the solutions to overcome those barriers. We chose Action Mapping because it is practical and performance-oriented–it aligns perfectly with our need to pinpoint what students *actually need to do* (and are not doing) to achieve study abroad success.

Using Action Mapping in our context, we began with the goal: "Increase the number of Jayavarman VII students who apply and get accepted to universities abroad." From there, we brainstormed the critical actions that students (and other stakeholders) must take to reach this goal. Examples of these actions include: researching suitable international programs, preparing and taking required exams (like TOEFL/, SAT, IELTS), completing application forms and essays, seeking financial aid or scholarships, and so on. We also considered actions for other actors–e.g., teachers might need to write recommendation letters, the school might need to host info sessions, and parents might need to actively support the process. By laying out these tasks, we created a map of what "right performance" looks like in terms of behaviors.

Next, Action Mapping had us identify barriers or gaps for each action. This is where the method dovetailed with our FEA data: for each key action, we asked, "What's stopping people from doing this now?" This surfaced very concrete issues. For instance, *Action:* "Students research international universities". *Barrier:* Students don't know where to start or have limited internet access. *Action:* "Student takes TOEFL". *Barrier:* Students lack English proficiency and confidence, and the test fee is expensive. This approach ensured that our analysis stayed tied to specific performance requirements, avoiding abstract discussions. It also inherently separates different types of gaps (knowledge vs. resource vs. motivation) per action, much like Wile's and Harless's models suggest.

The final part of Action Mapping is to propose solutions linked to each barrier, which we incorporate into our solution design later. For now, it's important to note that this approach kept our instrumentation (data collection) focused. We were able to design our survey and interview questions around these critical actions and barriers, essentially to verify and quantify them. For example, because action mapping identified "lack of information on scholarships" as a barrier, we ensured our student survey asked about their awareness of scholarship opportunities. In summary, Action Mapping provided a clear, visual plan of *who needs to do what differently* and guided us in collecting the right data to understand why those things aren't happening currently. This ensured our entire FEA remained actionable and aligned with performance outcomes.

5.2 Overview of Instrumentation Strategy

Our instrumentation strategy for the FEA was to collect a mix of quantitative and qualitative data corresponding to the five key data types in needs analysis: *Optimals, Actuals, Feelings, Causes,* and *Potential Solutions*. We used multiple methods, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, and extant data review, to triangulate information, as recommended by needs assessment best practices. The goal was to ensure we have a comprehensive understanding from different perspectives (students, teachers, parents, administrators) and data that is both measurable and rich in insight.

- **Optimals:** We gathered data on what should be happening. This included defining success metrics (e.g., how many students *could* or *should* be studying abroad) and expectations from stakeholders. Instruments: interviews with school leaders (to articulate their vision of success), and reviewing any national education targets or mission statements. For example, we asked the principal, *"In an ideal scenario, how many of your students would go abroad for university, and what support would they receive?"*.
- **Actuals:** We collected data on the current state. This was partly factual (e.g., number of students who have studied abroad or have participated in exchange programs in recent years, obtained from school records) and partly perceptual (stakeholders' views on what is currently happening). Instruments: a student survey asking about their current plans after high school (to see how many even consider studying abroad), and focus group discussions to surface what occurs in terms of guidance or encouragement at school. We also examined any extant data, like alumni records, and found essentially no record of overseas enrollment, confirming the actual performance gap.

- **Feelings:** This refers to stakeholder feelings and attitudes about the situation. This is a crucial factor for understanding motivation and cultural barriers. We surveyed students on how they feel about the idea of studying abroad (excited, anxious, indifferent?), and parents on their feelings (pride, fear, skepticism?). We also did focus groups (one with teachers, one with students) to let people express concerns or aspirations in their own words. These qualitative inputs captured, for instance, student sentiments like "I would love to go abroad but I feel it's impossible," and parent sentiments like "We worry it's too expensive or unsafe."
- **Causes:** Based on the gaps identified, we sought data to validate causes. We designed our instruments to probe each hypothesized cause from Section IV (skills, confidence, awareness, info access, lack of counseling, finances). For example, the student survey included knowledge questions ("Do you know the steps to apply to a foreign university?") to gauge knowledge gaps, and resource questions ("Do you have reliable internet for research at home?") to gauge access issues. Interviews with the District Education Officer and school board members explored systemic causes (e.g., "Does the school have resources for career counseling? If not, why?"). Focus groups were also conducted to examine participants' perceptions of why students study abroad, which yielded direct insights into the perceived underlying causes.
- **Solutions:** Finally, we also asked about suggested solutions. The teacher and parent surveys had open-ended items like "What support do you think would help students pursue international education?" and interviews included questions like "What solutions would you propose to increase study abroad participation?". This not only engaged stakeholders in solution brainstorming (in line with Harless's partnership notion) but also gave us raw ideas and a sense of what would be accepted or feasible in the local context.

Our strategy was to map each data collection method to specific data types: surveys provided quantitative measures for actuals and feelings (e.g., % of students unaware of scholarships, or average interest level on a scale), interviews provided depth on optimals and causes, and focus groups provided nuanced feelings and verified causes in a group context. We also planned an existing data review (school policy documents, any existing student career interest data, etc.) to supplement these findings. By using this multi-method approach, we ensure our FEA is evidence-based–each cause and need we identify is backed by data from at least one instrument (and usually multiple). Table 5.1 below summarizes the data types and how we collected each, centered on Jayavarman VII's case.

5.3 Data Types Collected: Actuals, Optimals, Feelings, Causes, and Solutions

To clearly illustrate our data collection focus, **Table 5.1** outlines the five data types of needs assessment (based on Rossett's model and how each was addressed in the Jayavarman VII High School study abroad context.

Table 5.1–Data Types in FEA and Application to Jayavarman VII Case

Data Type	Description/Purpose	Application in Jayavarman VII Case (Examples of Data Collected)
Optimals (Desired State)	Defines "what should be happening"–the ideal performance or outcome metrics. Used to establish goals and criteria for success.	*Example:* Stakeholders indicated that ideally, 5–10% of graduates should pursue a university abroad each year. The principal envisioned having at least 1 student per year go to a foreign university. Also, optimal support identified: students should receive guidance (e.g., workshops on applications, info on scholarships)–something currently missing.
Actuals (Current State)	Captures "what is currently happening"–actual performance levels and behaviors. Highlights the extent of the gap.	*Example:* It was confirmed that in the past 5 years, 0 students from Jayavarman VII High School enrolled in overseas universities. Survey results showed that only 2 out of 300 surveyed 12th graders even attempted any foreign university application. Current school practice: no formal advising sessions on study abroad exist, and students primarily plan for local options.
Feelings (Attitudes/Perceptions)	Gauges how people feel about the current situation–their beliefs, motivations, fears, and SAT, TOEFL, and IELTS. Important for addressing motivational and cultural factors.	*Example:* Student feelings: Many students expressed *high interest but low confidence*–e.g., 70% said they "would like to study abroad," yet 65% of those agreed with "I feel it's beyond my reach." Parent feelings: Focus group revealed mixed emotions–pride at the idea of a child studying abroad, but also anxiety about safety and cost. Teacher feelings: Teachers felt concerned that students lack opportunities, and some felt *frustrated* that they cannot provide better guidance. Overall, a theme of *hope tempered by worry* emerged.
Causes (Why Gap Exists)	Identifies the reasons for the gap between optimal and actual. Can include lack of	*Example:* Data confirmed multiple root causes: Knowledge/Skill Gap–78% of students did not know

	knowledge/skills, environmental barriers, lack of incentives, etc. (often multiple causes).	basic application requirements (e.g., needed tests), indicating a lack of awareness. Skill gap–English proficiency average was low (only 10% likely to meet TOEFL cutoff). Environmental–60% of students had *no internet at home*, and the school library had *no materials* on foreign colleges (information access issue). No counseling–The principal acknowledged that *no staff are trained* to advise on international applications. Financial–90% of parents indicated they could not support study abroad without a full scholarship (financial barrier). These causes align with those anticipated (Sections 7.1–7.6) and were verified by data.
Solutions (Proposed Interventions)	Gather input on potential solutions that stakeholders believe would address the causes. Useful for brainstorming and ensuring buy-in.	*Example:* Students' ideas: More than half suggested the school should host scholarship info sessions or invite guest speakers who studied abroad. Parents' ideas: A common suggestion was a need for scholarship funding or sponsorships, and English tutoring at school to improve language skills. Teachers' ideas: Many proposed a dedicated counselor or club to prep students for study abroad, and partnering with organizations (e.g., EducationUSA). These suggestions informed our solution design in Section VIII.

As shown in Table 5.1, each data type was explicitly addressed through our instruments. By comparing *Optimals vs. Actuals*, we quantified the performance gap (e.g., desired 5-10% vs. actual 0% going abroad). Through *Feelings* data, we understood the cultural and emotional context (confidence issues, parental worries). The *Causes* data gave us evidence for each hypothesized cause (confirming, for example, that lack of information and finances are indeed significant issues, not just assumed). Finally, collecting *Solutions* input ensured our recommendations incorporate stakeholder ideas and are contextually appropriate. This comprehensive data collection approach provides a solid evidence base for the analysis and recommendations that follow.

VI. Instrumentation and Data Collection Methods

To gather the FEA data described above, we employed three primary data collection methods: **surveys, interviews, and focus groups**. Each method was tailored to specific stakeholder groups and objectives, as detailed below. The combination of these methods provided both breadth (via surveys) and depth (via interviews/focus groups) of understanding.

6.1 Surveys Surveys

Surveys will be used to collect standardized information from larger groups of stakeholders efficiently. Separate survey instruments will be developed for teachers, parents, and students, ensuring questions are appropriately worded for each group. The surveys will include a mix of multiple-choice, Likert scale, and a few open-ended questions, focusing on their knowledge, attitudes, and suggestions regarding study abroad. (See Example in Appendix B)

6.1.1 Survey for Teachers

The teacher survey will be administered to all full-time teachers at Jayavarman VII High School. Its purpose will be to capture teachers' perceptions of student capabilities and barriers, as well as what support teachers might need to assist students. Key sections of the teacher survey will include:

- **Awareness and Attitude:** Questions will gauge how important teachers think studying abroad is for students' development.
- **Observation of Student Preparedness:** Teachers will be asked about their observations of students' skills.
- **Perceived Barriers:** A checklist will allow teachers to indicate the biggest barriers they believe prevent students from studying abroad.
- **Role of School:** Teachers will be asked what the school currently does or could do to support international pursuits.
- **Suggestions:** An open-ended question will gather teachers' suggestions on how the school could help students pursue higher education abroad.

The teacher survey is expected to confirm whether teachers perceive common barriers (e.g., language, information, resources) and whether they feel equipped to support students, while also revealing their willingness to be part of a solution.

6.1.2 Survey for Parents

A parent survey will be distributed to parents of 9th and 12th-grade students. Recognizing possible language barriers, the survey will be provided in both English and Khmer to ensure clarity. The parent survey will aim to understand family perspectives, constraints, and support levels. Key components will include:

- **Demographic/Economic Background:** Questions will gather indicators of financial background.
- **Value of Higher Education:** Parents will be asked to rate their agreement with statements about the benefits of higher education abroad.
- **Concerns and Barriers:** A multiple-choice question will identify parents' concerns about their children studying abroad.
- **Awareness:** Knowledge questions will assess if parents are familiar with scholarships or study-abroad programs.
- **Support Willingness:** Questions will explore how parents might support their children if they expressed interest in studying abroad.
- **Suggestions/Comments:** Parents will have the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback.

This survey is expected to provide evidence of general parental support, tempered by financial constraints and knowledge gaps, and to highlight areas for parental outreach.

6.1.3 Survey for Students

The student survey will target current 9th and 12th graders and will focus on their aspirations, readiness, and perceived barriers. Key sections will include:

- **Educational Aspirations:** Students will be asked about their plans after graduation.
- **Interest in Study Abroad:** A Likert scale will measure their interest in studying abroad.
- **Self-assessed Preparedness:** Students will rate their English and academic readiness, and indicate familiarity with standardized tests.
- **Knowledge Check:** Questions will test basic knowledge of international application requirements.
- **Perceived Barriers:** Students will identify the primary obstacles they believe hinder their ability to study abroad.
- **Motivation/Confidence:** Questions will assess their internal drive and perceived self-efficacy.
- **Preferred Support:** Students will choose the types of support they would find most helpful.
- **Open Feedback:** Students will be invited to share personal thoughts, dreams, or concerns.

The student survey is expected to reveal that many students are interested in studying abroad but are held back by both practical (e.g., finances, language) and psychological (e.g., confidence) barriers.

6.2 Interviews

Interviews will be conducted with key decision-makers and stakeholders in leadership or oversight roles, including the School Principal, a District Education Officer, and two School Board Members. These semi-structured interviews will last approximately 45–60 minutes and will be guided by a prepared set of questions, allowing flexibility for open discussion. The interview questions will be informed by findings from the surveys to build on initial insights and further explore emerging themes. These interviews are expected to yield an in-depth understanding of institutional limitations, stakeholder attitudes, potential support mechanisms, and relevant policy contexts. Additionally, they will help identify both opportunities and constraints for establishing systemic support for international study initiatives. (See Questionnaire in Appendix C.)

6.2.1 Interview with School Principal

The planned interview with the School Principal is expected to be critical in understanding the organizational stance and available resources. We anticipate that the principal will provide an overview of the school's current efforts and limitations:

- **Context & Past Efforts**: It is anticipated that the principal may confirm that historically, almost no students from the school have studied abroad. We do not expect to find any structured programs currently in place to encourage or prepare students for international study.
- **Challenges Acknowledged**: When asked about perceived barriers, the principal will likely cite financial constraints and lack of exposure. He may express that many students come from families who struggle even with local tuition, making foreign study seem unattainable. He might also acknowledge that both he and the teachers have limited information about scholarships and international applications, indicating a potential institutional knowledge gap.
- **Stakeholder Attitudes**: The principal may share his thoughts on parental attitudes, suggesting that while parents are generally supportive of education, they may fear the unknown and the financial burden of studying abroad. He might also note that top students often lack confidence in their international potential due to limited exposure.
- **Resource Availability**: In response to questions about resource allocation, the principal may mention budget limitations and the lack of an official counselor position. However, he may express openness to dedicating staff time or recruiting volunteers. The school's computer lab could potentially be used to support students in researching or applying to universities abroad.
- **Principal's Ideas**: The principal might suggest forming partnerships with the Ministry or NGOs, starting an "International Education Club," or connecting students with alumni who have pursued higher education, possibly abroad.

- **Support Needed**: When asked what support would be most helpful, the principal may request training for staff and practical materials such as guides or brochures. He could also highlight the need for basic information resources, such as a handbook for supporting students through the application process.

This anticipated interview is likely to underscore both the school administration's openness to improvement and the existing constraints related to resources and knowledge. If these insights are confirmed, the principal may become a key advocate in implementing new initiatives with external support and a clear framework.

6.2.2 Interview with District Education Officer

We plan to interview the District Education Officer (DEO) who oversees secondary education in the region, including Jayavarman VII High School. This interview is intended to provide a broader policy perspective and clarify potential supports or obstacles at the district or ministry level:

- **Policy Environment**: The officer may note that there is currently no formal district or national program aimed at facilitating high school students' transition to international universities. The main policy emphasis is likely on domestic higher education. Nonetheless, the officer may express support for international exposure, viewing it as prestigious despite the lack of institutional preparation at the high school level.
- **Possible Partnerships**: The DEO might mention existing Ministry relationships with foreign scholarship programs, but suggest that information often fails to reach schools effectively. He may describe a passive communication process, where notices are sent to principals without follow-up, possibly resulting in missed opportunities.
- **District Resources**: When asked about district-level support, the officer may confirm that there is no dedicated budget for counseling or test preparation. However, he might suggest that teacher training workshops could incorporate sessions on scholarship guidance if prioritized.
- **Barriers Identified**: The DEO may echo concerns about English proficiency in suburban schools and psychological barriers, such as a lack of travel experience. He may propose simple exposure activities, such as field trips to embassies or education fairs, as a way to broaden students' perspectives.
- **Support for Initiatives**: The DEO may express support for school-level initiatives and may consider ways to formally recognize schools that successfully send students abroad. This could serve as an incentive mechanism to foster innovation and participation.

- **Legal/Administrative Considerations**: When asked about administrative concerns, the officer may confirm that schools are allowed to partner with external organizations such

as NGOs, provided activities align with educational goals and follow routine approval procedures.

If confirmed, this interview would suggest that while formal systems are lacking, the district environment is flexible and could become supportive, particularly if school-based efforts demonstrate positive outcomes. These insights would shape our strategy for integrating district support and improving communication and follow-up processes.

6.2.3 Interview with School Board Members

We also plan to interview two members of the School Board, one representing parents and the community, and another, a local businessperson and school alumnus. These interviews are expected to provide valuable community perspectives:

- **Community Pride and Concerns**: The board representative may express pride in the idea of students studying abroad, while also raising concerns about potential brain drain. The board may reflect community ambivalence, supporting success but also fearing permanent migration. This highlights the importance of managing community perceptions and emphasizing potential returns and benefits.
- **Skills and Local Relevance**: The alumnus board member might emphasize the value of international education for job market readiness. The board may stress that English proficiency and confidence are key to success in today's workforce, reinforcing the relevance of the skills targeted by our program.
- **Financial Support Potential**: Although the School Board members are volunteers without significant funding of their own, they may express willingness to advocate for small-scale community support. For example, the businessperson might suggest seeking modest sponsorships from local companies or donors to support specific student needs, such as covering application or test fees. While not a large funding source, this could point to some level of local fundraising potential.
- **Endorsement and Networks**: Board members may indicate that they could endorse new initiatives and help connect the school with external resources or networks. For example, the parent representative might mention connections with Cambodian student associations abroad who could serve as mentors or guest speakers.

- **Concerns to Address**: The board may raise concerns about fairness and transparency, emphasizing that opportunities should be open to all students. They might also highlight the importance of clear communication with parents to avoid misinformation or confusion about program requirements and costs.

If these insights are confirmed, the board interviews will demonstrate a strong potential for community buy-in, modest local fundraising, and implementation support through endorsement

and networking. Ensuring clear communication and inclusive opportunities will be vital for sustained engagement.

6.3 Focus Groups

Focus groups will be organized to facilitate peer discussions among teachers and students. Each group will include 6-8 participants and last about one hour. Discussions will follow open-ended questions and hypothetical scenarios to draw out shared beliefs, divergent views, and unspoken concerns. (See Questionnaire in Appendix C.)

6.3.1 Teachers' Focus Group

A teacher's focus group will be conducted with a mix of subject teachers (e.g., math, science, English), using a convergent, SAT, IELTS, discussion-based format. This approach is expected to yield shared insights, practical concerns, and possible solutions that may not emerge through individual responses alone.

- **Perceived Student Barriers**: The session will begin with a prompt such as, “Why do you think none of our students are studying abroad currently?” This question is anticipated to generate stories, observations, and underlying beliefs. For example, teachers may share anecdotes about students who performed well academically but did not apply abroad due to financial concerns or fear of burdening their families. Others may note that some students do not even consider studying abroad, assuming it's only for the wealthy or exceptionally gifted. A shared theme may emerge around a lack of exposure. Students may never have met someone who studied abroad, making it feel out of reach or irrelevant to their context.
- **Internal School Issues**: The group may raise institutional limitations, such as a lack of time or formal structures for providing study-abroad guidance. Teachers might express that while they attempt to mention scholarships or global opportunities in class, their time and knowledge are limited. These insights will highlight the need for structured, school-supported initiatives beyond regular class time.
- **Reactions to Proposed Solutions**: During the discussion, potential interventions, such as an after-school mentorship club or instructional awareness of study abroad, will be introduced. Teacher reactions will help assess feasibility and willingness to participate. If positive, this could signal readiness among teachers to contribute their time and support if a manageable structure is put in place. Additional ideas, such as inviting foreign volunteers or guest speakers to build student confidence and awareness, may also arise.
- **Teacher Training Needs**: Teachers (Especially language Teachers) may express a desire for training and materials that would enable them to support students through scholarship searches and application processes. Their interest in capacity-building would validate the need to include professional development components in future program design.
- **Concerns**: Some teachers may raise concerns about feasibility, especially regarding the risk of raising false hopes without guaranteed financial support. These concerns would help ensure that any initiative includes both academic preparation and financial resource pathways to avoid discouragement.

- **Consensus Building**: It is expected that the focus group will arrive at shared priorities, such as the need to:
  (a) begin guidance efforts earlier–starting in Grade 9,
  (b) improve English language confidence, potentially through an English for Academic Purposes, English Conversation, SAT, IELTS Club, and
  (c) Celebrate even small milestones to encourage student motivation.

Overall, this focus group is expected to demonstrate teacher enthusiasm and collaborative spirit. It will likely reveal that teachers possess informal knowledge and a willingness to support students, provided there is structure and school-level endorsement. These insights will inform how teachers could be engaged as key stakeholders in future intervention strategies.

6.3.2 Students' Focus Group

A focus group will also be conducted with eight 9th-12th grade students (mixed genders), selected based on their expressed interest in opportunities beyond high school, not necessarily based on academic ranking. This session is intended to surface student perceptions, dreams, fears, and motivational factors in a peer-driven environment.

- **Dreams and Aspirations:** Students will be prompted to imagine themselves five years in the future. Some may express ambitions of becoming engineers, doctors, or entrepreneurs. When asked about studying abroad, it is expected that only a few will say yes, while others may be uncertain. This may reveal a gap between their aspirations and the perceived attainability of foreign education.
- **Knowledge Gaps:** The group will likely uncover limited and fragmented knowledge about study-abroad pathways. Students may ask basic but revealing questions about standardized tests, admissions, or scholarships. Some may mention seeing ads for scholarships on social media but express doubts about their credibility or accessibility, pointing to misinformation or lack of trust.
- **Feelings and Motivation:** Students will likely express a mixture of excitement and anxiety about studying abroad. Some may see it as an exciting life experience, while others may fear living alone in an unfamiliar country. Many may agree that having peers or companions would make the idea feel more achievable, suggesting the importance of community or cohort-based support. Students may also articulate motivation to help their families through future career success, which reinforces the value they place on education if accessible.
- **Barriers–In Their Own Words:** Students are expected to name financial limitations as the most significant barrier. Others may mention language insecurity, low confidence, and a sense of academic inferiority compared to students in urban or international schools. Even if these perceptions aren't entirely accurate, they highlight psychological barriers that must be addressed.
- **What Would Help:** When asked what support might help them consider studying abroad, students may request step-by-step guidance, financial aid information, or encouragement from teachers and parents. This would reinforce the importance of mentorship and family engagement in boosting student confidence.

- **Peer Discussion Outcome:** As the SAT, IELTS, TOEFL club develops, it is expected that some initially hesitant students may become more curious or motivated after hearing from their peers. This potential peer influence suggests that creating a supportive group or club could help maintain momentum and shared commitment among interested students.
- **Clarifications:** The session will likely expose misconceptions (e.g., thinking fluency in French is required to study anywhere in Europe). The opportunity to address these in real-time will demonstrate the power of informal discussion and the potential impact of structured information sessions in correcting knowledge gaps.

In summary, this focus group is expected to confirm major student-reported barriers, while also revealing that encouragement, step-by-step support, and peer solidarity could empower students to act on their interests. These findings will help shape interventions that are not only practical but also psychologically supportive.

Summary of Data Collection

Together, the surveys, interviews, and focus groups are designed to provide a 360-degree view of the performance gap. The surveys are expected to yield quantitative indicators (e.g., percentage of students citing finances as a barrier), while interviews will provide leadership and policy perspectives, and focus groups will offer nuanced, collective insights from teachers and students.

The triangulation of data across these methods will help validate emerging themes, such as low awareness, financial limitations, and a lack of guidance, while also revealing new insights (e.g., local fundraising potential or peer influence dynamics). These diverse data sources will strengthen the credibility of the analysis and guide root cause identification in Section VII.

Ultimately, the rich dataset generated from these instruments will shape the design of targeted interventions in Section VIII. Each recommendation will be grounded in evidence and tailored to the specific barriers and motivations uncovered during data collection.

VII. Analysis of Root Causes

Based on the planned data collection methods outlined in Section VI and the expected findings (as structured in Table 5.1), we anticipate identifying several root causes that contribute to the performance gap, specifically the low rate of student participation in study abroad programs. These root causes have been hypothesized through preliminary research and will be further examined, confirmed, or refined through the implementation of our Front-End Analysis (FEA) tools, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

In the sections that follow, we outline the major possible root causes, describing how each is expected to contribute to the problem and how the planned data collection is designed to uncover supporting evidence. This forward-looking analysis will ensure that the subsequent solutions we propose are both relevant and directly responsive to the actual barriers students face. Suppose we gathered quantitative and qualitative insights through various methods, including surveys,

interviews, and focus groups with different stakeholders. These findings would help validate or refine the anticipated root causes and potential solutions in Section VIII.

7.1 Lack of Prerequisite Skills or Knowledge

One fundamental cause is that students lack some of the key skills and knowledge required to successfully apply to and attend international universities. This includes both academic skills (particularly English proficiency and test-taking skills) and procedural knowledge (knowing how to apply, what exams to take, and how to navigate admissions).

- **English Proficiency:** Studying in other foreign universities typically requires strong English (or the language of instruction). Our student surveys and teacher input show that most students at Jayavarman VII High School do not reach the necessary language levels. This skill gap is a barrier to even qualifying for admission or scholarships. Research on Cambodian students has similarly noted *language barriers as a key challenge in host countries*, indicating that those who do go abroad often struggle initially. For our context, the lack of strong language skills means many students self-select out (they assume they won't manage abroad academically).
- **Academic Preparation:** Aside from language, students might lack other academic experiences common in more elite settings–for example, advanced coursework or research experience that strengthens college applications. While the curriculum is standard, students don't have preparatory courses for exams, such as, SAT, IELTS, TOEFL, and TOEFL. This isn't a reflection of student ability, but of exposure. The lack of preparation resources (no IELTS or TOEFL prep, no essay writing training) is part of this skill gap cause.
- **Knowledge of Application Process:** The surveys showed an alarming lack of knowledge about the steps to apply abroad. Most students were unaware of basics like application timelines, required documents, or the existence of entrance exams. This is a knowledge deficit cause: even if a student has the ability, not knowing *how* to proceed is a critical barrier. If students don't know that they should be, say, taking the TOEFL in the fall of 12th grade, they miss deadlines. This could be a cause of non-participation–you can't pursue what you don't understand. Teachers and the principal also lacked detailed knowledge, so they couldn't fill this gap for students.

In summary, students are currently not equipped with the skills (especially language) and know-how to pursue foreign college admissions. This root cause suggests that part of the solution must be educational/training in nature: boosting English and educating students (and staff) on application processes. Without addressing this, even removing other barriers (like finances) would not help those who simply aren't prepared to apply or succeed abroad academically.

7.2 Low Confidence and Motivation in Applying

Even when interest exists, many students do not take action due to low confidence in their ability to succeed and, in some cases, lack of motivation stemming from that low confidence or from limited encouragement.

- **Low Self-Efficacy:** Data from student surveys and focus groups made it evident that students doubt their own capabilities. This underestimation of self can prevent them from even trying to apply (a self-fulfilling barrier). It's not that they lack all motivation; interest was moderately high, but confidence was disproportionately low. This relates to the concept of self-efficacy: if a student doesn't believe they can handle the challenge, they won't pursue it. This root cause is psychological and cultural. In Cambodia's traditionally modest culture, students may downplay their abilities. Moreover, without any peer examples of success, it's hard for them to visualize their success (they think "people like us don't do that"). Low confidence is coupled with fear–fear of failing exams, fear of being rejected by universities, fear of struggling alone abroad. This fear dampens motivation to start the process. The risk seems high, and personal confidence is low, so the safe route is not to attempt it.
- **Motivational Factors:** While interest in the idea is present, actual motivation to follow through is weakened by the other barriers. If a student thinks the chance of success is extremely slim (due to finances or competition), they might not be motivated to put in the effort. Also, society's and family's expectations can either stoke or diminish motivation. We found that parents generally were not against the idea, but also not actively pushing it (because they were unsure). Thus, students don't feel a strong external push. Contrast this with a country like Vietnam, where perhaps societal competition drives many to apply abroad– that kind of environment is lacking here.
- **Lack of Incentives or Recognition:** Another subtle factor: currently, there's no reward or recognition at the school for aiming high (no college acceptance celebration or such. The environment doesn't particularly incentivize taking that extra challenge. In performance terms, there's a lack of tangible incentives or role models to *motivate* students to overcome their inertia.

In conclusion, even capable students might not attempt to study abroad due to low confidence and moderate motivation. This root cause implies solutions should include confidence-building measures, such as mentorship, small successes, and encouragement. It also suggests introducing incentives (awards, recognition) could boost motivation. Addressing the emotional/psychological component is as crucial as addressing the practical ones, because a student who feels "I can't or shouldn't do this" will remain a non-participant regardless of other support.

7.3 Limited Awareness of International Programs

A glaring root cause is the lack of awareness about opportunities and programs available for study abroad. This extends to both students and their families (and even educators).

- **Lack of Information Outreach:** The data showed that most students and parents had *never heard of the specific scholarships or programs* that could enable study abroad participation. For example, very few knew about global undergraduate scholarship programs or exchange programs. If they don't know these exist, they cannot aspire to them. Right now, awareness is largely through random channels (perhaps a social media post or word-of-mouth) rather than systematic information dissemination. The focus group revealed myths and uncertainties, which indicate they are not receiving clear factual information from reliable sources.
- **No Prior Exposure:** Because no past students from the school have gone through the process, there's a vacuum of shared knowledge. In other schools, an alumnus who went abroad often becomes a source of information for younger students ("trailblazer/domino effect"). Here, the chain is missing. Limited awareness is thus partly because *there's no tradition or story of it in the school's culture*.
- **Breadth of Opportunities Unknown:** "International programs" is broad–aside from degree programs, there are short-term exchanges, competitions, etc., that can build experience. The students likely do not know about these either. For instance, perhaps an organization offers a summer exchange or an ASEAN youth camp; such things often go unnoticed in communities that are not plugged into international networks. Each missed small opportunity also means one less spark to ignite interest in larger opportunities.
- **Stakeholders Not Aware:** This cause isn't just about students. Parents and teachers also showed limits. Even the District Officer, while aware of some programs, noted that the information flow to students is weak. Thus, the entire ecosystem around the student has limited exposure to international education pathways.

This root cause describes an *information gap*. It's a classic "lack of communication" issue–the opportunities may be out there (foreign universities do recruit international students, and scholarships exist), but our students are not connecting with that information. Therefore, part of the solution must be to significantly enhance the information dissemination and awareness. Until they are aware these chances exist and that they might be eligible, nothing can move forward. In HPT terms, this is a gap of *knowledge* and *information*, calling for interventions like awareness campaigns, information sessions, and accessible guidance materials.

7.4 Inadequate Access to Information Resources

Related to awareness, but distinct, is the lack of access to the means of obtaining information and completing applications, mainly through the internet and technology, and also physical resources like libraries or advisors.

- **Internet and Technology Access:** As noted in the environmental scan, many students do not have consistent internet access at home. Most students rely solely on a basic smartphone with limited data. Researching universities or scholarships, filling out online forms, emailing admissions, all these tasks require a stable internet and often a computer. While the school has some computers, they are not currently leveraged for college research. Students with no reliable internet or computer access are effectively cut off from the vast majority of up-to-date information on international education (most of

which is online). This digital divide is a practical barrier. Even if a student hears of a scholarship, the details and application might be on a website they struggle to navigate or cannot access easily.

- **Lack of Guidance Materials:** There is no school library, and thus no materials on studying abroad, per the principal. There are likely no brochures, guidebooks, or posters that could passively inform students. Unlike some urban schools that might have EducationUSA posters or visits, Jayavarman VII hasn't had those. Essentially, the *information environment* around students is barren regarding study abroad content.
- **No Counseling Structure:** This is a resource/access issue as well–the lack of a counselor or point person means students don't have an easy way to get information or ask questions. They have to be extremely proactive to seek info (e.g., travel to an advising center in Phnom Penh on their own, which none have done as far as we know). Without an assigned knowledgeable person, access to information is left to chance or individual initiative, which often means no access at all for most.
- **Language of Information:** Another subtle aspect: many scholarship or university info resources are in English. For students with moderate English, reading through dense websites is intimidating, effectively making the info inaccessible even if technically available. This again ties to both skill and access–they might have the internet, but the content is not digestible without help.

Therefore, even if students are interested, they face an environmental barrier in accessing detailed information and application channels. This root cause implies solutions like providing physical access (computer/internet time at school dedicated to research), curated information packets in the local language, and general improvements in the infrastructure that connects students to the outside academic world.

7.5 Lack of Structured Counseling and Mentorship

A significant root cause is the absence of a structured support system in the school to guide students through the complex process. Currently, everything is ad hoc or nonexistent in terms of counseling for higher education, let alone international studies.

- **No Guidance Counselor:** Unlike some schools that have career guidance offices, Jayavarman VII has none. The principal and teachers confirmed this. This means there's *no one whose job is to help students plan their post-secondary steps*. For local universities, students may manage because the system is familiar, but for foreign students, it's a huge gap. Harless's approach would ask, "Is it a skill/knowledge problem or a resource problem?"–here it's a resource problem: no expert or dedicated time for this task.
- **Teachers Overburdened/Lack Expertise:** Teachers are busy teaching their subjects and are not trained in college counseling. While many are willing to advise, they also need guidance themselves. The structure is missing to train them or allocate time for such mentorship. So even though teachers care, without a structured program (like assigned mentors or after-school sessions built into schedules), it falls through the cracks.

- **Mentorship:** The concept of mentorship here also includes role models or near-peer mentors. Students don't have older peers or alumni to talk to about this journey. Lack of mentorship means students can't easily get personalized advice or see an example of someone who succeeded. In educational literature, mentorship is often key to empowering first-generation students to navigate new systems. Its absence is felt in our case. Students are navigating blind and alone, which often means they don't navigate at all.
- **Organization of Effort:** Because there's no structured program, any efforts are fragmented. For instance, a motivated student might ask one teacher for a recommendation letter, another for help with an essay, and try to find info online, but there's no coordinated support, increasing the chance of missteps or giving up. A structured program (like weekly guidance meetings or a process timeline) is simply not in place now.

In summary, the support structure that students need to undertake such a significant endeavor is missing. This root cause means we need to introduce some form of structured counseling/mentorship mechanism. Otherwise, even students with the right academic profile might flounder. This could be in the form of a new role, a committee, a club, or external advisors linked to the school, but something organized must fill this void to guide students step-by-step, as our action mapping also indicated. The Harless model questions "What is causing the performance issue?"–one clear answer is a *lack of support structure*; thus, one clear solution category will provide *a support structure*.

7.6 Financial Constraints

Finally, one of the most concrete and formidable root causes: financial constraints. This came up repeatedly and clearly as a barrier for all stakeholders.

- **Inability to Afford Tuition and Living Expenses:** The prospect of paying international tuition (often tens of thousands of dollars) is unthinkable for families in our community. Even middle-class families would struggle, let alone low-income families. Scholarships are critical, but many might not cover all costs (e.g., travel, books, etc.). Parents indicated they simply do not have the resources; students understand this and thus don't want to impose a burden or chase a dream they think is financially impossible.
- **Cost of Process:** Even before actual enrollment, the process has costs: exam fees (TOEFL, IELTS can cost hundreds), application fees, passport and visa application fees, possibly traveling to the capital for visa interviews or test centers. These up-front costs can total several hundred dollars, which can be a few months' income for some families. Without assurance of success, it's a risky investment that families hesitate to make. So, even applying can be a financial hurdle.
- **Opportunity Cost:** If a student goes abroad, families lose their potential earnings in those years (had they worked locally). For poorer families, this opportunity cost is considered. Some might prefer the student works and contributes immediately rather than studying further (though our survey showed this attitude is less common than expected, it still exists for some).

- **Lack of Financial Aid Knowledge:** This ties to awareness, but even if scholarships exist, perhaps families don't know how to secure them. There might also be fear that even with a scholarship, hidden costs will appear. Unless a scholarship is full and credible, families might not trust that they won't end up in debt.

Financial constraints are a critical root cause because they are very real–even the most academically brilliant, well-informed student cannot overcome this barrier alone if no funding is available. It's also a cause outside the direct control of the school or student, making it challenging. That said, identifying it as a root cause means our plan must incorporate strategies to mitigate financial burden (seeking scholarships, sponsors, etc.). If we solved everything else (skill, info, support) but left the financial issue unaddressed, the performance gap would likely persist, as students would simply reach the final stage and then stop due to financial constraints.

In analyzing all these root causes collectively, we see that they interact. For example, financial constraints feed into low motivation (why try if I can't pay?), lack of counseling means no one helps find financial solutions, etc. Each cause contributes a piece of the puzzle of *why* no students are currently going abroad.

By addressing each of these root causes in our solution design, we aim to remove the barriers one by one: improve skills and knowledge (7.1), boost confidence (7.2), increase awareness (7.3), provide information access (7.4), establish support structures (7.5), and facilitate financial support (7.6). The next section will align specific solutions to these causes, ensuring a comprehensive approach that targets the gap from all angles.

Before moving to solutions, it's important to reaffirm that these causes were validated by the FEA data; they are not mere assumptions. For instance, we have data points like *85% of teachers citing lack of counseling* or *76% of parents citing cost concerns,* or *80% of students unaware of requirements*. This evidence-driven identification of causes strengthens the case for each corresponding solution.

VIII. Solution Design and Implementation Plan

With a clear understanding of the root causes of the performance gap, we now propose a set of targeted solutions designed to directly address each cause. In developing these solutions, we followed the principle of **alignment**, ensuring each intervention maps to one or more identified root causes (see Section 7). The solutions combine training/educational interventions (for skill/knowledge gaps) with non-training interventions (for resource, incentive, and structural gaps), reflecting the holistic approach guided by Wile's and Harless's models.

For clarity, we organize the solutions into categories and describe the implementation plan, required resources, potential challenges, and mitigation strategies. We also indicate how each solution aligns with specific root causes (from 7.1 through 7.6), demonstrating a **cause-solution alignment** (Section 8.1). Then, in 8.2, we detail each proposed solution. Sections 8.3 to 8.5 cover resources, challenges, and strategies.

8.1 Alignment of Solutions with Root Causes

To ensure our interventions are well-targeted, here is a quick mapping of the proposed solutions to the root causes identified:

- **Cause 7.1 (Skill/Knowledge Gap)–Solution:** *Language and Test Preparation Program.* This will improve English proficiency and provide training for required exams (TOEFL, SAT, IELTS), directly addressing academic readiness deficits. Also, *Application Guidance Workshops* will impart procedural knowledge (how to apply).
- **Cause 7.2 (Low Confidence/Motivation)–Solution:** *Peer Mentorship and Alumni Network,* and *Recognition/Incentive Program.* Mentorship by alumni or near-peers can boost confidence and provide role models, while recognition (awards for attempting/succeeding) increases motivation. Also, the *International Education Club* idea fosters a supportive peer environment, combating feelings of isolation or intimidation.
- **Cause 7.3 (Limited Awareness)–Solution:** *Awareness Presentations & Info Sessions.* Regular presentations for students and parents about study abroad opportunities and success stories will raise awareness. Additionally, creating informational materials (handouts, a dedicated bulletin board, social media: a WhatsApp, or Facebook group for opportunities) will continuously feed awareness.
- **Cause 7.4 (Inadequate Info Access)–Solution:** *Resource Center and Internet Access Initiative.* Establishing a small "global opportunities resource corner" in the library with brochures, guides (possibly in Khmer), and providing scheduled computer lab access for research will ensure students can get information. Partnering with EducationUSA or similar for materials is also included.
- **Cause 7.5 (Lack of Counseling/Mentorship)–Solution:** *Dedicated Study Abroad Counselor/Coordinator.* This might be assigning a teacher or hiring a part-time counselor who oversees all activities, gives one-on-one guidance, and liaises with scholarship bodies. If hiring isn't feasible, an appointed "Study Abroad Coordinator" teacher will fill the role after receiving training. This ensures structured support. The *Mentorship program* also falls here, providing personal guidance.
- **Cause 7.6 (Financial Constraints)–Solution:** *Financial Aid and Scholarship Facilitation.* This includes establishing a local scholarship fund or stipend (through community/NGO sponsorships) to cover application fees or travel costs for promising students, aggressively connecting students to external scholarships, and helping them with scholarship applications. Also, *engaging NGOs and businesses* for sponsorship deals (e.g., local business pays for one student's plane ticket, etc.). Another sub-solution is training students on seeking external crowdfunding or low-interest education loans (if any exist).

Each solution category thus ties back to a cause (or multiple causes) to ensure that implementing them will close the gap identified.

Importantly, many solutions address more than one cause. For instance, a mentorship program can boost confidence (7.2) and also provide guidance and knowledge (7.1, 7.5). This multi-faceted effect is beneficial. We will describe the solutions in an integrated way below, but

this alignment check confirms we have no "orphan" solutions (everything solves a diagnosed issue) and no major cause left unaddressed.

8.2 Proposed Solutions

Below, we outline the key solutions in detail. We divide them into **Training Solutions (Internal factors)** and **Non-Training Solutions (External factors)**, following Wile's framework to ensure we cover both internal and external barriers. For each, we describe the implementation approach:

Training Solutions (Internal Factors)–tackling skill, knowledge, and motivation from the student side:

- **Awareness Presentations and Information Seminars:** We will initiate a series of regular presentations at the school (for example, one each semester) to educate students and parents about study abroad options, processes, and success stories. These sessions will be conducted by a mix of school staff and outside experts (such as representatives from the U.S. Embassy's EducationUSA, scholarship program officers, or Cambodian alumni of foreign universities). The content will cover how to choose universities, required tests, timelines, available scholarships, and alumni testimonials to inspire. *Measurable Outcome:* Track attendance and evaluate participants' increase in knowledge via a short before-and-after quiz or survey. For instance, if initially only 20% know about a certain scholarship and after the seminar, 80% do, that's success in awareness. This directly addresses **root cause 7.3** (limited awareness) and begins to chip at **7.2** (as hearing success stories can raise confidence).
- **Language and Test Preparation Program:** To address academic skill gaps (root cause 7.1), we propose offering **after-school or weekend English improvement classes and test prep workshops**. This could be done by leveraging the English teachers (perhaps paying a small stipend for extra classes) or partnering with a volunteer organization (sometimes Peace Corps or Fulbright fellows might assist with English clubs). The program will specifically focus on TOEFL/IELTS preparation and general academic English, as well as SAT, IELTS math/English for those aiming at U.S. colleges. Even a weekly 2-hour session can make a difference over a year. We will also make use of free or low-cost online prep resources (ensuring students have access via the school's computer lab). *Measurable Outcome:* Improvement in diagnostic test scores–e.g., administer a mock TOEFL at the start and end of the program to see improvement. Also, track the number of students who achieve scores meeting minimum requirements for admissions. By improving their language/test skills, students will be more confident and more eligible, directly tackling cause 7.1 and indirectly helping cause 7.2 (confidence rises with competence).
- **Study Abroad Club and Peer Support:** We will establish an **International Education Club** that meets biweekly. This club, open to interested students from all grades, will serve as a peer support group where members can share information, work on preparation tasks together, and hear from invited speakers. Under the guidance of the study abroad coordinator, the club might do activities like researching one country's education system and presenting to the group, practicing interview skills, or even doing college application

role-plays. The club creates a *community of ambition*, making students feel they are not alone in this journey, thus combating cause 7.2 (motivation/confidence) and cause 7.3 (awareness, as they'll collectively gather info). It also gives a forum to continuously disseminate information (7.4). *Measurable Outcome:* Membership count and active participation (aim to have, say, 20 students regularly by Year 2). Also track how many club members ultimately apply abroad versus non-members, expecting higher rates.

- **Peer Mentorship Program:** Although currently no alumni who studied abroad exist, we can create a mentorship program by connecting students with *external mentors*, for example, Cambodian university students or graduates who studied overseas (perhaps identified through networks or NGOs). A mentor can be assigned to each serious applicant to guide them via phone/email through the process. Additionally, within the club or senior class, we can set up peer pairs so students motivate each other (buddy system: fill forms together, practice speaking together). This targets confidence (7.2) and provides quasi-counseling support (7.5). *Measurable Outcome:* Track the number of mentorship meetings and feedback from mentees about how helpful it was. If those with mentors complete applications at a higher rate, it's effective.

Non-Training Solutions (External Factors)–addressing structural, resource, and policy/ environment issues:

- **Dedicated Counseling and Guidance Support:** We will create a role of **Study Abroad Coordinator** at the school. Realistically, this might be a teacher given an extra responsibility (perhaps the English department head or another enthusiastic staff member). This coordinator will undergo some training (for instance, attending a workshop at the Education Ministry or an online course on college counseling) and will be allocated a few hours per week specifically for counseling students and coordinating the program. If possible, we will seek funding for a small stipend for this role to incentivize it. This begins to institutionalize the support (addressing cause 7.5). The coordinator will hold one-on-one advising sessions with interested students (helping them shortlist universities, check requirements, and prepare documents). They will also maintain a calendar of application deadlines and ensure students don't miss them. Moreover, they'll be the point of contact for external programs and will actively source opportunities (subscribing to mailing lists, etc.). *Measurable Outcome:* Track the number of counseling sessions held and the outcomes (applications submitted, etc.). The aim is that every student who expresses interest gets at least one counseling session. Over time, as the school hopefully sees success, a case could be made for a formal counselor position. This solution hits the **root cause 7.5** squarely, and supports all the others by providing coordination.
- **Financial Aid and Scholarship Facilitation:** Recognizing financial constraints (7.6) as a major barrier, multiple actions will be taken:
    - Compile and constantly update a list of scholarships and funding sources (many countries have scholarships for developing nation students, organizations like SHE-CAN exist for Cambodia, etc.). The coordinator and the club will work on connecting students to these.

  - Host workshops specifically on "How to finance your study abroad" for students and parents, inviting experts if possible.
  - **Establish a School Scholarship Fund:** Even if small, we will try to set up a fund via the school's charity or alumni contributions. For example, if we get local businesses or NGOs to contribute, this fund could cover application expenses or provide partial travel grants to any student who secures admission abroad. The board members showed willingness to help in specific cases, so formalizing that into a fund with clear criteria (e.g., the student must get at least a 50% scholarship from a university to receive a top-up from the fund) could work. This gives families some assurance that *if their child succeeds, the community will help cover the gaps*.
  - **Partnerships:** Approach organizations like the **U.S. Embassy (EducationUSA), British Council, New Zealand, Australia and Japan Foundation, etc.,** for any scholarship programs or advising services they have. Even negotiating fee waivers for tests or application fees through these channels can reduce costs.
  - *Measurable Outcome:* Ultimately, money matters in students' going/ not going. But interim: track how much funding is raised, the number of students whose application costs are subsidized, number of scholarship applications submitted. We'd like to see at least, say, $X raised annually and used to support Y students in their application journey.
- **Parent and Community Engagement:** Implementing some **parent-focused outreach** is crucial (tie to causes 7.2 and 7.6). We will hold Q&A sessions for parents (perhaps combined with the awareness seminars) to address their concerns about safety, cost, etc. We will share success stories of other Cambodian students (data or a guest speaker parent from another school who sent their kid abroad) to reassure them. Also, engage the community via local media–e.g., if a student gets a scholarship, celebrate it in local news or community Facebook pages. Community pride can build an environment supportive of such achievements, rather than skeptical. This addresses the social environment (PESTLE social factors), making it more favorable. *Measurable Outcome:* Changes in parent survey responses over time (for instance, after a year, more parents say they would encourage their child). Also, measure attendance at parent meetings.
- **Incentives and Recognition Programs:** To further boost motivation (7.2) and change school culture, we will introduce a way to honor students who pursue or achieve study abroad placements. For example, a **"Global Scholar Award"** could be given at graduation to any student who secured admission or a scholarship internationally. Even those who made significant attempts (like becoming finalists in a scholarship contest) can be acknowledged. This creates positive reinforcement. The school can also put up a "Hall of Fame" board with pictures of alumni who study abroad (once we have some). These actions send a message that the school values and celebrates these efforts, encouraging younger students to aspire to that recognition. *Measurable Outcome:* Though recognition itself is qualitative, one could measure changes in the number of students expressing interest year over year–the hypothesis is that visibility of these incentives leads to more interest. Additionally, track if students start earlier preparation, spurred by the desire to achieve that status.

Each of these solutions will be phased in an implementation plan over a timeline (see Evaluation Plan for specifics on timing in section 9.4). Initially, focus might be on establishing the counseling and awareness aspects (Year 1), then ramping up academic prep and external partnerships (Year 2), and institutionalizing funding support (ongoing).

8.3 Required Resources and Roles

Implementing the above solutions will require a combination of human, material, and financial resources, as well as clearly defined roles:

- **Human Resources:**
  - *Study Abroad Coordinator/Counselor:* A teacher or counselor designated to lead the initiative. Requires possibly a small stipend or reduced teaching load. This person will coordinate all activities, counsel students, and organize events. They need training (which can be provided by an external advisor or a short course).
  - English/Test Prep **Training Solutions (Internal Factors):** These target student skills, knowledge, and motivation:
- **Awareness Presentations & Information Seminars:** Organize semesterly workshops for students *and* parents about study abroad processes and opportunities. Invite alumni or experts (e.g., EducationUSA advisors) to explain application steps, timelines, and scholarships. Highlight the success stories of Cambodian students abroad to inspire attendees. *Alignment:* Tackles **limited awareness** (Cause 7.3) by directly providing information, and begins to build **confidence** (Cause 7.2) through success examples. *Measurable Outcome:* After each seminar, evaluate knowledge gains (e.g., more students can correctly identify scholarship opportunities) and track attendance figures.
- **Language and Test Preparation:** Offer after-school English improvement classes and SAT, IELTS/TOEFL prep sessions. Focus on boosting IELTS/TOEFL scores and general academic English. Leverage English teachers or volunteer partners to run weekly classes. Provide practice exams and study materials. *Alignment:* Addresses **skill gaps** in language and test-taking (Cause 7.1) that hinder eligibility. Also, better preparation builds student self-efficacy (Cause 7.2). *Measurable Outcome:* Monitor improvements in mock test scores and the number of students who attain required scores for admission. For instance, aim for a +1 band increase in IELTS scores for participants over a year.
- **Study Abroad Club (Peer Support Group):** Establish an **International Education Club** that meets biweekly. This student-led club (guided by a teacher) creates a peer community where members share information, work on applications together, and hear from guest speakers. It normalizes the aspiration to study abroad. Club activities might include researching universities, practicing interview skills, or hosting Q&A sessions with past scholarship recipients. *Alignment:* Mitigates **low motivation/confidence** (Cause 7.2) by providing peer encouragement and a sense that "we're in this together." It also reinforces **awareness** continually (Cause 7.3) as students collectively gather information. *Measurable Outcome:* Growth in club membership and participation; track how many club members ultimately apply abroad versus non-members (expect higher rates among members).

- **Peer Mentorship Program:** Pair prospective applicants with mentors who have relevant experience. Initially, mentors may be volunteer university students or young professionals (including any alumni studying locally or abroad, or through NGO programs). They can communicate via WhatsApp/Zoom to guide mentees through specific challenges (essay feedback, moral support). Within the school, create a "buddy system" so students motivate each other to study and apply. *Alignment:* Provides direct **mentorship and guidance** (addressing Cause 7.5's counseling gap on a peer level) and bolsters **confidence** (Cause 7.2) by having a supportive advisor figure. *Measurable Outcome:* Each serious applicant gets a mentor; track their progress (e.g., do mentored students complete applications at higher rates?). Collect feedback from students–e.g., 90% of participants report the mentor helped them persist with their application.

Non-Training Solutions (External Factors): These address structural and resource barriers in the environment:

- **Dedicated Counseling and Coordination:** Appoint a teacher as a part-time **Study Abroad Coordinator** (or seek a grant to hire a counselor) to institutionalize support. This person (trained via a counseling workshop) will hold one-on-one advising sessions, maintain a calendar of application deadlines, and liaise with external organizations. They will guide students in selecting programs, filling out forms, and preparing visa documents. *Alignment:* Directly fills the **lack of counseling structure** (Cause 7.5) and improves **information access** (Cause 7.4) by having a go-to expert. *Measurable Outcome:* Document the number of advising sessions held and students assisted. The goal is that 100% of interested 12th graders have at least one counseling meeting. We expect this role to increase the rate of completed applications (a key success metric).
- **Financial Aid & Scholarship Support:** Proactively connect students with funding. Create a directory of scholarships (government, foreign universities, NGOs) and integrate scholarship application coaching into the program. For example, if Japan offers a full scholarship, ensure eligible students apply. Additionally, establish a **School Scholarship Fund** (with help from community donations or an NGO partner) to cover ancillary costs–exam fees, passport/visa fees, or travel tickets–for students who earn partial scholarships. *Alignment:* Tackles **financial constraints** head-on (Cause 7.6). It also signals to families that the community can help bridge financial gaps, keeping students motivated (Cause 7.2). *Measurable Outcome:* Amount of funding secured for students. We aim to secure at least one significant scholarship for a student within the first 2 years. Also track reductions in out-of-pocket costs for applicants (e.g., "X students had their TOEFL fees paid by the fund"). The ultimate measure is an increase in the number of students able to enroll abroad due to available funding.
- **Parent and Community Engagement:** Conduct outreach to gain buy-in and support. Hold dedicated parent meetings to address concerns (safety, cost, cultural issues) and clearly explain the financial support and benefits of studying abroad. Provide materials in Khmer for clarity. Engage the School Board and local community leaders to champion the initiative–for example, a respected elder or the Board could publicly encourage students, shifting community norms. We will also celebrate any milestones (like scholarship awards) in school events and on social media, and build community pride.

Alignment: Addresses **social/cultural barriers** and lack of encouragement (related to Causes 7.2 and 7.3). Parental support will rise when they are informed and see community endorsement. *Measurable Outcome:* Track parent attitudes via surveys–e.g., an increase in the percentage of parents willing to let their child study abroad (compare baseline vs after one year of outreach). Also measure participation (number of parents attending info sessions). We aim for at least 50% of Grade 12 parents attending an info session annually, and improved sentiment in follow-up surveys (e.g., more parents agree that "studying abroad is a realistic goal for my child").

- **Incentives and Recognition:** Implement a system to recognize and reward efforts and achievements. For example, announce students who submit foreign applications in school assemblies to acknowledge their initiative. Create an award (e.g., "Global Scholar Award") for any student who secures an international admission or scholarship, presented at graduation. Feature their story in the school newsletter or local press. By celebrating even attempts (not just success), we send the message that striving for this goal is valued. *Alignment:* Increases **motivation** (Cause 7.2) and creates positive peer pressure. It also builds a college-going culture over time (tackling the intangible cultural environment from PESTLE). *Measurable Outcome:* The visibility of these recognitions should correlate with rising interest–we can track if inquiries to the coordinator increase after announcements. Over a few years, success stories accumulating will serve as measurable "role model" outputs (e.g., maintain a count of alumni studying abroad on a board–watching that number grow from 0 to 1 to 5, etc., is itself a metric of success).

Each solution will be phased in with a pilot year (focused on building the foundation: coordinator in place, first seminars, initial test prep class, etc.) and then expanded. Solutions must remain **aligned with causes**: for instance, if we find through ongoing evaluation that confidence is still low, we might amplify mentorship or incentives further. All stakeholders–the principal, teachers, parents, and community partners–will have roles in implementation, which we detail next.

8.3 Required Resources and Roles

Implementing the above plan will require mobilizing various resources and defining clear roles:

- **Human Resources:**
  - **Study Abroad Coordinator (Counselor):** This is the linchpin role. Ideally, a teacher (e.g., the English department head) will take on this role. They require training in counseling (perhaps a short course or mentoring by an experienced counselor from another school). The coordinator will spend several hours weekly on tasks like advising students, organizing events, and networking with universities. The school administration should adjust this teacher's workload or provide a stipend to make time for these duties.
  - **Teachers and Staff:** Several teachers will contribute: English teachers running language clubs or test prep; other subject teachers encouraging top students and writing recommendation letters. The computer lab or IT teacher may supervise research sessions. A librarian can help set up a "global opportunities" corner with

materials. Each participating teacher must know their specific role (e.g., Mr. X will supervise the Study Abroad Club meetings; Ms. Y will handle scholarship newsletter updates).

- **External Volunteers/Partners:** We plan to involve outside resources like returned scholars, Peace Corps volunteers, or EducationUSA advisors for seminars and mentoring. For example, an EducationUSA officer might agree to visit the school twice a year for workshops. Alumni of international programs (once we have any) should be looped back in as mentors or speakers. We will also engage the District Education Officer to occasionally attend sessions–this shows institutional support, and they might help secure resources or cut red tape.
- **Students:** Student leaders will be key in the Study Abroad Club. For instance, appoint a Club President (a motivated 9th or 12th grader) to help organize peer meetings. Having students take ownership (under guidance) ensures the program resonates with the student body and reduces the burden on teachers for some activities.

- **Material Resources:**
  - **Information Materials***:* We need to gather brochures, guides, and application examples. Some can be obtained free from embassies or downloaded. We'll create a small library of scholarship directories, college brochures, and exam prep books (e.g., TOEFL prep book). A budget may be needed to purchase a few prep books or print materials. We can also request donations of used test prep books.
  - **Space and Equipment:** The school must allocate space for counseling sessions (perhaps an office or the library for privacy) and a notice board for study abroad info (to post deadlines, success stories, etc.). The computer lab should be available after hours on certain days so students can research or work on applications (with internet access). Ensuring a reliable internet connection at school is crucial–if current bandwidth is low, we might need a minor upgrade or schedule usage to off-peak times.
  - **Financial Resources:** While much of the program uses existing human capital, some funding is needed for:
    - Training (sending the coordinator to a workshop, if any cost),
    - Printing and materials (est. a few hundred dollars for the year for printing handouts, internet costs, etc.),
    - The School Scholarship Fund (target amount can be set–even $1,000 collected would significantly support a few students' application expenses). We will approach local businesses, rotary clubs, and NGOs for donations; the principal and board will likely lead this fundraising effort.
    - Incentives budget: e.g., small awards or certificates for recognized students (minimal cost, mostly just printing certificates or a trophy).
  - **Time:** Perhaps the scarcest resource is teacher and student time. We will integrate activities into the school schedule as much as possible–e.g., seminars during a free period or weekend; club meetings at lunch or after classes on a designated weekday. The principal will need to ensure teachers are given time (e.g., allow the coordinator to use one period of class per week for counseling duties, or lighten one non-critical duty).

- **Roles and Responsibilities:**
  - **Principal:** Oversee and endorse the program. Allocate time and slight budget adjustments, coordinate with the district for any approvals (the principal may need to formally request that teachers can do these extra activities). They will also monitor progress in the first year and lend authority when inviting external partners.
  - **Study Abroad Coordinator/Counselor:** Manage day-to-day implementation schedule of events, maintain student records, for example, who is applying where, provide counseling, and report progress to the principal. Essentially, the project manager is at the school level.
  - **Teachers:** Assist per their roles (club advisor, test prep instructor, etc.). Also importantly, *all teachers* can help identify promising students early (e.g., a grade 11 teacher refers a bright student to the coordinator as a candidate for the program). In staff meetings, the coordinator will brief others so that student identification and encouragement become a shared responsibility.
  - **School Board/Community:** The board will support fundraising and advocacy. For example, a board member might approach a local NGO for scholarship sponsorship on the school's behalf. They also serve as a link to the community, addressing any community concerns or misconceptions.
  - **Parents:** Their role is to support and allow their children to participate. We will form a small parent committee for higher education (maybe 2-3 active parents) who can help disseminate correct information among other parents and even assist with minor logistics (like chaperoning students to a city event if needed). Engaging parents in the process gives them ownership–they move from bystanders to supporters.

Overall, while the resource demands are manageable (largely reallocation of existing resources with some external supplementation), it is crucial that roles are clearly defined and that those involved are committed. To formalize this, the principal will include the study abroad initiative in the school's annual plan and assign duties in writing (e.g., an official letter appointing Mr. ___ as Study Abroad Coordinator). This formal recognition ensures accountability.

8.4 Potential Implementation Challenges

We anticipate several challenges in rolling out these solutions:

- **Staff Workload and Buy-In:** Teachers and staff are already busy. Taking on extra duties (club supervision, extra classes, counseling) could lead to burnout or reluctance. There's a risk that without proper incentives or support, teacher participation might wane after initial enthusiasm. Additionally, some staff might be skeptical about focusing on study abroad when many students struggle with basics–we might face an attitude of "why spend effort on a few students for overseas colleges?"
- **Student Participation and Persistence:** Initially, students might be hesitant to join the new programs out of fear or skepticism. We might struggle with low turnout for the club or seminars if students think, "this isn't for people like us." Also, pursuing study abroad

is a long and challenging process; there is a risk that students start but give up when facing obstacles (e.g., a low practice test score or a complicated application form)–essentially, maintaining student motivation through the lengthy application season could be difficult.

- **Financial Limitations:** The plan involves raising some funds (for fees, etc.)–there's a challenge that we may not gather sufficient resources. If scholarships or outside funding don't come through as hoped, we could have students get admitted but then be unable to go due to money, which would be disheartening. Conversely, if we get many interested students, the available financial aid might not cover all, forcing difficult decisions on who to support.
- **Cultural and Family Resistance:** Despite our parent outreach, some families might still be uneasy. There could be hidden resistance–e.g., a parent verbally says OK but privately discourages their child from pursuing it due to fear of the child leaving home. Community norms change slowly; some community members might gossip that studying abroad is impractical, potentially discouraging students.
- **Logistical Hurdles:** Navigating the mechanics of applications and tests could prove challenging. For example, registering students for, SAT, IELTS/TOEFL in Phnom Penh (2 hours away) involves travel logistics and permission; obtaining passports for minors requires parental documents and fees–bureaucratic issues could cause delays or drop-offs. These practical hurdles might derail a student's plan if not managed closely.
- **Measuring Short-Term Success:** There is an expectation to see results (students going abroad). However, the timeline for actual enrollment outcomes might be 1-2 years. In the interim, it might appear the program is not "working" if no one immediately departs for overseas study. This could challenge stakeholder patience. The school or district management might question the effort if immediate, tangible results (like admissions) don't materialize in the first year.
- **Sustainability and Continuity:** If the coordinator or key champion teacher leaves the school or is unavailable, the program could stall (a one-person dependency issue). Moreover, keeping the momentum beyond initial success can be hard–once the "novelty" wears off, the school must integrate these efforts into regular practice, which is a challenge in the face of changing administrations or shifting priorities.
- **Competition and Failures:** Not all students will succeed in getting scholarships or admissions. We must anticipate that some will face rejection. Multiple rejections or difficulties (like visa denials) could demoralize both participants and those observing. There is a challenge in managing these failures–if not handled well, a highly publicized attempt that fails (e.g., a student doesn't get the scholarship everyone hoped for) could reinforce the belief that trying is futile.
- **External Factors:** Uncontrollable external events can pose challenges, for example, changes in foreign visa policy, global pandemics, or geopolitical issues that suddenly limit travel or opportunities. Such factors could temporarily halt or reverse progress (as seen during COVID-19 when many international programs paused). We need to be wary that our plans have some resiliency.

8.5 Strategies to Address Challenges

We will employ several strategies to mitigate the above challenges:

- **Gradual Implementation and Teacher Support:** To avoid overwhelming staff, we'll implement changes gradually and distribute responsibilities. For instance, in year 1, focus on a small pilot group of students rather than the whole class, so only a manageable number of counseling sessions are needed. We'll formally recognize teacher contributions–the principal will commend participating teachers in meetings and possibly factor it into their performance appraisals (e.g., cite their mentorship as a service to the school). Providing a modest stipend or time-off for the coordinator addresses workload concerns. To build buy-in, we'll highlight how the program can elevate the school's reputation and student success (a point of pride for teachers). Early professional development sessions will also be held to get all teachers on the same page about the value of this effort (combating any "why do this?" skepticism by sharing data on benefits and perhaps a talk from an educator at another school that did something similar successfully).
- **Student Engagement and Motivation Tactics:** To encourage participation, we will actively *recruit* students for the club and workshops, for example, personally invite high-achieving or English-proficient students who show potential. We'll use senior students' or alumni videos to promote the program to juniors, making it seem aspirational and "cool." During the program, maintain motivation through regular check-ins and morale boosts–for example, celebrate small milestones (completed first draft of an essay, improved TOEFL score) in the club. If a student stumbles (say, with a low test score), the coordinator and mentor will meet to reframe it as an area to improve rather than a stop sign, emphasizing a growth mindset. Keeping the group tightly knit (peer accountability) will help–students will encourage each other not to quit. We will also manage expectations by emphasizing that even if studying abroad doesn't pan out, the skills they gain (English, confidence, etc.) will benefit them in local opportunities, so participation is never a waste. This way, even if outcomes are uncertain, they stay motivated by the *process* value.
- **Financial Planning and Transparency:** We will create a transparent system for any school-raised funds to ensure fairness and trust. For example, establish criteria: funds first cover mandatory fees (tests, visa) for any student who cannot pay; if multiple students need flight tickets, perhaps need-based or merit-based committee decisions will be made. By communicating these criteria early to students and parents, we set realistic expectations on what will be funded. To amplify resources, we'll seek multiple small contributions instead of depending on one source–for instance, ask an NGO to cover test fees for 5 students, a local business to sponsor a "study abroad scholarship" of $500, etc. If full scholarships are not obtained, we will help students explore alternative financing (education loans, crowdfunding platforms) and ensure they have a backup plan (like deferred admission to reapply for funding). Additionally, we'll advise students to apply to a mix of countries/universities, including some with generous aid (to maximize chances of an affordable option). Essentially, we tackle the finance issue on many fronts to minimize the scenario of a student being stranded after all that effort.

- **Cultivating Parental and Community Support:** Overcoming cultural resistance requires continuous communication. We'll identify a few champion parents (perhaps those who are enthusiastic about the idea) to speak to other parents–nothing persuades better than peer examples. At parent meetings, apart from formal presentations, we'll facilitate open discussion so that hesitant parents can voice fears and have them addressed by staff or by those supportive parents. Also, engaging community leaders to publicly bless or endorse the effort can help shift perceptions (for example, having a local leader say at a school event, "We are proud of students aiming high, even abroad"). For families concerned about children not returning, we can highlight how many scholars do return or how they can contribute back even if abroad (remittances, skills, etc.), reframing it as a community investment. We will also ensure that any student who does succeed abroad remains connected (perhaps sending updates to school to share), demonstrating to the community the positive outcomes (success breeds acceptance).
- **Managing Logistical Hurdles:** The Study Abroad Coordinator will create a checklist and timeline for each participating student, essentially project-managing each case. For example, "Passport obtained by June–responsible: student + parent, with coordinator following up. TOEFL in August–responsible: coordinator registers all club members together by May," and so on. By bundling logistics (registering for tests as a group, possibly traveling together for exams), we reduce individual burden. We will coordinate with the school administration to provide official letters or transportation as needed (e.g., a school van trip to the testing center if feasible, or at least pairing students to travel together). For visa interviews, we'll arrange practice sessions (to reduce anxiety) and ensure all paperwork is reviewed. Essentially, foreseeing bureaucratic steps and tackling them in an organized way will prevent last-minute crises. The coordinator will maintain close contact with parents during these steps too, to guide them through, say, passport applications.
- **Demonstrating Short-Term Wins:** To address the issue of proving success early, we will define interim metrics of success and communicate them. For example, by the end of Year 1, success might be "5 students took the TOEFL, IELTS or SAT and improved scores" or "the school sent 3 strong applications to international programs, awaiting results"–these will be reported to school leadership and celebrated. We'll also highlight intangible wins like "students' English club participation has doubled" or specific student growth stories. By setting these intermediate goals, we manage expectations that success is not only the final outcome (going abroad) but also the progress made. This way, even if no student has left for abroad in the first year, stakeholders see concrete improvements and value. Additionally, we will aim for at least one *visible* achievement in the first year to validate the program–for instance, even getting a small summer exchange program for one student or winning a partial scholarship can serve as proof of concept.
- **Institutionalization and Succession Planning:** To sustain the program, we will document all processes (creating a simple "Study Abroad Handbook" for the school). The coordinator will keep files on contacts, timelines, colleges' info, etc., so if personnel change, the next person can pick up. We'll also try to involve multiple teachers in key knowledge areas (for example, two teachers attend the counselor training instead of one) to build internal capacity. The principal will be asked to include the program in the school's formal development plan each year, so it doesn't disappear with staffing

changes. If a champion leaves, we'll engage another by sharing success stories and perhaps having the outgoing person mentor the incoming replacement during transition. Additionally, as soon as we have student alumni who went through the program (even those who ended up in local universities but participated), we'll involve them in mentoring the next cohort, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of support.

- **Coping with Failures and Setbacks:** Not every attempt will succeed, so we'll frame failures as learning opportunities. If a student is not selected for a scholarship, the coordinator (and mentor) will debrief with them to extract lessons and possibly identify other opportunities. We will maintain multiple options for each student (e.g., also apply to a local scholarship or a less competitive country as a fallback) so that a failure isn't the end of the road. Publicly, we will be careful to manage information–we will celebrate attempts but not broadcast individual failures. Instead of announcing "Student X didn't get scholarship Y," we will privately comfort and re-strategize with that student, while still praising their hard work in general. This protects students from feeling humiliated and the program from getting a bad image. If external factors (like a pandemic) hit, we will pivot to alternatives (perhaps focus on virtual exchange programs or delay timelines) and communicate clearly to stakeholders that the commitment remains and the plan will resume when possible. Being flexible and resilient in the face of challenges will demonstrate the program's robustness.

Through these strategies, we aim to preempt or minimize the impact of foreseeable challenges. By nurturing a supportive culture, being realistic yet optimistic, and adjusting course as needed, the initiative can survive early hurdles and thrive long-term. In essence, ongoing communication, support, and adaptation are our main tools for ensuring that the performance improvement efforts remain on track despite difficulties.

IX. Evaluation Plan

To determine the effectiveness of our FEA interventions and ensure continuous improvement, we will implement a robust evaluation plan. The evaluation will be both formative (ongoing, to make adjustments during implementation) and summative (to assess outcomes against our goals). We outline clear success criteria, the methods and instruments we'll use to gather evaluation data, how we'll analyze that data, and a timeline for these activities.

9.1 Evaluation Criteria for Success

We have identified specific evaluation criteria (metrics) that align with the performance objectives and the root causes addressed. The ultimate goal is to increase study abroad participation, so the primary criteria relate to that outcome, but we also include leading indicators and process measures to capture progress along the way:

- **Number of Students Applying to Overseas Programs:** This is a key indicator of engagement. Our target is to increase this number from 0 at baseline to at least 3–5 students applying in the first year, and a growing number thereafter (e.g., 10+ in year 3). This metric shows that more students are taking concrete steps toward the goal.

- **Number of Students Accepted/Enrolled Abroad:** The pinnacle measure of success is how many students matriculate in foreign institutions. Our initial objective is to have *at least one student* enroll abroad within the first 2 years of the program (by the end of the second admissions cycle), with a longer-term goal of sustaining at least 1–2 students per year (or more) going forward. This will be compared to the baseline of 0 to quantify improvement.
- **Scholarships/Funding Secured:** Since finance is crucial, we will track the amount of scholarship money or financial aid our students secure. Success might be, for example, "$50,000 in scholarships awarded to our students" in a year, or that "X students received full funding." If students are enrolling, presumably they have funding, but this metric also accounts for those who got offers (even if they didn't all enroll). It reflects our effectiveness in addressing financial barriers.
- **Improvement in Student Preparedness (Skills):** We will use pre- and post-assessments to measure gains in language and test scores. For instance, we expect the average TOEFL score among program participants to increase by at least 15% after the prep course. Or, if initially only 2 students could meet an IELTS 6.0 requirement and by year's end 6 students can, that's a clear improvement. We'll also monitor the number of students who take standardized tests–an increase from baseline (where virtually none had ever taken such tests) to, say, 5-10 students taking TOEFL/, SAT, IELTS annually is a success indicator.
- **Awareness and Attitude Changes:** Through surveys, we'll evaluate changes in awareness and attitudes (for students and parents). Criteria include: higher awareness (e.g., on a quiz, students can now list on average 5 foreign universities or scholarships, up from maybe 1 or 2 initially), and more positive attitudes (e.g., an increase in the percentage of students who say "studying abroad is one of my goals" or parents who say "I would support my child going abroad"). Specifically, we might aim for a 20% increase in the number of students expressing strong interest in study abroad and a significant boost in parent approval ratings after one year of interventions.
- **Engagement in Program Activities:** We'll also define success by participation levels in our program components–for example, having at least 15 active members in the Study Abroad Club, or 80% of invited students attending the seminars. Consistent attendance and engagement indicate the program is reaching its audience. If these numbers fall short, it signals the need for adjustments.
- **Stakeholder, SAT, IELTS satisfaction:** Using feedback forms, we will gauge how, SAT, IELTS, satisfied students and parents are with the support provided. Criteria could include a majority of students rating the counseling/mentorship as "helpful" or "very helpful," and parents expressing, SAT, IELTS results, that the school is providing guidance. The target might be, say, 85% of participants indicating they feel more supported in the study abroad process than before. Also, teacher and coordinator reflections can be part of this–do they feel the program is manageable and worthwhile?
- **Integration into School Culture:** While harder to quantify, another criterion is institutionalization–for instance, the presence of a sustained counselor role or annual budget allocation for this program by the school. We can treat it as a goal that by year 2 or 3, the study abroad initiative is formally written into the school's strategic plan and

that the district acknowledges it (perhaps replicating it in other schools). This indicates long-term viability.

These criteria cover outcomes (e.g., students abroad), outputs (e.g., applications submitted), and process/impact measures (skills improved, SAT, IELTS satisfaction). We will compare these metrics against baseline data (collected in the FEA) and against the targets we set. For example, baseline awareness might have been very low (as seen, few knew about scholarships); after interventions, we expect a measurable jump–that becomes a success criterion achieved.

9.2 Methods and Instruments for Evaluation

To collect data for each of the criteria above, we will use a mix of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, mirroring some of the FEA methods but now applied to measuring change. Key methods and tools include:

- **Surveys (Post-Intervention):** We will deploy follow-up surveys to students, parents, and teachers at regular intervals (e.g., end of each school year). These surveys will contain many of the same questions as the baseline needs analysis surveys, allowing direct comparison. For students, questions will assess current plans (local vs. abroad), awareness of opportunities (quiz-like questions), confidence levels, and SAT, IELTS satisfaction with support. For parents, surveys will check if their concerns have been addressed and if their outlook has changed. Likert-scale items will gauge changes in attitudes (e.g., "I feel confident I could apply to a foreign university"–see how responses shift). These surveys generate quantifiable data (percentages, mean ratings) to evaluate progress. *Instrument:* Structured questionnaires (online via Google Forms or paper)–similar in design to the initial ones, but now focused on "after program" perspectives. We'll also include a few open-ended prompts for qualitative feedback (e.g., "What did you find most helpful? What additional support would you like?").
- **Interviews and Focus Groups:** For a deeper understanding, we'll conduct interviews with key stakeholders such as the Study Abroad Coordinator, a sample of participating students, and a couple of parents. These conversions, SAT, and IELTS help contextualize the numbers. For example, if only 1 student went abroad, an interview can reveal the obstacles those who didn't make it faced, or the unintended benefits they still got. A focus group with participating students at year-end can discuss how the program helped them, what challenges remain, and suggestions for improvement (ensuring student voice is part of the evaluation). Similarly, a short focus group with teachers involved can surface whether they saw academic improvements or changes in student behavior. These qualitative methods will shed light on the *why* behind success levels and provide nuance (e.g., a student might say "I didn't get to go abroad, but now I am motivated to apply for an international graduate program in the future because of this experience," which is still a positive impact).
- **Program Records and Document Analysis:** We will keep detailed records throughout implementation, such as attendance logs for workshops/club meetings, lists of students who took tests (with scores), application trackers (which students applied where, results), and the amount of funds disbursed. These records themselves form a rich source of

evaluation data. For instance, the application tracker will directly feed the metrics of "number of applications" and "number of acceptances." The coordinator will compile a yearly summary document enumerating: how many advising sessions took place, how many external partners engaged, etc. We'll analyze these documents to see if we met our activity targets (e.g., planned 4 seminars, actually held 3–why short? or exceeded target membership in the club).

- **Pre- and Post-Testing:** Specifically for skill improvement, we will use test results as an objective measure. We'll compare students' diagnostics vs. post-prep scores (for TOEFL, IELTS practice tests, etc.). We might also use an English proficiency test administered at school (like a standardized English test we give at the start and end of the year) to measure improvement for participants vs. non-participants, serving as a quasi-control comparison. Additionally, if possible, track GPA or academic performance of participants–it might improve due to increased motivation/focus (though not a direct goal, it's a nice side effect to measure).
- **Observation Records:** The coordinator and teachers will maintain anecdotal notes–e.g., notable student behaviors, enthusiasm observed, challenges encountered–which, though subjective, can highlight changes like increased student initiative or confidence in class. We can use an observation checklist (like "Student demonstrates proactive behavior (e.g., asking teachers for recommendation letters)–often, sometimes, rarely") to systematically capture some behavioral changes. These observations especially help in evaluating less tangible outcomes like confidence: for instance, an English teacher might note that students in the club are now more vocal in class or taking on leadership roles.
- **Feedback Forms after Events:** Immediately after key events (like an awareness seminar or the conclusion of a test prep course), we'll use quick feedback forms. These forms ask participants to rate the usefulness of the session and what they learned. This immediate feedback helps evaluate each component's quality and can inform tweaks for next time (formative evaluation). For example, if students rate a particular workshop poorly, we know to revamp that content.
- **Comparative Data:** Where available, we might compare our school's outcomes to similar schools or national averages as a benchmark. For instance, if data exists on how many Cambodian high schoolers study abroad on average, we can see if we have exceeded that proportion after our interventions. Or, if another school in the district doesn't have such a program, how do our English test score gains or scholarship wins compare? This can strengthen the evaluation by providing context (though we'll be careful, as such comparisons can be tricky due to different conditions).

By using these diverse methods, we ensure we gather quantitative data (e.g., counts, percentages, test scores) to judge progress objectively, and qualitative insights (opinions, experiences) to understand the effects and guide improvements. The combination provides a comprehensive picture of the program's performance.

X. Additional Recommendations

Beyond the immediate solutions and evaluation, we offer additional recommendations to ensure the *sustainability* of the performance improvements and to foster *future enhancements* of the

initiative. These recommendations will help embed the changes into the organization's fabric and adapt the program to evolving needs.

10.1 Sustainability Suggestions

To make sure the progress persists and the program continues to thrive in the long term, we suggest the following:

- **Institutionalize the Program:** Integrate the study abroad support program into the school's official operations and policies. For instance, the school could create a permanent "College and Career Guidance Unit," of which international guidance is a part. This might involve eventually securing a budget line for the Study Abroad Coordinator position or related activities each year. By having formal recognition (e.g., mention in the school's annual report or development plan), the program is less likely to depend on one champion or be seen as an "extra" that could be dropped. Over time, as results prove its value, push for the Ministry or District to allocate resources or at least endorse the program so it survives leadership changes.
- **Capacity Building for Staff:** Continuously train and develop staff so that knowledge is retained and expanded. Perhaps send one or two teachers each year to professional development (like an HPT or counseling workshop). Encourage the Study Abroad Coordinator to attend conferences or join networks (maybe an online forum of college counselors in Asia) to stay updated on opportunities. Building a team of trained teachers (not just one) is key–for example, after 3 years, have three teachers who could all step into the coordinator role if needed. This addresses continuity. It might also be wise to involve younger teachers who are likely to be at the school longer and groom them into program roles.
- **Student Leadership Pipeline:** Sustain the peer-driven aspects by creating a pipeline of student leaders. For the club, implement a system where juniors shadow senior club officers, so when seniors graduate, juniors seamlessly take over. Alumni who benefited should be invited back (virtually or in person) to speak or mentor; this alumni network will grow each year and become a sustainability asset–older peers motivating younger ones in a self-perpetuating cycle. In a few years, the school could have a small alumni community who went abroad and can even form a support group (they might collectively fundraise a scholarship for their alma mater, for example).
- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** Keep the community invested in the program's success. One idea is to establish an *annual "Education Abroad Night"* as a fixture in the community–an event every year where current students, parents, alumni, and local sponsors gather, success stories are honored, and new aspirants are introduced. This yearly ritual will help maintain visibility and support. It's also an opportunity to publicly thank donors and thus encourage continued contributions. By making the program a source of community pride ("our village has X students in universities abroad now"), it will garner social sustainability.
- **Documentation and Knowledge Management:** Maintain detailed documentation of processes, contacts, scholarship databases, lesson plans for training sessions, etc. Over the years, refine a School Guidebook for International Applications that is updated

annually. This guidebook can be handed to new staff or used by students directly. It ensures that even if personnel change, the know-how doesn't leave with them. The guidebook could include timelines, sample forms, FAQs answered, and reflections from past students ("I wish I had started prepping earlier…" etc.). This living document sustains organizational knowledge.

- **Integrate with Curriculum (where possible):** To reduce reliance on extracurricular efforts, weave some elements into the curriculum. For example, the English curriculum for Grade 11 or 12 could include an assignment to draft a personal statement or do a research project on an international university–thereby aligning academic work with program goals. If that's too formal, at least use homeroom periods or existing "life skills" classes (if any in the curriculum) to cover topics like study skills for college applications. This normalization within class time ensures these topics are continuously addressed without solely relying on voluntary participation.
- **Leverage Technology for Scalability:** As the program grows, use technology to manage it efficiently. For instance, use a shared Google Drive or database for tracking student progress, accessible (with privacy controls) to relevant staff. Possibly implement an online platform for mentoring (there are platforms that connect mentors/mentees globally). By year 3 or 4, if many students are participating, technology will help manage communications and information dissemination (e.g., a dedicated Facebook or WhatsApp group for announcements, a website or section on the school site listing resources and alumni stories). This also appeals to students and meets them where they are (online).
- **Monitor and Prevent Burnout:** Sustainability also means preventing burnout of key players. The principal should monitor the coordinator's workload and success. If the program grows, perhaps form a small committee (two teachers, the coordinator, and a counselor from the district, if available) to share the tasks. Regularly celebrate the efforts of those involved to keep morale high (for example, after each cycle, acknowledge the teachers in a staff meeting or give a token of appreciation). Happy, motivated implementers will sustain the program out of passion, not just duty.
- **Plan for Funding Sustainability:** For financial sustainability, work on building an endowment or a steady source of funding for the scholarship fund. For example, if a local company can commit to a multi-year sponsorship, secure an MOU for that. Or aim to collaborate with an NGO that focuses on scholarships (perhaps convincing them to consistently include our school's students in their selections). Another idea: as alumni graduate from university and enter careers, encourage them to "give back"–even small amounts pooled from successful alumni can sustain a scholarship for future students (this is long-term, but planting that idea early with current students could bear fruit 5-10 years down the line).

Sustainability will come from institutionalization, continuous engagement, and resource stability. By making the program part of the school's identity and routine, training multiple people, and fostering a supportive ecosystem around it, we aim to ensure it continues to narrow the performance gap for years to come.

XI. References

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XII. Appendix

Appendix A: Use of AI

Create Draft Table of Contents: Convert rubrics into a draft table of contents using ChatGPT.

Reference Links: Include relevant ChatGPT conversation links for continuity. OpenAI. (2025, April 5). *FEA Plan Table Review-Final Project*. ChatGPT. https://chatgpt.com/share/680088d7-e204-8008-9837-85ca6e79f0d4

Appendix B: Student Survey

A survey will be administered to a convenience sample of 9th-12th-grade students at **Jayavarman VII High School** via Qualtrics survey building software. All responses will be anonymous with IP address encryption. Our survey will utilize both multiple-choice questions for gathering demographic information (grade level, age, etc.), and a 6-point Likert Scale to avoid neutral responses. The following is a list of one example question covering each of our 8 areas of interest.

**Please note that this list of questions is incomplete and does not cover every aspect of each category that would be addressed, and should this survey be applied.*

Example Question Measuring **Educational Aspirations:**

As of now, what are your plans after high school graduation?

a. Attend a four-year college or university
b. Attend a two-year/community college
c. Enroll in a trade or vocational school
d. Join the military
e. Start working full-time
f. Take a gap year to travel, work, or explore interests
g. Not sure yet / still figuring it out
h. Pursue an apprenticeship or internship program
i. Other (please specify): _____

Example Question Measuring **Interest in Study Abroad:**

How interested are you in participating in a study abroad program during or after high school?

1 – Not at all interested
2 – Slightly interested
3 – Somewhat interested
4 – Moderately interested
5 – Very interested
6 – Extremely interested

Example Question Measuring **Self-assessed Preparedness:**

Please rate your level of preparedness in the following areas as you think about life after high school.

I feel confident in my English reading and writing skills for use in university or work settings.

1 – Strongly disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Slightly disagree
4 – Slightly agree
5 – Agree
6 – Strongly agree

Example Question Measuring **Knowledge of International Application Requirements**:

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement about applying to universities outside of Cambodia.

Statement:
I understand the requirements for applying to international universities, such as academic transcripts, English proficiency tests (e.g., IELTS or TOEFL), personal statements, and recommendation letters.

1 – Strongly disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Slightly disagree
4 – Slightly agree
5 – Agree
6 – Strongly agree

Example Question Measuring **Perceived Barriers:**

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about possible barriers to studying abroad.

Statement:
I believe the cost of studying abroad is a major obstacle for me.

1 – Strongly disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Slightly disagree
4 – Slightly agree
5 – Agree
6 – Strongly agree

Example Question Measuring **Motivation/Confidence:**

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your motivation and confidence to study abroad.

Statement:
I believe I have the ability to succeed in an international academic environment.

1 – Strongly disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Slightly disagree
4 – Slightly agree
5 – Agree
6 – Strongly agree

Example Question Measuring **Preferred Support:**

Please rate how helpful you believe each of the following types of support would be in helping you pursue study abroad opportunities.

Statement:
Workshops or seminars about international university applications.

1 – Not helpful at all
2 – Slightly helpful
3 – Somewhat helpful
4 – Moderately helpful
5 – Very helpful
6 – Extremely helpful

Example Question Facilitating **Open Feedback:**

We would love to hear your thoughts. Please share any personal goals, worries, or questions you have about studying abroad. What would make you feel more confident or supported in pursuing this opportunity?

Appendix C: Interview & Focus Group

Jayavarman VII High School Interview & Focus Group Questionnaire for Front-End Analysis (FEA) on Study Abroad Participation

One-to-One Interview Questions for Leadership Stakeholders

Target Participants: School Principal, District Education Officer, School Board Members
Estimated Duration: 45–60 minutes

A. Understanding of the Issue

1. From your perspective, why do you think none of the students at Jayavarman VII High School are studying abroad?
2. How do you define success when it comes to preparing students for international education?
3. In your role, what kind of concerns have you heard from parents or community members about students going abroad?

B. Institutional Capacity and Support

4. What institutional or structural limitations currently prevent the school from promoting or supporting study abroad initiatives?
5. Is there currently any policy or practice within your authority that could be adapted to improve access to international opportunities for students?
6. Have any efforts previously been made to promote study abroad from this school or district level? If so, what were the outcomes?

C. Attitudes and Policy Context

7. What is your attitude toward sending more students abroad? Do you view it as a priority for the school or district?

8. How do current national or district education policies support or limit study abroad efforts?
9. Are there any risks or drawbacks you foresee if the school begins to more actively promote international study?

D. Potential Support Mechanisms

10. What support (financial, technical, or human resources) would be required to develop a sustainable study abroad preparation program?
11. What role do you think external organizations (e.g., NGOs, EducationUSA, alumni) could play in supporting this effort?
12. If a proposal were made to initiate a mentorship or study abroad readiness club, what would be needed to secure your approval or support?

E. Opportunities and Constraints

13. What opportunities (e.g., partnerships, funding, visibility) do you see for expanding study abroad from Jayavarman VII High School?
14. What constraints (e.g., staffing, budgeting, administrative policies) do you think must be addressed first?
15. Are there any upcoming changes in the educational landscape that might support or complicate this initiative?

F. Vision and Commitment

16. How committed would you or your department be to helping at least one student go abroad each year?
17. What would make this initiative sustainable beyond a one-time effort?
18. If you could implement just one action to promote study abroad participation at the school, what would it be?

Teachers' Focus Group Interview Questions

Target Participants: A Group of Respected Representatives from the Teaching Staff
Estimated Duration: 45–60 minutes

A. Perceived Student Barriers

1. Why do you think none of our students are currently studying abroad?
   Follow-up: Can you share an example or a story that illustrates this?
2. Have you encountered students who were capable of studying abroad but chose not to apply? If yes, what held them back?
3. What common misconceptions do you think students have about international education?

B. Internal School Issues

4. What support structures currently exist at the school to help students pursue international education?

5. Do you feel you have enough time and knowledge to guide students who are interested in studying abroad? Why or why not?

C. Reactions to Proposed Solutions

6. What are your thoughts on establishing an after-school mentorship club focused on study abroad preparation?
7. Would you be willing to contribute time or effort to activities such as info sessions, scholarship workshops, or essay review support?
8. What additional ideas do you have to build awareness and student confidence about studying abroad?

D. Teacher Training Needs

9. What kind of training or resources would you need to better support students in applying to international universities?
10. How comfortable do you feel in advising students on language exams like TOEFL or IELTS, and the application process in general?

E. Concerns

11. What concerns do you have about encouraging students to pursue opportunities abroad?
12. Do you worry that raising student expectations without financial support could lead to discouragement? How can we address this?
13. Some say studying abroad is only for top students or the wealthy. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

F. Consensus Building

14. At what grade level do you think guidance for international study should begin?
15. How can we encourage and celebrate small milestones (e.g., application submissions, scholarship interviews) to keep students motivated?
16. If you could fix only one thing to make studying abroad more accessible for students, what would it be?
17. What would make you feel more confident and supported as a teacher contributing to this initiative?

Students' Focus Group Interview Questions

Target Participants: A Group of Respected Student Representatives
Estimated Duration: 45–60 minutes

A. Dreams and Aspirations

1. What are your goals or dreams for the next five years after high school?
2. Have you ever thought about studying abroad? If so, where and why?

B. Knowledge Gaps

3. What do you know about the process of applying to study abroad?
4. Where do you usually get your information about universities or scholarships?

5. Have you ever seen scholarship posts or programs online that you didn't trust or didn't understand?

C. Feelings and Motivation

6. How do you feel when you hear about students from other countries going to study abroad?
7. What excites or worries you the most about the idea of living and studying in another country?
8. Would it help if you had a group of friends or classmates going through the process with you? Why?
9. Do you think someone like you could study abroad? Why or why not?

D. Barriers – In Your Own Words

10. What are the biggest challenges that might stop you from applying to study abroad?
11. Do you feel confident in your English skills or academic ability to succeed in another country? Why or why not?

E. What Would Help

12. What specific kinds of support (e.g., workshops, financial aid information, essay help, encouragement from teachers/parents) would help you the most?
13. Who would you like to get support from (teachers, parents, alumni, mentors)? What kind of help would you want from them?

F. Peer Discussion Outcome

14. After hearing your classmates' thoughts, has anything changed in your thinking about studying abroad?
15. Would being part of a school club or team focused on international education make you more likely to apply? Why or why not?

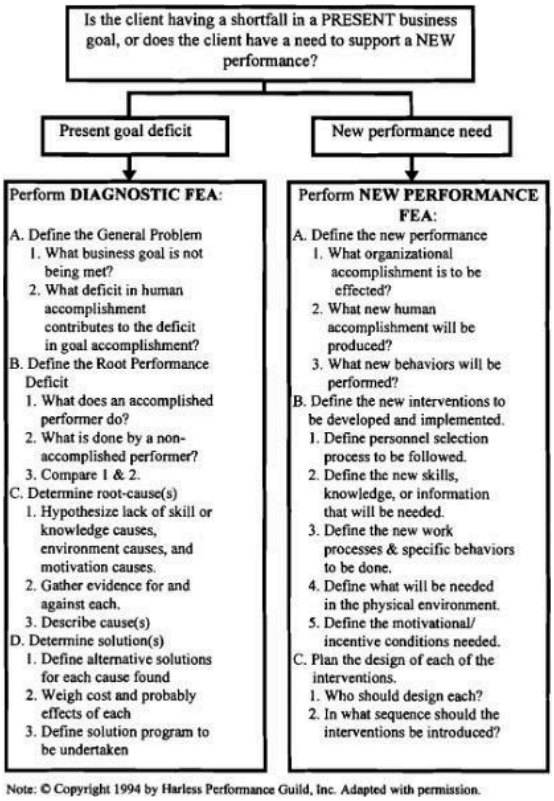
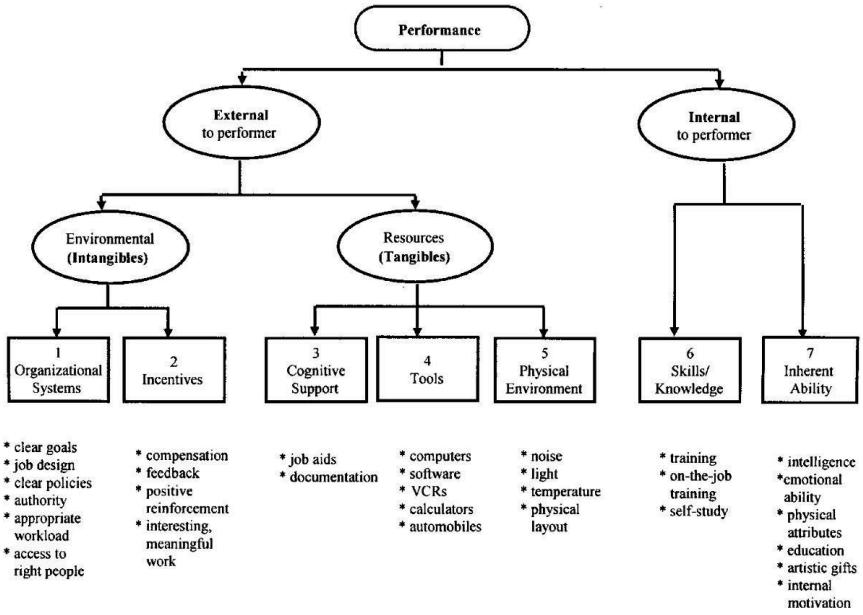
G. Clarifications

16. What are some things you're unsure of or confused about when it comes to studying abroad?

Note for Interviewer:

Encourage open sharing and peer interaction. Allow time for deeper stories to surface. Use follow-up questions based on participant responses and remain neutral to avoid influencing responses. Feel free to rephrase or clarify questions as needed to ensure participants fully understand.

Appendix D: Model Selection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