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Primary Schools' Development in Somaliland – The Role of Community Education Committees

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Abstract

The study sought to determine the methods used to participate the community in school infrastructure projects. It also examined the extent and effectiveness of the community education committee participation process. Done as a cross-sectional survey using mixed methods of inquiry, the study targeted 1002 respondents consisting of 920 headteachers and 82 officers in charge of District Education (DEOs) in Somaliland. The sample comprised 257 headteachers and 22 DEOs. Multi stage sampling was used. Purposive sampling was used to draw a sample of regions, stratified random sampling to draw a sample of headteachers while simple random sampling was used to draw a sample of DEOs. Pilot testing of the questionnaire was done on 28 headteachers.

DEOs were interviewed while Headteachers filled questionnaires. Reliability of the questionnaire was ensured using Cronbach alpha. Empirical literature review, peer review and pilot testing were used to ensure validity. The response was received from 20 DEOs and 247

headteachers. Thematic analysis was used to analyse interview data collected from DEOs. Headteachers data collected by questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics.

Participating the community in decision-making, offering free labour and fundraising were the leading methods of participating communities in school infrastructure projects. Communities perceived full ownership of completed school infrastructure projects. Community members were satisfied with the schools' participation process. Most schools had realized their community participation goals. The CEC process was just one of the numerous ways the community participated in school infrastructure projects. The CEC participation method was largely working and realising its goals. More school development could be realised if the CEC participation process was further strengthened.

Keywords: community Participation, Headteachers, Primary Schools, Somaliland, Community Education Committees, Education, Public Schools, Infrastructure Facilities, Infrastructure projects.

1. Introduction

Until the mid-20th century, the obligation for educating the children lay on the community (Williams, 2004). Communities can be regarded as consisting of persons in social interactions and having common ties that they are aware of and which may change over time (Burns and Taylor, 2000). Such persons may be living in the same geographical area or be interconnected using communication technology and may have overlapping community membership (Atkinson & Cope, 1997). Modern communities have shifting and overlapping memberships and represent varied, competing and conflicting interests.

The basic understanding of participation is to take part in 'something' and therefore this concept is applied to a range of experiences. A participatory orientation promotes the active inclusion of 'the public' or community in decision-making causes (Bishop&Davis, 2012; Foster, 2012). Participation varies by level from low to high depending on the participant's interest and power.

The levels include inform, consult, collaborate, partner, empower and control, in that order from low to high participation (Clayton, Dent & Dubois, 2013). Successful participation results to empowered communities able to engage in multiple aspects of education support including

willingly contributing resources (human, material, and economic) for the benefit of education, thereby increasing the likelihood of the education initiatives being both successful and sustainable (De Wit, 2010). One approach to deliver this outcome is Community Based Development (CBD), which refers to projects that participate beneficiaries actively in the entire project cycle (Cooke & Kothari, 2010) founded on the tenets of inclusion, empowerment, sustainability, good governance, poverty reduction, effectiveness and efficiency (Chambers, 2013).

The results of community participation in school projects include improved equitable access, better quality facilities, higher retention, and improved general school performance (Burki, Perry & Dillinger, 2009; Bengle & Sorensen, 2016). In this study, community participation is regarded in the context of local communities participating in school infrastructure projects in local public primary schools within their area.

The study sought to discover the methods used for community participation in primary schools. It also examined the extent and effectiveness of community education committee participation in school infrastructure projects. The study was undertaken in Somaliland.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was a cross-sectional survey using mixed methods of inquiry. The target population was 1002 respondents (920 headteachers and 82 DEOs). A sample of 279 respondents was determined using Morgan's table at a 95% level of confidence (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) and was made of 257 headteachers and 22 DEOs in a proportionate representation. The study used multistage sampling. Purposive sampling criteria of was used to draw 7 from 13 regions.

The purposive sampling criteria used were: security and absence of armed conflicts; physical accessibility, a high number of primary schools, a relative balance of rural and urban schools and attaining a national geographical spread. These criteria were applied in that order. Data collection in regions with security issues and those difficult to access due to poor road infrastructure was considered untenable.

Stratified proportionate random sampling was used to draw 257 headteachers from the 735 headteachers in the 7 regions purposively sampled. Finally, a sample of 22 DEOs was drawn by

simple random sampling. Headteachers filled a questionnaire while DEOs were interviewed. Pilot testing of the questionnaire was done on 28 headteachers.

Reliability was ensured using the Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.866$). Empirical literature review, pilot testing and peer review ensured the validity of the questionnaire. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis while quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The data were merged at the interpretation stage.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Response rate

Of the 257 questionnaires issued, 247 questionnaires were returned. Twenty DEO's were interviewed while 2 DEOs could not be reached.

3.2. Quantitative data analysis and findings

The study sought to establish the methods through which communities participated in school infrastructure projects. Respondents were given six choices to choose from with space provided to indicate any other ways not included in the main choices. Respondents were asked to select all the choices that applied to their schools.

Participating the community in decision-making, free labour services and fundraising were the leading methods of participating communities in school infrastructure projects with 226, 221 and 220 schools using the methods out of 247 schools surveyed, respectively. Donating complete infrastructure facilities was the least used method with only 3 schools reporting having used it.

Other methods of community participation in schools included: assisting the school in project fundraising especially from donors and NGOs, mobilizing community support as well as goodwill for school infrastructure projects and donating furniture and installations needed to make the completed infrastructure projects operational.

These findings collaborate other studies, among them Swift-Morgan (2006) who found that community participation in school infrastructure projects in southern Ethiopia was in the areas of planning, resource mobilization, volunteering labour and, project monitoring and evaluation. Emenola and Ibekwe (2013) reported community participation in school development in Okigwe, Nigeriaas entailing financial donations, payment of school fees; donation of land, facilities, furniture and equipment to schools.

Such participation can have a positive influence on school development by reducing infrastructure projects' costs due to donated materials and labour. It can also enhance project realization through fundraising for the projects. On the downside, community participation efforts may mismatch the projects' requirements and thus result in no impact on infrastructure project performance in schools.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics. For individual items with a low of 1 and a high of 5 (Strongly Disagree-1, Disagree-2, Not Sure-3, Agree-4, Strongly Agree-5) an equidistance of 0.8 was adopted (Carifio & Perla, 2007). The data were grouped into 3 clusters: disagree, not sure and, agree. The frequency distribution, and descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Community Participation

Item No.	Item Statement	SA	A	NS	D	SD	MEAN	STDV
1	Community members spend an insignificant time on school infrastructure projects related activities.	0	18	0	186	43	4.03	0.683
		(0%)	(7.3%)	(0%)	(75.3%)	(17.4%)		
2	In my school, we participate the community in all school infrastructure projects.	46	196	4	1	0	4.16	0.440
		(18.6%)	(79.4%)	(1.6%)	(0.4%)	(0%)		
3	The community perceives full ownership of the school's completed infrastructure projects.	65	164	0	18	0	4.12	0.737
		(26.3%)	(66.4%)	(0%)	(7.3%)	(0%)		
4	CEC members involved in school infrastructure projects are representative of the community.	77	56	27	31	56	3.27	1.563
		(31.2%)	(22.7%)	(10.9%)	(12.5%)	(22.7%)		
5	Community members are dissatisfied with the school's	0	18	0	186	43	4.03	0.683
		(0%)	(7.3%)	(0%)	(75.3%)	(17.4%)		

Item No.	Item Statement	SA	A	NS	D	SD	MEAN	STDV
	participation process.							
6	The school has not realized its goals in community participation.	0 (0%)	15 (6.0%)	3 (1.2%)	176 (71.3%)	53 (21.5%)	4.08	0.682
7	All community subgroups in the local area are represented in the CEC.	0 (0%)	43 (17.4%)	0 (0%)	186 (75.3%)	18 (7.3%)	2.28	0.834
8	Community members participate in school infrastructure projects in more ways than just the CEC.	43 (17.4%)	201 (81.4%)	3 (1.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.16	0.401
9	Community participants in school infrastructure projects do not participate in all project activities.	12 (4.9%)	205 (83.0%)	0 (0%)	30 (12.1%)	0 (0%)	2.19	0.706
10	Community representatives are not involved in project decision making.	3 (1.2%)	0 (0%)	30 (12.1%)	72 (29.2%)	142 (57.5%)	4.42	0.796
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation							3.67	0.753

Notes: n = 247. Reverse scoring of negative items was applied

On the value placed on the time that community members spent in school infrastructure projects, majority of the respondents, 229(92.7%), indicated that community members spent significant time on school infrastructure projects, 18(7.3%) disagreed while no respondent gave a Luke warm response.

The mean of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.683, show the item exerted a positive influence and its responses were less spread around the item mean when compared with the composite mean 3.67 and standard deviation 0.753 respectively. This shows that community members spend significant time on school infrastructure projects related activities, and the schools

recognized it. Community participation in school projects was therefore perceived to be important to both the community and the schools.

On whether the schools participated the community in all infrastructure projects in the schools, 242(98.0%) of the respondents indicated that community participation was in all school infrastructure projects, 1(0.4%) respondent disagreed while 4(1.6%) were not sure. The mean was 4.16 with a standard deviation of 0.44 indicating a positive influence on the composite mean and compact responses with little dispersion when compared with the composite standard deviation of 0.753.

This finding shows that community participation was wide and covered all infrastructure projects in the school. This finding corroborates Tines (2011) who found that community participation in primary schools in Somaliland extended to school operations and management. Community participation in school development is widespread in primary schools in Somaliland. The Ministry of Education and Higher Studies (MoEHS) requires all public primary schools to establish Community Education Committees (CECs) which is the officially recognised community representation in school projects, operations and management.

Concerning the level of ownership perceived by the community on the completed schools' infrastructure projects, the respondents agreed, 229(92.7%), that the community perceived full ownership of the schools' completed infrastructure projects. No respondent took a lukewarm position on the item with 18(7.3%) disagreeing.

The mean was 4.12 and the standard deviation 0.737 indicating a positive influence and dispersion in item responses nearly similar to the variable's average dispersion when compared to the composite mean 3.67 and composite standard deviation 0.753 respectively. This shows that local communities perceived school development and school infrastructure projects as the development of their community and perceived ownership. Local communities felt ownership of local public schools and considered them as being part of and belonging to their community. This perceived ownership enhances community participation realisations.

As to how representative of the community the CEC members who participated in school infrastructure projects were, 133(53.9%) respondents indicated that the CEC members were representative of the community, 87(35.2%) disagreed while 27(10.9%) were not sure.

The mean was 3.27 with a standard deviation of 1.563 indicating a negative influence and item responses that were twice spread over the item mean when compared to the composite mean 3.67 and composite standard deviation 0.753 respectively. This shows that CEC members were largely perceived as being representative of the communities they come from. This perception of representativeness is critical when the CEC members are mobilizing funds and support for school projects from the community as it often determines the support the community is willing to give to the schools. It also creates a sense of inclusiveness in school matters and school projects.

On whether community members were dissatisfied with the school's participation process, 229(92.7%) head teachers reported that their community members were satisfied with the school's community participation process, 18(7.3%) disagreed with no respondent taking a lukewarm position. With a mean 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.683, the item exerted a positive influence and had responses that were moderately spread around the item mean when compared to the composite mean 3.67 and composite standard deviation 0.753 respectively.

Overall, community members were satisfied with the community participation processes used in the schools. MoEHS specifies the formal community participation process in public primary schools as CECs. However, schools sometimes tend to supplement this method with other methods depending on the needs and challenges they are facing (*finding on item 8*). This shows that although the CEC community participation method is appreciated by the community it is inadequate for the headteachers and so they seek other methods to supplement it.

On whether the schools had realized their goals in community participation, most schools, 229(92.8%), indicated having realized their community participation goals, 15(6%) had not achieved while 3(1.2%) were not sure. The mean was 4.08 and the standard deviation of 0.682 indicating the item had a positive influence and had a lesser dispersion of responses around the item mean when compared to the composite mean 3.67 and composite standard deviation 0.753 respectively. This shows that schools were reaping from their community participation efforts.

The schools were able to harness social capital from the local communities for school development through community participation.

As to whether all local community sub-groups were represented in the school's CEC, 204(82.6%) schools had not managed to include all local community subgroups in the school CEC while 43(17.4%) schools indicated they had managed. No school took a lukewarm position. The mean was 2.28 with a standard deviation of 0.834 indicating a negative influence and a slightly wider dispersion of item responses around the item mean when compared to the composite mean 3.67 and composite standard deviation 0.753 respectively.

Putting this response together with the response for *item 4* it can be inferred that although most schools had not included all the local community subgroups in the CEC membership, this was not perceived on the part of the CEC as lack of representativeness. The challenges of representing all community subgroups in the CEC emanates from the complex clan, sub-clans and family system that exists in Somalia.

On whether the community participated in school infrastructure projects in more ways than just the CEC, 244(98.8%) headteachers responded affirmatively indicating that community participation was much bigger and wider. The CEC process was just one of the ways the community participated in school infrastructure projects. Only 3(1.2%) respondents took a neutral position on the item.

The mean was 4.16 and the standard deviation 0.401 showing a positive influence and compact item responses with a lesser spread around the item mean when compared to the composite mean 3.67 and composite standard deviation 0.753 respectively. The finding indicates that headteachers utilize other methods of community participation in addition to the MoEHS instituted method of CECs.

On whether the community participated in all infrastructure project activities 217 (87.9%) head teachers reported not participating their communities in all the project activities. Only 30(12.1%) schools participated the community in all project activities. No respondent took a lukewarm position. The mean was 2.19 with a standard deviation of 0.706, the item exerted a negative influence and the item responses were moderately spread around the item mean when compared

to the composite mean 3.67 and composite standard deviation 0.753 respectively. Combining this finding with the finding on *item 2*, it was inferred that schools participated the community in all infrastructure projects but not in all the activities in each project. The schools participated the communities in some stages of the project cycle but not on all of them.

On whether community representatives were involved in project decision making, 214(86.7%) headteachers reported involving community representatives in project decision making, 3(1.2%) did not, while 30(12.1%) were not sure. The mean was 4.42 and the standard deviation 0.796 indicating a positive influence and a moderate dispersion of responses around the item mean when compared to the composite mean 3.67 and composite standard deviation 0.753 respectively. This shows that the schools involved the community - through their CEC representatives - in project decision making.

The composite mean was 3.67 with a standard deviation of 0.753 indicating the respondents believed that community participation in their schools was high.

These findings show the critical role that community participation has played in primary schools' infrastructure development. The high community participation (mean=3.67) is indicative of the importance that the schools place on community participation. It also shows the communities' high level of commitment to the public schools in their area. However, high community participation brings with it certain encumbrances among them: delays in decision making, delays in project commencement, diverse interests requiring compromising, slow progress and costs of participation.

The responses for each school were summed up on a scale of 10-50. An equidistance of 8 was applied resulting into the following scale: 10 < Strongly Disagree < 18; 18 < Disagree < 26; 26 < Not Sure < 34; 34 < Agree < 42; and 42 < Strongly Agree < 50 (Carifio & Perla, 2007). The data was then grouped into three categories: disagree, not sure and agree. The resulting binned data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents' Perception of Community Participation

Response category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Disagree/low (10<26)	0	0	36.74	4.00
Not sure (27<34)	53	21.5		
Agree/high (35≤50)	194	78.5		
Total	247	100.0		

Of the 247 schools surveyed, 194 (78.5%) schools reported high community participation in school infrastructure projects. No school reported low community participation while 53(21.7%) schools were not sure whether their community participation experience could be categorized as low or as high. With a mean of 36.74, the respondents were, overall, persuaded that community participation in school infrastructure projects was high. The standard deviation (4.00) show that the responses were narrowly spread around the mean and there were no outliers in the data indicating the respondents agreed that community participation in public primary schools was high.

This shows that schools highly depended on the community when undertaking school infrastructure projects. Headteachers sought community involvement and support in school projects since MoEHS was largely unable to support school development. Community participation in primary schools was a fill-gap measure rather than an enhancement measure.

3.3. Qualitative data analysis and findings

Data collected from DEOs using semi-structured interviews and comments made by head teachers in the questionnaire were analyzed by thematic analysis.

The study found that community members devote significant time on school infrastructure projects activities (item 1). This finding was reiterated by comments made by a DEO and a headteacher:

".. Being a CEC member requires sharing your time with the school and being available when needed" - DEO 12 (2019).

“... Some CEC members are very devoted, they participate in many school activities and projects and come here several times a week.” – Head teacher, AllaBaday district (2019).

These findings are in line with MoEHS (2017) education sector strategic plan which requires an increase in CEC meetings and expansion of their roles in primary schools. The amount of time the community representatives spent on CEC work, CEC training and, frequency of meetings is akin to the level of their participation in school projects. This is also indicative of the contributions in ideas, skills and other aspects that the community representatives bring and, the level of ownership they perceive in the school and the schools’ infrastructure projects.

The study found that schools participated the community in all manner of school infrastructure projects (item 2) and even non-infrastructure projects. Such broad participation increases the contributions that the community can make in the school and increases the partnership between the school and the community. One DEO expressed this as follows.

“The policy we have and the direction the ministry has taken will have community members being engaged in almost all school management and project activities in the schools in the future”- DEO 6 (2019).

This finding is in line with the findings of Swift-Morgan (2006) who found that the Ethiopian school community participation policy aimed to achieve community participation in all aspects of the school. Tines (2011) found that in Puntland, CECs were involved in the entire spectrum of school management including hiring teachers and paying their salaries while in Somaliland, CECs were involved in physical facilities establishment, rehabilitation, development and implementation of school improvement plans.

Most communities perceived full community ownership of completed school infrastructure projects (item 3). The community felt a sense of ownership of the school infrastructure projects they had realized in their local community and were proud of their achievements. In an interview one DEO noted.

“The schools are for the community and it is important that the community feel a sense of ownership, otherwise they will not contribute to local

schools' construction. They give to the schools and they get back better education facilities for their children"- DEO 4(2019).

Community participants taking part in school infrastructure projects on behalf of the community were representative of the community they were from (item 4). This is necessary for the participation process to be perceived as inclusive and genuine. One DEO commented:

".. When we started, membership of the CEC was voluntary. Today we try as much as possible to ensure the committee membership represents all sections of our community and is gender-balanced" – DEO 11(2019).

These show that CECs were becoming more inclusive and representative with time.

Community members were satisfied in the schools' participation processes (item 5). Satisfaction in the process is crucial for the community to continue participating in and supporting the process. The study further found that where the community was dissatisfied with the participation process, it mainly had to do with how the CEC members were selected and a common remedy was to dissolve the CEC and reconstitute it afresh with more community participation and involvement. One headteacher noted.

"Our first and second CECs were dissolved due to community complaints that the committees did not represent them. Now we have a CEC membership that is accepted by the community". – Headteacher Sheekh district (2019).

Most schools surveyed reported having realized their goals in community participation (item 6). This is important for the participation process to continue and to be effective. Both the school and society need to realize their participation objectives. A headteacher's comment read:

"We started by asking the community to help in rehabilitating physical facilities damaged during the war, then in electing a fence, constructing latrines and now we are putting up new classrooms. The community has been of much help" –Headteacher Mandheera district (2019).

Two DEOs expressed the issue this way:

“the (CEC) process is not just (about) the community developing the school but also the community developing because, with more education facilities, access to education is increased, community members are empowered and, the livelihood of the next generation is transformed” - DEO 19 (2019).

“In this region, we lost everything to the war. But community participation has helped restore primary school education” –DEO 3 (2019).

Not all community subgroups in the local areas were represented in the CECs (item 7). In his impact evaluation study of CEC's in Puntland and Somaliland Tines (2011) arrived at similar findings noting that although deliberate efforts had been put in place by MoEHS to ensure gender balance and representation of clans and sub-clans in the CECs, CECs were still not 100% representative of gender and ethnic clans in their local communities. Factors that impede representativeness include illiteracy among the adult population, unwillingness to participate by some potential CEC recruits, local politics, a complex clan system among others. A headteacher and a rural area DEO commented as follows:

“The community sub-clans and family groups are in some areas more than the CEC membership positions recommended by Hargeisa. We are unable to include all of them”- Headteacher, Burco district (2019).

“Operational challenges on the ground prevent the schools from having all sub-clans and family lines in the local community represented in the CEC. In this district, for example, we have three nomadic clans. They can't attend a meeting in school when it is called because they have moved east or south in search for pastures and the headteacher has no means of contacting them. In such cases, availability becomes more important than representativeness when constituting CEC membership” – DEO 15 (2019).

CECs were not the only method of community participation in primary schools in Somaliland (item 8). Whereas the CEC mechanism was the formal participation method which had the full support of MoEHS and its development partners, other participation methods existed and different schools explored different methods of participating their communities in school projects

among them: fundraising, engaging volunteer labour from the community, employing locals; seeking cash donations, book donations, land and building materials donations. A DEO corroborated this:

“CEC is our main community participation method, but it cannot achieve everything. When schools are mobilizing for resources such as funds, we have to get to the community members directly and try to reach many of them”- DEO 18 (2019).

This shows that CECs as a method of community participation have various shortcomings and cannot fulfil the entire scope of community participation in schools. Some schools, therefore, seek additional methods of participating the community.

Community participants in school infrastructure projects did not participate in all infrastructure projects activities (item 9). The community did not participate in project identification and selection stages but were participated in project financing, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A rural area DEO explained this.

“The participation process is time-consuming and also, at times, consume the resources that are already scarce at the schools. We involve the community as much as possible, but where there is no time, or the headteacher can get it done alone, we would rather that. It’s faster and saves resources.” – DEO 14 (2019).

A headteacher commented:

“Community members are not always fully knowledgeable of the needs and challenges the school faces. They are often not familiar with all ministry regulations and policies, so some things I do alone”- Headteacher Kalabaydh district (2019).

These findings are similar to those of a study done in Portugal by Veloso, Craveiro and Rufino (2013) who found that although there was one national policy for community participation in

school management, projects and operations, only 66% of the schools reported having involved the community in the management of school projects, the rest had not.

This departure from community participation policy in some areas can be attributed to local dynamics such as community politics, the leadership style of the headteacher, community sense of ownership of the schools and local culture, among others.

Community participants were involved in project decision making (item 10). Decision making is the placation level of participation in Arnstein's ladder and represents a genuine participation process. Whereas in Puntland, CECs were almost attaining the level of *citizen power* (Tines 2011), in Somaliland, the achievement appeared to be approaching the *partnership* level on Arnstein's ladder at the time of the study.

A headteacher commented as follows:

“At the beginning, we could only call community members to assist the school when there was a problem or a crisis. Now we participate them in planning and decision making and they assist in running the school.” – Headteacher Qoryale district (2019).

Not only is community participation in school infrastructure projects in Somaliland born of national policy, but it is also both essential and critical for primary schools to undertake and realize vital infrastructure projects to rehabilitate and build physical facilities necessary for their core role of offering education services

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Community members spent significant time in school infrastructure-related activities. The communities were participated in infrastructure projects and project decision making - though not in all project activities. Communities perceived full ownership of completed school infrastructure projects. Community members were satisfied with the schools' participation process. Most schools had realized their community participation goals. The CEC process was just one of the numerous ways the schools participated the community in school infrastructure projects. Although not all community clans were represented in the CECs, CECs were still considered representative of the community.

Community participation in Somaliland's primary schools is widespread and has a perceived positive contribution to school development in that it fills the gaps that the ministry of education has left in the schools. With the high demand for education causing strain on existing school infrastructure facilities, community participation is used to develop schools as the national government, short of funds is unable to finance school development in most schools. The reality is that without community participation many schools would have no infrastructure projects at all as government capitation is little and hard to come by. Community participation in schools largely plays the role of facilitating schools to mount development and infrastructure projects in the first place. The CEC participation process was largely working and realising its goals in primary schools. The ministry of education should strengthen the CEC participation mechanism in schools while providing policy guidelines for headteachers to explore other methods of community and stakeholder participation.

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