

Community Participation for Educational Planning and Development

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Abstract: This research set out to explore the roles communities in the development of education. The concept of community participation has been important around the world. In developed countries communities have important role in the processes of educational planning and development. But in third world countries there are some important barriers in face of community participation in education activities. This paper looks at the barriers of community participation in educational activities as well as role of community participation in educational planning. This research draws from my scientific experience in a variety of disciplines namely; anthropology and education. [Nature and Science 2010;8(9):1-4]. (ISSN: 1545-0740).

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1. Introduction

Communities can play a variety of roles in the provision and management of education and learning processes. Community participation can contribute to promoting education (UNICEF 1992). Community participation is a concept that attempts to bring different stakeholders together for problem solving and decision making (Talbot and Verrinder 2005). Community participation is considered necessary to get community support for educational planning and development (Cole 2007). Community participation refers to peoples' engagement in activities within the educational system. It plays an essential and long-standing role in promoting quality of life (Putnam 2000). Community participation in educational development processes can support and uphold local culture, tradition, knowledge and skill, and create pride in community heritage (Lacy et al. 2002).

Community participation is one of the mechanisms to empower people to take part in educational development. It was launched as a key concept of development. Increased participation is a means to achieve development to resolve the educational problems (Aref et al, 2009; Lasker, Weiss, and Miller 2001). This article looks at the barriers and potential of community participation in educational development in Iran.

2. Community Participation

The term "participation" can be interpreted in various ways, depending on the context. Shaeffer (1994)

clarifies different degrees or levels of participation, including:

- Ø involvement through the contribution of money, materials, and labor;
- Ø involvement through 'attendance' (e.g. at parents' meetings at school), implying passive acceptance of decisions made by others;
- Ø involvement through consultation on a particular issue;
- Ø participation in the delivery of a service, often as a partner with other actors;
- Ø participation as implementers of delegated powers; and participation "in real decision making at every stage," including identification of problems, the stay of planning, implementation, and evaluation (Uemura 1999).

Shaeffer stresses that the first four definitions use the word involvement and connote largely passive collaboration, whereas the last three items use the word participation instead, implying a much more active role (Uemura 1999). In other definition Participation is concerned with human development and increases people's sense of control over issues which affect their lives, helps them to learn how to plan and implement and, on a broader front, prepares them for participation at regional or even national level. In essence, participation is a 'good thing' because it breaks people's isolation and lays the groundwork for them to have not only a more substantial influence on development, but also a

greater independence and control over their lives (Oakley 1991; Warburton 1997).

Without community participation, there is obviously no partnership, no development and no program. Hence the lack of community participation in decision making to implement educational development can lead to failure in the community

development (Miranda 2007). Meanwhile, some scholars provided a typology of participation, but they do not directly deal with tourism development (Leksakundilok 2006). Table 1 showed six broad categories or levels of participation, which had been formulated.

Table 1: Types of Community Participation for Educational Planning and Development

Types	Characteristics
Empowerment	Local people have control over all development without any influence (Choguill 1996; Dewar 1999).
Partnership	There are some degrees of local influence in development process (Arnstein 1969).
Interaction	People have greater involvement in this level. The rights of local people are recognized and accepted in practice at local level (Pretty 1995).
Consultation	People are consulted in several ways, e.g. being involved in community's meeting or even public hearings. Developers may accept some contribution from the locals that benefits their project (Arnstein 1969).
Informing	People are told about development program, which have been decided already, in the community. The developers run the projects without listening to local people's opinions (Arnstein 1969).
Manipulation	Development is generally developed by some powerful individuals, or government, without any discussion with the people (Arnstein 1969).

Source: Adapted from Leksakundilok (2006) and Aref et al. (2009)

3. Methodology

The research was performed as a qualitative library in which the researcher had to refer to relevant and related sources. I have used a number of articles and official websites of the various Iran known organizations.

4. Barriers of Participation in Education

Understanding barriers of participation is important when a community is getting organized for involvement in educational development planning. This understanding can help community and organizations more effectively impact the educational policy-making process. Further, it is important for government to understand that educational system also face barriers that can hinder its progress in responding and recognizing the priorities of local communities in Iran. Overcoming the barriers to education will serve to facilitate the policy making

process. There are several literatures that directly deal with the barriers of communities particularly in third world countries. Especially educational development in Iran has several barriers that cannot develop. Following are the main barriers:

- Inability to analyze the changing socio-cultural dimensions of educational system
- Lack of understanding of the policy process
- Lack of access to information (Steven and Jennifer 2002).

Involving communities in the education planning requires facing and tackling a number of challenges. In general, as Crewe and Harrison (1998) articulate, participatory approaches tend to overlook complexities and questions of power and conflict within communities. They are designed based on the false assumption that the community, group, or household is homogeneous, or has mutually compatible interests. Differences occur with respect to age, gender, wealth, ethnicity, language, culture,

race and so on. Even though marginalized or minority groups may be physically present during discussion, they are not necessarily given a chance to express their views to the same degree as others.

Bushell and Esgles (2007) also states education as a phenomenon of affluent contemporary societies is a particularly difficult concept in communities in developing countries to grasp (Bushell & Eagles, 2007, p. 154). As consequence, community participation may be unacceptable for educational development. Hence building capacity through is necessary for stakeholders involved in educational planning and development.

In attempts to understand factors that prevent communities from being involved in formal education, Shaeffer (1992) found that the degree of community participation is particularly low in socially and economically marginal regions. This is because such regions tend to have the following elements: (a) a lack of appreciation of the overall objectives of education; (b) a mismatch between what parents expect of education and what the school is seen as providing; (c) the belief that education is essentially the task of the State; (d) the length of time required to realize the benefits of better schooling; and (e) ignorance of the structure, functions, and constraints of the school (Uemura 1999).

5. Conclusion

In any effort to promote community participation for educational planning and development, it is necessary to assess the communities' capacity to carry out what they are expected to achieve in a long run. Community participation itself is not a goal in educational development, or a panacea to solve complicated issues contributing to poor educational quality in both developing and developed countries. It is a process that facilitates the realization of improving educational quality and the promotion of democracy within society. In completion this study explored the notion of community participation in processes of educational development. The study also showed the community participation can contribute to educational planning and development through various channels. The following is the ways which communities can contribute to the educational planning and development.

- advocating enrollment and education benefits;
- boosting morale of school teachers;
- raising money for schools;
- constructing, repairing, and improving school facilities;

- recruiting and supporting teachers;
- making decisions about school locations and schedules;
- monitoring and following up on teacher attendance and performance;
- forming village education committees to manage schools;
- actively attending school meetings to learn about children's learning progress
- providing skill instruction and local culture information;
- helping children with studying;
- garnering more resources from and solving problems through the education
- providing security for teachers by preparing adequate housing for them;
- identifying factors contributing to educational problems (Uemura 1999).

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