

COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Aprendizaje basado en la comunidad para un Desarrollo Sostenible

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ABSTRACT: The main focus of this paper is to discuss the roles and functions of community-based learning centres and spaces in Asia, within the overall context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN General Conference in 2015, with a particular focus on Goal 4 on education towards 2030. This paper reviews how community-based learning institutions emerged within the education for all (EFA) context in Asia and discusses their changing roles and functions through the education for sustainable development (ESD) context; it then explores the potential contribution community-based learning can make to the SDGs. There are three key enabling factors to ensure the roles and functions of community learning centres (CLCS) as community coordinators for sustainable development, namely, community participation, comprehensive programme development and developing networks and linkages. If the main roles and functions in the concept that has emerged for CLCS are carried out, the activities of the CLCS themselves will promote ESD in communities. Abundant local human, natural, information and infrastructure resources are available to tackle local, national and even global issues. CLCS have good potential to act as catalysts to facilitate linkages and partnerships between different stakeholders through intersectoral and inter-generational learning, and thus contribute to developing social capital in the community.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable Development Goals, local resources, education, Education for Sustainable Development, Asia.



RESUM: L'enfocament principal d'aquest document és discutir els rols i funcions dels centres i espais d'aprenentatge basats en la comunitat a l'Àsia, dins el context general dels Objectius de Desenvolupament Sostenible (ODS), adoptats per la Conferència General de les Nacions Unides a 2015, amb un enfocament particular en l'Objectiu 4 sobre educació cap a 2030. Aquest document pretén revisar com van sorgir les institucions d'aprenentatge basades en la comunitat en el context d'educació per a Tots (EPT) a Àsia i discutir els seus rols i funcions canviants a través del context d'Educació per al Desenvolupament Sostenible (EDS), i aleshores, explorar els potencials que l'aprenentatge basat en la comunitat té per contribuir als ODS. Hi ha tres factors habilitadors clau per garantir els rols i funcions dels CLC com a coordinadors comunitaris per al desenvolupament sostenible, és a dir, la participació comunitària, el desenvolupament integral de programes i el desenvolupament de xarxes i vincles. Si es duen a terme les funcions i els rols principals en el concepte que ha sorgit per als CLC, les activitats dels mateixos poden promoure l'EDS a les comunitats. Els recursos locals són abundants en termes humans, naturals, d'informació i infraestructura per abordar problemes locals, nacionals i fins i tot globals. Els CLC tenen un bon potencial per funcionar com a catalitzador en la comunitat per facilitar els vincles i associacions de diferents parts interessades a través de l'aprenentatge intersectorial i intergeneracional i contribuir al desenvolupament dels capitals socials en la comunitat.

PARAULES CLAU: Objectius de Desenvolupament Sostenible, recursos locals, educació, Educació per al Desenvolupament Sostenible, Àsia.

RESUMEN: El enfoque principal de este documento es discutir los roles y funciones de los centros y espacios de aprendizaje basadas en la comunidad en Asia, dentro del contexto general de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS), adoptados por la Conferencia General de las Naciones Unidas en 2015, con un enfoque particular en el Objetivo 4 sobre educación hacia 2030. Este documento pretende revisar cómo surgieron las instituciones de aprendizaje basadas en la comuni-



dad en el contexto de Educación para Todos (EPT) en Asia y discutir sus roles y funciones cambiantes a través del contexto de Educación para el Desarrollo Sostenible (EDS), y entonces, explorar los potenciales que el aprendizaje basado en la comunidad tiene para contribuir a los ODS. Hay tres factores habilitadores clave para garantizar los roles y funciones de los CLC como coordinadores comunitarios para el desarrollo sostenible, a saber, la participación comunitaria, el desarrollo integral de programas y el desarrollo de redes y vínculos. Si se llevan a cabo las funciones y los roles principales en el concepto que ha surgido para los CLC, las actividades de los mismos pueden promover la EDS en las comunidades. Los recursos locales son abundantes en términos humanos, naturales, de información e infraestructura para abordar problemas locales, nacionales e incluso globales. Los CLC tienen un buen potencial para funcionar como catalizador en la comunidad para facilitar los vínculos y asociaciones de diferentes partes interesadas a través del aprendizaje intersectorial e intergeneracional y contribuir al desarrollo de los capitales sociales en la comunidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, recursos locales, educación, Educación para el Desarrollo Sostenible, Asia.

Introduction

The main focus of this paper is to discuss the roles and functions of community-based learning centres and spaces in Asia, within the overall context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹ adopted by the UN General Conference in 2015, with particular focus on Goal 4 on education towards 2030.

The fourth of the 17 SDGs is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. It comprises

1. Detailed information about SDGs is available on the UN website <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs> (accessed on 10 December 2018).



seven targets and may be considered as a hybrid of two key international education commitments, namely, achieving education for all (EFA) and promoting education for sustainable development (ESD).

EFA was adopted by the World Conference on EFA held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, reaffirmed in 2000 at the World Education Conference in Dakar, and wrapped up in Incheon in 2015.² Almost all countries have made significant progress in promoting primary schooling; however, according to the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) 2017, there are still an estimated 753 million illiterate adults in the world (UNESCO 2017), who lack the basic reading, writing and numeracy skills needed for everyday life.

The EFA report 2000–2015 Achievement and Challenges revealed that improvement in the adult literacy rate is mainly due to higher rates of enrolment and completion of primary schooling rather than adult literacy programmes (UNESCO 2015: 144). The effectiveness of literacy activities through short-term non-formal education (NFE) campaigns and classes has been challenged, and their education programmes criticised as second-rate (Rogers 2004: 137), since many learners relapse into illiteracy, or learning is not necessarily backed up with official qualifications for further education or employment.

In response to the challenges of education outside formal schooling, in particular the limitations of campaign mode and class mode activities, the idea of developing permanent community-based learning centres emerged under the NFE policies and strategies of Asian countries as a follow up to the EFA Conference in Jomtien in 1990 (UNESCO 1995). In general, NFE is defined as a domain or system of structured education programmes outside formal education (UIS 2011). At the same time, Rogers (2014) proposed that formal, non-formal and informal education can be defined according to context relevancy and the processes or approaches adopted; for example, formal approaches such as lectures are used in NFE, and likewise, flexible and contextualized learning processes such as group work, demonstrations and peer learning are adopted in formal schools.

2. EFA related documents are available on the UNESCO homepage <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/> (accessed on 10 December 2018)



ESD, another stream for SDG 4, was initiated in 2005, based on the recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10, Johannesburg) in 2002, followed by the Resolution on the UN Decade of ESD (2005–2014) adopted by the UN General Assembly. The concept of sustainable development was described by the Brundtland Report as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987). The idea of sustainable development is a paradigm change from economic-oriented development to thinking about the future in terms of balancing economic, social and environmental aspects in development.

The ESD International Implementation Scheme for the UN Decade stated that “educational effort will encourage changes in behaviour that will create a more sustainable future in terms of environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society for present and future generations” (UNESCO 2006). At the end of the decade, in 2014 the World Conference held in Nagoya, Japan, adopted the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration, which reported on the achievements of the decade and the need to further efforts through multi-sectoral and policy support for ESD, among others. Accordingly, the Global Action Plan for ESD (2015–2019) was launched with five themes: 1) Advancing policy; 2) Transforming learning and training environments (whole institution approaches); 3) Building capacities of educators and trainers; 4) Empowering and mobilizing youth; and, 5) Accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level (UNESCO 2015). Forums of network partners under each theme were created to organize sharing experiences and capacity building of participating stakeholders at regional and global levels.³

This paper aims to review how community-based learning institutions emerged within the EFA context in Asia, and discuss their changing roles and functions through the ESD context; it then explores the potential contribution community-based learning can make to SDGs through an analysis of key enabling features of their functions.

3. Detailed information about ESD and GAP is available on the UNESCO website <https://en.unesco.org/gap> (accessed on 13 December 2018)



1. Emergence of Community Learning Centres (CLCS)

Over the years, community-based learning institutions have been established and operated in Asian countries in various forms and taking different approaches according to the local context and situation; some examples are literacy centres, village reading centres and community libraries. At the same time, “such initiatives were often time- and budget-bound projects without systematic or long-term strategies, disconnected from national education policies and planning” (UNESCO, 2007a: 4).

UNESCO’s regional programme on CLCS in the Asia-Pacific region since 1998 featured initiatives to systematize such diverse learning institutions as consistent and sustainable delivery mechanisms linked to the national policies and framework of NFE while maintaining context-based and bottom-up programming and implementation. CLCS are defined as “local educational institutions outside the formal education system, for villages or urban areas usually set up and managed by local people to provide various learning opportunities for community development and improvement of people’s quality of life” (UNESCO PROAP, 2001: 3). In comparison to formal schooling, CLCS emphasize community participation in and ownership of management and programming based on local needs and community demands through a bottom-up learning process, contributing to comprehensive community development.

In general, CLCS have four main functions, namely, education and training, library and information, community development and coordination, and networking through integrated approaches for creating future visions of the community (Fig. 1).

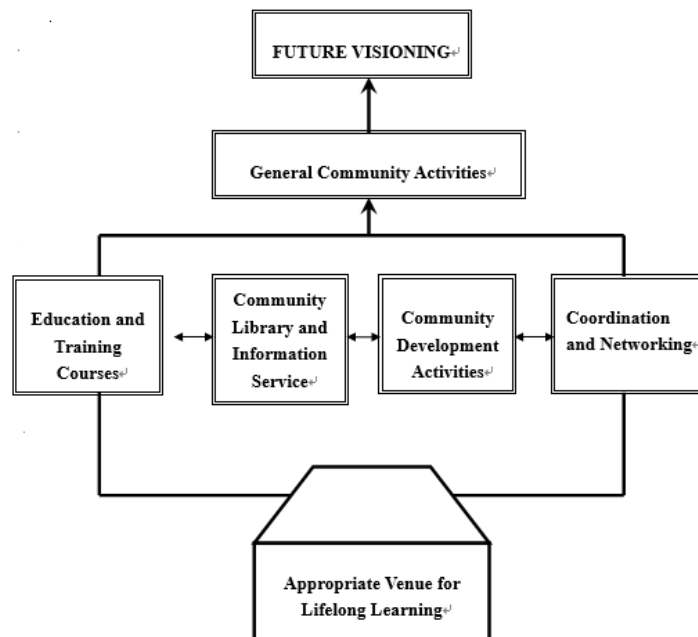


Figure 1. The Functions of CLCs: An Integrated ApproachSource: UNESCO (2001) CLC Regional Activity Report (1999–2000), p. 5.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report of 2008 reported that CLCs in Thailand “provide a wide range of structured learning activities determined by community needs”, and that CLC “activities in Bangladesh, China, Indonesia and the Philippines include literacy classes, continuing education and skills training as the most frequently provided programmes” (UNESCO, 2007b: 60-61). A report on the mid-point of the UN Literacy Decade (2003–2012) finds that “In Asia, CLCs have provided a focus for community participation in 22 countries. As a local education institution outside the formal education system, they offer an opportunity for people to learn skills and might become a focus for development activities” (UNESCO, 2008: 55).

The Belem Framework for Action, formulated by the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in Brazil in 2009, recommends the creation of multi-purpose community learning spaces and centres and improving access to, and participation in, the full range of adult learning (UIL, 2010: 40).



According to UNESCO Bangkok, there are more than 17,000 CLCs throughout the Asian region (NILE, UIL 2016) with different kinds of status and characteristics.⁴ Some countries have formalized CLCs through government provision of financial and technical support, whereas others are established and run by NGOs or local communities (Table 1).

Table 1. Varying status and characteristics of CLCs in Asia.

Country	Number (year)	Legislation and policies	Remarks
Indonesia	10,035 (2015)	Law no. 20 (2003)	Community initiatives with government support
Japan	14,841 (2015)	Social Education Act (1949)	Kominkan, government
R. of Korea	509 (2015)	Social Education Act (1999)	Government
Thailand	8,764 (2015)	NFE-IFE Act (2008)	Government
Vietnam	10,994 (2014/15)	Education Law Article 46 (2005)	Government
Mongolia	360 (2015)	Ministry policy (2010)	Lifelong Learning Centres, government
Lao PDR	340 (2016)	NFE Policy (2011)	Government budget with International donor support
Bangladesh	5,000 (2014)	NFE Act (2014) definition	Ganokendra run by NGOs
Nepal	2,151 (2015)	A 10-year NFE policy framework (2006)	Technically supported by NGOs

Source: UNESCO Bangkok CLCPedia <http://clcpedia.net/index.php> (accessed 23 December 2018) and NILE-UIL (2016)

4. UNESCO Bangkok's 'CLCPedia' <http://clcpedia.net/index.php> includes resource materials, and regional and country reports from the inception of the UNESCO's CLC programme in 1998 (accessed on 10 December 2018).



2. Changing role and functions of CLCS in different contexts in Asia

While CLCS were recognized as effective institutions and included in national legislation and policies on EFA, in particular NFE, the roles and functions of CLCS were not rigid and static but flexible and dynamic, and varied greatly according to the time and local context. One of the recent trends in the EFA and lifelong learning context has been the role of CLCS in providing alternative basic education programmes for out-of-school children, youths, and adults who missed basic education. In what follows, I describe some cases of the background and trends in CLCS based on country reports and regional studies on EFA and CLCS coordinated by UNESCO and UIL, as well as my field work in Bangladesh, Thailand and Japan in the period 2010–2017.

Thailand initiated adult literacy programmes in the 1930s and developed various NFE programmes including the ‘Each One Teach One’ movement, and *Khit-Phen* (ability to think) emphasizing learning for harmonizing life and the environment since the 1970s (ONFEC 2007: 9-10). Utilizing these accumulated resources and experiences, Thailand implemented well-organized community-based learning and development institutions throughout the country during 1990s, establishing 8,000 CLCS by 1999. The turning point in the priority of CLCS in Thailand was the enactment of the Non-formal and Informal Education Act of 2008 (Ministry of Education, Thailand 2008). One positive aspect of the enactment was that the government’s Ministry of Education, under the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE), was made responsible for providing buildings and facilities, materials and teaching personnel, and running costs for CLCS. One negative aspect was that ownership by local community stakeholders was weakened and their tendency to depend on government support increased. According to the national guideline for CLCS, their management committee is responsible for planning and organizing activities. The national advisory group suggested CLCS expand their network with other sectors (NILE, UIL 2016: 16-17). Through my field work in Ubon Ratchatani in 2012 and Chiangmai in 2014, I found that the main activity of CLCS was now an equivalency programme providing alternative basic education for out-of-school children, youths and adults, while community development activities were handled by other offices. Community-based pro-



gramming was dependent on voluntary initiatives to respond to community needs and demands (Oyasu, 2014).

In Bangladesh, the Non-formal Education Act was enacted in 2014 (MOPME 2014), ensuring the right to education through entities outside formal schooling, quite some time after the right to primary education was guaranteed through the Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1990. Prior to the NFE Act, all the government non-formal literacy and training activities were time- and budget-bound projects. The main activities of the Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Project (PLCEHD), implemented during 2000–2015 in two phases, were literacy and training in skills such as poultry raising and sewing in programmes usually lasting between six months and one year. Since the Bureau of Non-formal Education, the government organization responsible for NFE, did not have enough capacity and mechanisms to deliver NFE activities at the community level, most of these activities were contracted to NGOs. Bangladesh is known as an ‘NGO country’ because of its reliance on their considerable capacity to provide social services in almost all sectors and communities including education, health, sanitation and welfare. BRAC, the world’s largest NGO, has a network of libraries called Ganokendra (people’s house) that provide informal learning spaces for all, and they also provide primary education for out-of-school children. Other NGOs, including the substantial Dhaka Ahsania Mission, also use Ganokendra as community learning and development centres with a focus on literacy and primary education, together with skill training for income generation and promotion of health and sanitation (Rahman 2007). NGOs’ primary education programmes are accredited as equivalent to formal schooling on a case-by-case basis or through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with local governments, but there are no mechanisms at the national level to this end. The NFE Act 2014 prioritized systematizing equivalency programmes of general education and vocational education through government and non-government providers. The Act defined CLCS as the main community learning institutions but no specific strategies and plans had been developed as of 2017 besides indicating their possible functions of providing literacy and post-literacy programmes and future linkages with equivalency, plus skill training such as the activities of the PLCEHD project.



The above trends introducing a national NFE accreditation system equivalent to formal schooling in Thailand and Bangladesh can be described as “formalizing non-formal education”, which has become a central strategy in the NFE policies and practices of other countries in the region, such as Indonesia and Vietnam. Accordingly, the main role of CLCS is to provide alternative basic education standardized and equivalent to formal education, through the support of governments and donors who need concrete and measurable learning outcomes to ensure their support under the EFA scheme. For example, since 2015 Pakistan has implemented the Advancing Quality Alternative Learning Project with the support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for developing systematized equivalency programmes to promote non-formal primary education for out-of-school children and illiterate youths and adults.⁵ The World Bank supported Timor-Leste from 2012 to 2017 to develop NFE mechanisms through three pillars: equivalency programme for standardizing literacy and skill development activities; CLCS for needs-based community learning; and a NFE management information system for monitoring and evaluation towards evidence-based policy making and planning (World Bank 2017).

Although the context differs from that of EFAS, Japan has a long history of community learning institutions, named Kominkan (literally, “citizens’ public hall”) to provide social education, which in Japan means community and adult education. Kominkan were initiated with a concept note from Mr. Teranaka of the Ministry of Education in 1946, requesting local governments in the country to establish education centres that would provide youths and adults with learning opportunities for community development with a focus on promoting scientific knowledge and democracy. When Kominkan were formalized under the Social Education Law in 1949, their functions were confined to those of education institutions, to contribute to community development through learning with conditions of non-commercial, non-religious and non-political activities. During the 1950s and 60s when the country was primarily an agricultural society, neighbourhood ties in communities were strong and collaborative work was needed at the local community level. In

5. <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/advancing-quality-alternative-learning-aqal> (accessed on 13 December 2018).



that period Kominkan provided various work- and life-related as well as community development programmes.

However, the urbanization that began in the 1970s changed the role of Kominkan from community development to individual learning for knowledge and skill development in many urban areas. Since the majority of the population in both urban and rural areas started working in government and company offices, their sense of belonging was to those offices or schools, and so local community ties became loose, compared with those of the earlier agricultural society. Furthermore, the promotion of lifelong learning as the government's main education policy in the late 1980s highlighted individuals' right to learning in public and private institutions and spaces throughout their lives. The role of the Kominkan in urban society is now as a place for people to gather to socialize, learn through lectures, classes and joint learning, and connect with each other to create learning circles. Many learning circles were organized in Kominkan, but the 'communities' formed by these circles were often based on individual interests rather than geographical community needs and interests.

3. Potential of CLCS for sustainable development

As discussed above, the trends in CLCS have been to prioritize equivalency education and individual learning in many Asian countries with different contexts as supplementary basic education providers for achieving EFA and/or meeting individual learning needs and interests. One of the main reasons is that government and donors need to assess their investment in education measured through data on enrolment, retention, and completion of schooling and literacy skills of adult learners. Since CLCS emerged under the EFA framework and goals, it makes sense that alternative basic education for out-of-school children is given priority in CLCS to provide accountability of tax payers' funds.

Wade and Parker suggested that "too much emphasis on individual learning will fail to address key issues for poverty reduction and sustainable development" (Wade and Paker, 2008: 28). If CLCS have become supple-



mentary learning centres for basic education and/or individual learning space in recent years, questions arise of whether CLCS can and/or need to function in community development and networking and linkages. To discuss the roles and functions of CLCS for community development, it is useful to review them from the ESD perspective. EFA has specifically addressed provision of quality education and learning achievement of all individuals, whereas ESD emphasizes not only individual empowerment but also how to facilitate the use of knowledge and skills to plan and take actions collectively with a view to creating a sustainable society.

What follows is a discussion about the role of Kominkan in Japan for promoting ESD, through a review of the overall country context and the case of Okayama city. During the period of rapid and stable economic development in Japan from the 1970s to the 1990s, individual-based learning may have been an appropriate approach in the Kominkan. Since the 2000s, however, social problems in the country have become more visible, in particular an ageing population and falling birth rates. The implications of these demographic changes are labour shortages and the financial burden of welfare on a government already saddled with a huge public financial deficit. To revitalize the functions of a community to develop mutual support for community welfare, several local governments have introduced mechanisms for comprehensive community development, but not necessarily with the Kominkan. Local governments have merged several institutions in a community and established community development committees and/or Community Centres, expanding their functions beyond education to encourage comprehensive community development including commercial activities such as community businesses. Some Kominkan have also been converted into Community Centres and developed as multi-functional centres. This shift means governance of the Kominkan was transferred from the local education board to the general administration of the city government. In addition, the need for public Kominkan has been questioned, since various learning opportunities are available for individuals through commercial education and training institutions, and also lifelong learning can be left up to individuals while the government may provide the necessary information and space for such purposes. Accordingly, the number of public Kominkan has declined over the last decades from more than 18,000 in 2000 to around 14,000 in 2015



(MEXT 2015). There have been discussions about whether Kominkan should maintain their status as an education institution or change their function to a community development centre. In the latter case, the main concern of educators is how to guarantee the functions of education and learning, rather than becoming centres providing general services.

Against this background, initiatives implemented in the Kominkan in Okayama city have attracted attention as practical cases of community-based ESD through lifelong learning, which is a unique approach in the country. The main reason why the Kominkan in Okayama initiated ESD was the local government decision in 2005 to adopt ESD as the main policy through a whole-city approach including different government offices, Kominkan, schools, non-profit organizations (NPOS) and the private sector. Okayama city was designated as one of the initial seven Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) for ESD, coordinated by the UN University since 2005 (UNU-IAS 2010).

In Okayama city, Kominkan are established in each of the 37 districts (junior high school catchment areas), with diverse landscapes of urban, rural mountainous and coastal areas. While Okayama city has seven priority areas of Kominkan for ESD, namely environment, senior citizens, health, gender, child care, youth development, and linkages and networking, each Kominkan has developed its programme in response to local needs. Activities include developing community linkages to help senior citizens in their daily lives; water and greenery research and cleaning up the local rivers to improve the environment in the community; and preservation of local culture through local tales and traditional cooking with help from local resource persons. Each Kominkan has several staff members who plan and provide learning opportunities through lectures, discussions and project planning based on the learning experiences. Local schools, NPOS, experts and volunteer groups are important partners in Kominkan operations. The key principles of Kominkan ESD activities include owning local issues, establishing mutual learning relationships, reviewing the present from a past perspective and considering the future, ensuring stakeholder participation in planning, taking actions to solve problems and change behaviour, and learning the pleasure of cooperation for a common future.



In 2014, the last year of the UN Decade of ESD, the International Conference on Kominkan-CLC for ESD was held in Okayama. Nearly 700 participants from 29 countries attended, including educators, practitioners, researchers and government officials. The Okayama Commitment, the outcome document, presented the potential of CLCS to promote community-based learning for promoting ESD and a sustainable society in the future. The conference sessions and the Commitment covered the key ESD areas of social, economic, environmental and cultural issues as development domains, and advocacy, capacity development, research, networking, policy support and international cooperation as their main modalities.⁶ As one of the organizers and moderators of the conference, I found that the strengths of CLCS for promoting ESD lie in their potential to deal with complex development issues of socio-economic and environmental aspects with the participation and dialogue of various local stakeholders. CLCS have unique features to respond to such complex issues through learning whereas most other institutions deal with single or limited issues, such as health, agriculture, gender and environment. Further enabling factors for CLCS to function as community development centres are discussed in the next section.

4. Key enabling factors of community-based learning for sustainable development

Several factors are important in mobilizing and coordinating collective actions of a community and its members for a sustainable society. My argument is that if the main roles and functions in the concept that has emerged for CLCS are carried out, the activities of the CLCS themselves will promote ESD in communities. There are three key enabling factors to ensure the roles and functions of CLCS as community coordinators for ESD, namely community participation, comprehensive programme development and developing networks and linkages. Several reports on CLCS, prepared or coordinated by UNESCO and UIL, have already discussed the importance of these factors for quality

6. Conference materials, presentations and outcome documents are available at <http://www.okayama-tbox.jp/esd/pages/5620> (accessed on 13 December 2018).

improvement of CLCS (NILE, UIL 2016: 29-31), covering other significant issues such as policy, infrastructure and research. Below, I attempt to expand on the meaning of three key factors in the context of community-based learning and its centres.

The first factor is participation and ownership of a community and its people. Learners in CLCS have internal motivations to participate in learning activities, and sometimes external interventions of participatory approaches are required to mobilize the participation of facilitators and experts. There are also basic conditions for people to participate such as physical and psychological conditions and policies and legislation (Fig. 3). For example, small children and senior citizens can go to a centre if it is within walking distance whereas young people can travel around more easily and prefer to access information through social networking services (SNS) rather than paper-based media.

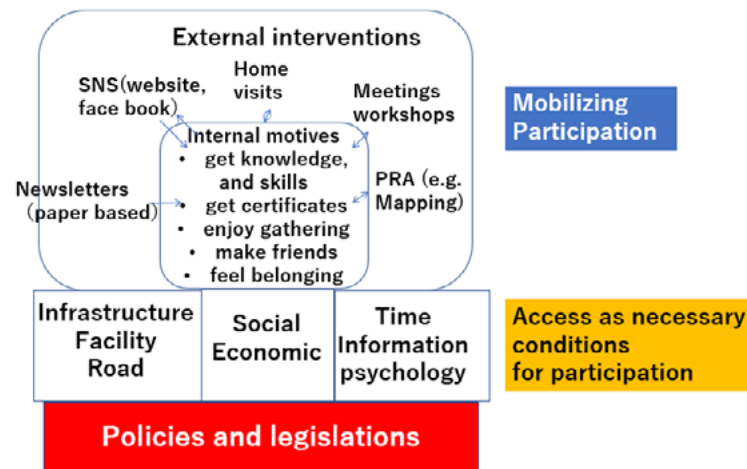


Figure 3. Requirements for learner participation in CLCS.

Source: the author.

Arnstein (1971) analysed different types of participation as eight levels from non-participation to citizen control (Fig 4). She argued that citizen participation is considered good and necessary but there needs to be careful analysis of how citizens participate in relation to the existing power-holders.

She described this continuous process as a ladder for the non-haves who start as recipients and become power-holders to control and obtain ownership.

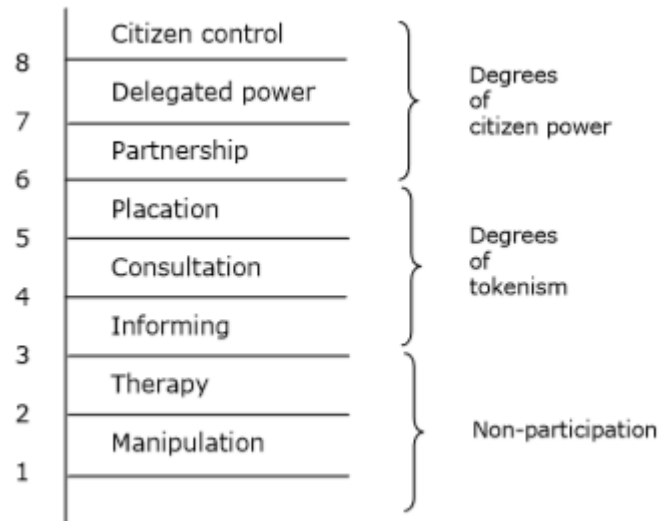


Figure 4. Eight rungs on a ladder of citizen participation.

Source: Arnstein, A ladder of citizen participation, Journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute (1971: 4).

In the case of CLCS, community members participate in different programmes, but they do not always participate in programme and/or organization management, which includes the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. A CLC usually has a management committee which often consists of local leaders with stronger voices than learners' representatives, in particular, and people from disadvantaged population groups. Since communities are not homogeneous, we cannot take it for granted that their members' participation means all the needs and demands are reflected in CLC planning and management. Figure 5 shows the two layers of citizen participation based on my field work in Bangladesh, Thailand and Japan. Community participation does not always follow a continuous process from non-participation to citizen control as Arnstein described, but the power balance in the local community and within the organization has to be taken into account. Accordingly, the different participatory approaches discussed in Figure 4 should be used to obtain feedback and opinions from participants, in particular those in disadvantaged situations, in order to improve the quality and relevance of the CLC activities.

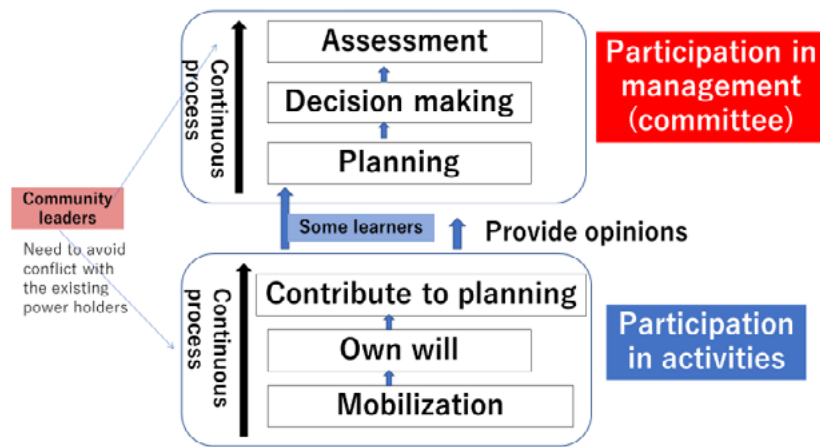


Figure 5. Two layers of participation in CLC activities and management
Source: the author.

Some learners are not interested in management because of the time-consuming extra volunteer work involved or lack of capacity and confidence to engage with management work. However, even if learners may not be able to handle day to day management or strategic planning of CLCs as facilitators and local leaders can, their participation should be ensured to increase the relevance of the activities and help maintain transparency of CLC management.

Secondly, while the importance of need- and demand-based programming through participatory approaches is discussed in CLCs, comprehensive programmes including the following three programme contents will be effective to ensure CLCs thrive as community-based learning and development centres:

Curriculum-based and standardized contents, based mainly on prescribed textbooks and materials, are usually developed by education experts to deliver basic knowledge and skills for learners to access social services as a right. However, this does not mean the learning activities should be exclusively one-way lectures or presentations; rather, participatory approaches can be incorporated into the teaching-learning processes.

Programming through a bottom-up learning process that responds to the needs of individuals and communities can be developed through collaboration between facilitators, learners and resource persons to ensure contents and activities are relevant to local needs.

Content open to everyone in the community and beyond is also important and may take the form of advocacy events, socialization such as festivals and cultural events, and information dissemination through computers, internet and other appropriate technologies such as community radio. Figure 6 shows the contents and approaches involved in community-based learning.

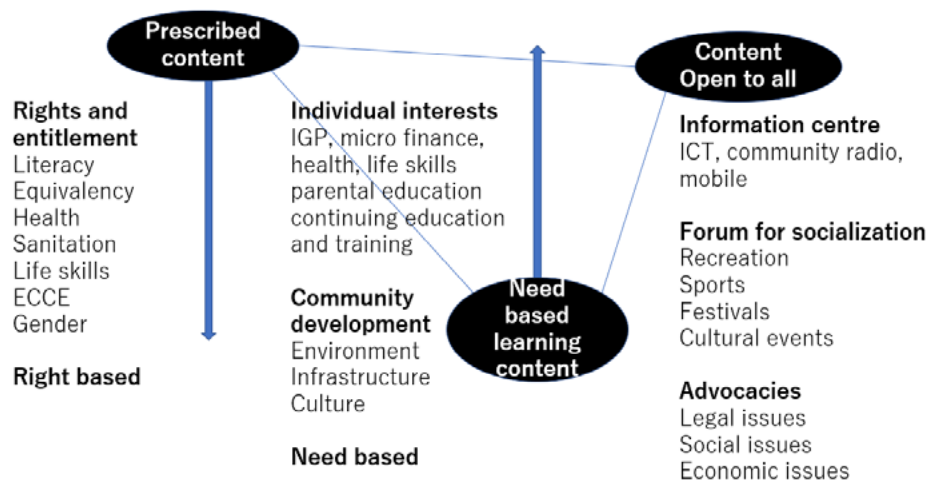


Figure 6. Linkages between learning contents and approaches.
Source: the author.

Developing programme contents and making links between the different contents will encourage synergies through a variety of learning approaches such as lectures, group work, discussions, demonstrations and open seminars. In what follows I describe some interesting cases of such coordination of learning.

All the Kominkan in Okayama organize annual festivals as forums for learners to present their work and their performance to the public, in which people from the community and beyond participate. At Koki Kominkan, one adult learning circle prepared vegetable curry and served it at their annual festival, and then asked a group of children how the vegetables were grown. As most of the children had no practical knowledge or skills, the adult learning circle proposed organizing a farming project to grow vegetables in local gardens. A Kominkan facilitator suggested the group of adults and children



learn more about environmental issues concerning water and agriculture in the community and global food issues through lectures and dialogues with experts in this field.

In a CLC in Chiangmai District of Thailand, learners in a literacy group usually cooked lunch together after the classes and found that they often had leftovers. They consulted a literacy teacher and CLC facilitator about what to do with the food. The facilitator introduced a local resource person to teach them how to make snacks from rice and vegetables. After several lessons, the quality of the snacks improved, which prompted the facilitator to suggest the group sell them in a market to generate income through One Tambon (Village) One Product, called the OTOP market.⁷

These examples show that CLC facilitators can act as catalysts to link different aspects of learning in accordance with the local context. It is important to provide various opportunities and forums to encourage learners to discover issues from their own community and daily life, which can be linked with local to national and even global issues and markets.

A third factor is to develop local networks among different organizations to mobilize internal and external resources. Since a CLC is a small institution, its local resources are limited. Therefore, mutual sharing of resources is important to enrich the CLC's activities. The Kominkan in Okayama actively promote ESD for community development since they function as part of the network of Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) Okayama, coordinated by the city government, in which more than 200 organizations participate, including universities, schools, and government and non-government organizations. Extension programmes such as child care for young parents, health care for senior citizens, and gender equality awareness are organized at the Kominkan by the government offices to familiarize members of the community with the government services available.

The importance of networking partners is stipulated in the Non-formal and Informal Education Act 2008 of Thailand. While CLCs focus more on

7. OTOP is a programme to promote local products, based on the One Village One Product movement in Japan in the 1970s. Inspired by the Japanese experiences, Mr. Thaksin, the then Prime Minister, initiated it as a nationwide programme in 2001. <http://www.thaitambon.com/en/> (accessed on 23 December 2018)



basic education through equivalency, other activities such as income generation, disaster risk reduction and health promotion are handled by other government offices. Since Buddhist monks are respected in the communities of Thailand, CLCS usually have strong links with local temples for organizing joint programmes such as the promotion of a healthy life style. One of the CLCS in Ubon Rachathanni Province is located in a temple. Young monks participate in an equivalency programme while other monks help members of the community through dialogues about family issues, mental care, terminal care and counselling of prisoners in collaboration with the relevant government offices.

Through a sub-district administration office, CLCS in Rangpur District of Bangladesh drew up an MOU with a local university to send students as volunteers to help CLCS organize literacy classes and advocacy campaigns on health, sanitation and environmental issues. The students learnt about gender issues in university classes and discussed how to share the knowledge with local community members. They considered that early marriage and dowry are two major issues in the community that cannot always be easily discussed at an individual level with older people at home. The group leaders consulted local CLC managers and district NFE officers and decided to hold drama events for advocacy on gender issues, performed by the youth group. While the youth group invited their families and community members to the event, CLC managers talked to local leaders to inform them about these forums. It was found that the messages from young people in the local community were stronger and more convincing for community members than announcements or lectures from the government officials or development agencies. Furthermore, these events are combined with video presentation programmes on relevant issues of gender, health and sanitation to provide the community audience with scientific knowledge, information and practical skills.

The importance of and need for self-sustainability of CLCS is often discussed, especially in the case of NGO/community initiated CLCS, but it should not imply isolating a CLC from outside stakeholders or that it should try to meet all the needs locally by itself. On the contrary, self-sustainability needs to develop inter-dependent relationships with other stakeholders to mobilize, share and synergize internal and external resources. By developing net-



works and linkages among stakeholders in education and other sectors, local resources can be fully utilized to discuss and explore needs to sustain local community development.

In view of the rapid advancement of ICT, such networks and linkages will not always need face to face meetings, especially for information sharing and small group discussions. There are initiatives in Japan to create flexible and innovative learning forums, utilizing existing houses and available spaces, in line with the key principles of the Kominkan and CLCS. Hantagawa Kominkan of Okinawa prefecture has initiated mobile Kominkan by bringing a 'Kominkan kit' to reach communities and discuss local issues and explore solutions in the community, from school children to senior citizens, based on traditional forms of local dialogue in the communities.

Conclusions

This paper reviewed community-based learning institutions, specifically the emergence and changing roles of CLCS, based on various documentations and my field work in selected countries of Asia, and then discussed key factors for sustainable community and social development. Since CLCS were initiated as education institutions, their focus is now to provide standardized basic education programmes equivalent to formal schooling in order to meet the EFA goals and commitments. In the new era of SDGS, CLCS can revisit their role and functions for sustainable community development through community participation and ownership, comprehensive programme content development, and linkage and networking to maximize internal and external resources. These CLC functions align with the five thematic priorities and strategies of the global action programme on ESD, especially at the local level. Abundant local human, natural, information and infrastructure resources are available to tackle local, national and even global issues. CLCS have excellent potential to function as catalysts to facilitate linkages and partnerships among different stakeholders through intersectoral and intergenerational learning, and thus contribute to developing social capital in the community.

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