

Education issues in an urban community in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, have influence on youth poverty through Micro, Meso and Macro levels

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows the impact of education issues through macro, meso and micro levels on youths in a poor urban community. Research consistently demonstrates a strong causal link between education and poverty. This study examines the problems in slums or poor urban communities in Phnom Penh Cambodia. Qualitative research laid the foundation of the descriptive. Using an inductive approach and analyzing the real situation based on interviews and observation. Individual and family factors are a part of the micro level on youth education issues. It is very important for the development of the community to understand the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threat. This study focuses on general both soft and hard that have strong relationship. All social services based on education are attracted on the issue of how to improve or to take more intervention to solve the problem. I investigated youth development by understanding both student and stakeholders that have provided education services. This paper aims to provide youths living in a slum a better life, in order to reduce youth school dropout and make them easier to access. Formal, informal and non-formal education services were considered in this study, for intervention on youth development.

Keywords: Education issues, youth poverty, Micro, Mezzo and Macro levels in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

INTRODUCTION

After Khmer Rouge (1975-1979) the population of Cambodia lost over 2 million people, education issues increased and

Cambodia needed strategies to improve. The most of people with high education such as teachers and students use to kill by POL POT regime. Even if those people were a good human resource for a developed country. Phnom Penh was a ghost town during Pol Pot's regime, no one would stay in the empty city during this period of time. Nowadays there are many constructions and old building since Cambodia has been a French colony, and still using this old system until today. There are many settle urban poor or slums in Phnom Penh since 1980. It causes many problems when government takes land for development or to organize administrator, because Phnom Penh is a developing city. That is the reason why many slum areas were moved to the outskirts of city by eviction. Education is more of a concern because the lack of human resources so Cambodian people are poor and all individuals, families and society are located in poverty conditions.

Education has been promoted worldwide, promotion for all people in the world to have access to education. As long as the world accepted the education can end poverty (Craig & Porter, 2003). According to education for all it would be of interest of youth's education in slum or urban poor community. They have access to public schools, private and vocational trainings provided by Non-Government Organization (NGOs). There are many factors to development; through

education, through economy, qualification of education. Education for all starts from software and hardware problems (Akyeampong, 2010). It is important to have knowledge about urban settle in the city to effectively decrease poverty (Baker & Schuler, 2004).

There are not many NGO's in Phnom Penh that work on education in urban poor communities. Building schools located in urban communities, provide the same school systems as public schools, but they have to provide specific subjects and give students more support than in public schools (Cheng, 2010).

OBJECTIVE

1. To study youths education issues in poor urban communities
2. To examine why youths in slum dropout in secondary school and high school.
3. To study non-formal education provided by non-government organizations and the effect on empowerment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on research objectives, the Researcher used Qualitative methods. The researcher conducted a study based on description of the Interpretive Paradigm in order to observation and interviews substantiate this study (Sofaer, 2002). In interpretive paradigm, the

researcher does believe on theories but interested to create knowledge in new theories without testing, as in this study researcher asks questions “What? and How?”, because the researcher would like to follow up what the people in slum do through their thinking, feeling and experience as researcher can measure through assimilation and deductive (Portes & Zhou, 1993). The social experiments is a great general belief. The design has using the phenomenology to explore the experience and thinking of individual, the ethnography to describe and interpret cultural and social influence on youth’s education in slums. The measurement is useful for studies on observation.

Key informants has selected with functions that directly involve on youths education, such as the government community leader, non-government organizations working on education and the school manager. These people work directly with the community in order to increase youth development.

Key informants in this study were focus on 6 parents, 5 villages’ chiefs, 3 school managers from non-government organization for interview.

The data collection researcher has conducted both in primary source and secondary source. The researcher has made an appointment with the people mentioned above in order to do interviews. Data collection in the field was

taken 3 months from 28st Feb - 28 Mays, 2014. Most of the interviews conducted in this study were taken about 1 and a half hour to 2 hours. This research made use of certain tools for support, such as a recorder and write down on the note booked during interviewing. In the process the researcher proposes an appointment and explains them about the need of the research. In the beginning of the interview we has made a good relationship as a technique to create a comfortable atmosphere. The researcher gives the interviewee enough time to answer the question. During the interviews the researcher made notes and as following the question that we had prepared.

Data Analysis in this study working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns employed the narrative and descriptive analysis according to the data in the form of field notes from observation, transcripts from interviews, documents, and audio files. It was involved a coding process to organize and table the data into meaningful chunks and it is also necessary to interpret the data and draw out the major themes. More importantly, it was using the pictures of the research setting, participants, and activities. All the interviews were transcribed and formatted for putting in the database. In the process of sequence of data analysis, the activities such as data

transcribed from recorded interviews of each informant were written in their own language of participants. The tape interviews were reviewed at least two times to guarantee the accuracy. The transcripts were reviewed and checked for the accuracy of the translation and meaning.

RESULTS

Micro Level Problems

Individual factors are motivation, drop out of school, working under ages, gambling, behavior and poor support. The motivation for studying, coming from parents are very poor. Parents often motivate children to work and therefore earning an income to support their family. Some youths assist the parents' jobs, which offer them free time from school. This strategy affects their education, because they do not have enough time to study besides helping their parents. School drop outs are the most concerning in urban poor communities in Phnom Penh. The highest rate of youth quitting education in secondary school and high school, is because of poverty. Most of their families are very poor and can not give them financial support to study at school, so most of youths have to work and earn income to support their families even if they do not want to quit studying. After them dropouts of school at this level of education, they decided to work in factories and some youth become gangster, using drugs and so on. Because the highest priority is to get a job, youths are

working under ages in factories. This leads to corruption; the employee's requirements are from 18 year old, so the community leader changes their age. There are many types of gambling in poor urban areas, such as card games, internet shocker etcetera. These bad influences in the environment, has a huge effect on youth's education. The number of gangster youths increases when there is a reduction in the community of education, moral respect, and selfishness. Parents do not allow their children to go to school, because they don't have money and they need their children to earn income to support the family.

Family factors influencing education are income, poverty, family situation, loan, family unemployment. Income is a big problem for poor families. Money is a priority in the family, because they need to expend on food, electricity, water and rent etcetera. The income and expends is out of balance. The general family situation is to live in worries and family members are stressful through poverty. Day by day, the family expends become higher and higher. The family bond is broken, the members do not have a good relationship with each other, this causes mental health problems, structural sickness and hopelessness. Loan is top ranking in the family, they get money from banks to fix and upgrade their houses. They upgrade their house to look better and to cover that it is a slum, because they worry that the government

will evict them to the outskirts of the city. Families spend a lot of money, even those who do not have proper jobs and income. Eventually some families decide to sell their house because they do not have money to pay for the loan. The income for these families comes from selling products on the roadside or on the street and work as a construction worker.

Mezzo level problems

Community factors are unemployment, lack of safety, poor urban situations, school formal informal non-formal and domestic violence. Unemployment for poor people causes corruption. The people in these communities do not have permanent jobs, this brings a lot of insecurities. Safety is also a concern, because many accidents happen on the streets. Criminals in communities steal everything that they can sell in markets even for a cheap price. It is not safe to abandon your house in the community, because of the high rate of crime. The urban situation is that most of the people have been evicted from the city and this is a problem. The government has plans to develop an area, and therefore take the people their land.

To attend school, formal, informal, and non-formal, most of the students have to pay money for teacher's service (daily cost 1000 to 2,000 riel Cambodia) this amount depends on grads that they attend. In public school they did not care much because attendance is

not important, even if they go to school they do not learn much from that. Informal education also have been a problem because study at night time and far from home.

In informal school, they have to pay for class every month. The costs of informal school fee is one subject is \$8, there is a total of six subjects. They have to pay for that because this year she will have a big exam. In general informal education is better than formal education because teachers come on time and are never absent. Non-government organizations provide education for free and this form of education is very helpful. There are only a couple of non-government organizations that have a program to promote youth in this community in order related to health or drugs. Most of the students in Phnom Penh are attending Formal education. Non-government organization have interventions on youth that dropout of school and the student are studying such as send document to school director at formal education for send them back to school and request for teacher in class don't get copy paper fee . Some students have got a high percentage of being absent in class, when the teachers tries to investigate and asks the parents, some parents said that they did not know where their children were. This means that parents are careless about their child. Some of the students come from better families, these students are never absent.

Some girl students have to study at night time and at day time they work at factories. Domestic violence always happens in urban poor communities. Conflicts by word harassment happens almost every day, physical conflicts happen sometimes. The community's leader does not have the ability to solve this problem and it increase and become a big crisis four our country in the future.

Macro level problems

The macro level problems is about education provider through formal, informal and non-formal still have limited to promote youth poverty to access higher education. The policy have limited to promote youths in poor urban community in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Formal education is provided by the Ministry of Education Youths and Sports. The informal education is provided sector such as private teachers (mostly government teachers). Non-formal education is provided by Non-Government Organizations. It much more concern about future of youth in urban poor communities. Time to focus on youths for development and transform community to development community.

Non-government organizations have provided basic training in computer lessons, English, Khmer, art, health, hygiene, sports and food donation program. It is important for their future because all employees need these priorities. Non-government Organization have

created a group of young leaders in different schools to do volunteer work in schools, specifically the incentives are training them to become good leaders. Youth have learned a lot from this program. There are seven schools in different locations in poor urban communities and they have provided all most the same services. In these seven schools, there are over 600 students aged from 14 to 19 years old.

Empowerment

It is very important to understand empowerment in urban poor communities. The power of empowerment influences leadership through motivation and through the construction of social value of human behavior (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The role of empowerment can be bottom up, or it can be top down. Empowerment and youth education are having a relationship through micro, meso and macro level. Personal power from individual or strength perspective bass, have relevant family and community through. Youth are poor, and poverty is weakness and a threat. Opportunities and strength through education can make change. Non-government Organizations have provided education to youth for free and are also trying to work with the family(parents) to give youth support on education through provide education services. Community empowerment in poor urban communities through education, is possible because of cooperation between individuals,

families, communities, government, and international and national non-government organizations to reach empowerment, non-government organizations have activities in the community to get in touch with the parents, the parents have to get more involved in their children's lives and send their children to school. The NGO tries to promote the NGO School and encourage them with education programs. In the beginning of the year, the NGO explains the importance of education, with an activity with the parents. Who is involved in this problem solving strategy is the individual, the family, non-government organizations and the government. The individual has to pay attention on education, including with help from their parents. NGOs have to contact the school director and have to be informed about the poor students coming to study without paying school fee. When we sent the youth to school we are trying to have parent meetings, to cooperate together to aim for development through education for their children.

Non-government organizations are successful for providing education services to poor people in poor urban communities. Some students have to work in the good companies to earn a high salary and some staff from school are recruiting to help their own community. Some of the NGO's students are highly committed to study even if they have to work too. Education improves living

standards and reduces poverty (Van der Berg, 2008).

Creating education programs such as a study club or a local school in communities together with other programs such as English class, porridge program, health and hygiene, stimulates youths in society to cooperate and helps them to motivation to learn from their own experiences. This is a great model to set up their goals and develop their own plan.

DISCUSSION

There are some non-government organization putting interest in poor urban communities through providing programs and vocational trainings. This has impact on youths in poor communities(Wallquist, 2002). According to (Dy & Ninomiya, 2003) basic education in Cambodia has more impact on qualitative and quantitative schooling, enrolment has increased through the international policies from Education For All (EFA).

It consists of successful planning and framework. Rabe, P. E, 2009) wrote about urban poor communities, development professionals, land sharing and power in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Residents from slum communities have concerns about eviction by the government and companies taking their land for development. These parties are willing to move them to live in the outskirts city, to places that the government and the companies build for them. Youth were

concerning about their education, because they must changing the school.

Thanks to the involvement of the parents, youth education has improved. Parents give their children support and they cooperate with schoolteachers. This involvement is really relevant for parents in youth education (Altschul, 2011). The education can reduce poverty all over the world (Raffo et al., 2010).

This country has education issues and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has stated three priorities to achieve (2006-2010): “To ensure equitable access to education; to increase quality and efficiency of the education services; and to promote institutional development and capacity building for decentralization”. To have more control, to prevent less enrolment and decrease the high percentage of dropouts, especially in secondary schools. Students have to pay for informal class that is provides by the teacher from public schools. (Tan, 2007). Policies of non-formal education have pointed out their effectiveness of their programs to poor communities in Cambodia. Students have an opportunity to study even if they can not afford to study formal education. The Royal government of Cambodia also gives authority to communities and non-government organizations to work directly with communities (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2002).

Private sector or informal education increases day by day. This form of education gets involved with formal school, because formal education teachers provide these classes by their own business. Just imagine how they teach in formal school and private school. They are careless about formal school and they concentrate on their own private class. The quality of studying in private class is much higher, so also the expenses are much higher for the students. This is an issue for students living in slum or poor urban communities. Their families have no money to pay for these classes. The result is that students stop studying and trying to find part time jobs (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2002).

Policies to promote education through human recourses is the vision of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports. Stay focused on the improvement of the quality of teachers and staff and providing the best human resource to develop individual and agency in society (Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, 2012). It is important to understand space of participation between traditional norms and modern norms, because it has impact on schools in Cambodia already. Schools located near pagodas, will have influence on school. Come closely with traditional norms. Modern norms are influenced by technology (Pellini, 2005) Inequality of education is a big concern and

an important point is to concern about the level of education students got from studying (Holsinger & Jacob, 2009).

Livelihoods and livelihood strategies were about people living condition, currently issue and a non-government organization call Attitude Center for Education (ACE) have operation in Wat Than community as known poor urban community in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. There are five asset are social capital, human capital, natural capital, financial capital and physical capital all those five asset have problem such as human resources, income, social relationship so and so. ACE have provided project non-formal education to children and youth in Wat Than community in order such as English health hygiene, leadership and arts. (Lichelle, 2012)

CONCLUSION

Youths from poor urban communities in Phnom Penh really need treatment on education issues, based on three level macro, meso and micro. The problems and solutions are described in this study. The problems are based in individual, family, communities and society. The solution is the empowerment of slums or poor urban communities, with involvement of multiple factors.

Micro level is focusing on individual and family problems such as motivation, behavior, attitude, dropout of school, working under age and gambling. Family problems are

unemployment, poor support, loan and low income. Mezzo level is focusing on community's problems like unsafety because there are shifts gangster in these communities. Also social services are very poor. Macro level is focusing on society's problems like policy from the government. The empowerment of poor urban communities can be reached by vocational training provided by non-government organizations and government communities.

Empowerment is the progress of development through leadership and motivation and is based on the strength coming from communities. Hereby, opportunities can be created in these communities by non-government organizations. For example, they built schools located in poor communities for youths to study non-formal education. Programs for learning English, health, hygiene, leadership and life plans, changes their future.

All those strategies through macro, mezzo and micro level can change the living condition in the slum and leads to reducing poverty. Based on this research, I have some suggestions to improve or develop youths in poor urban communities:

- Motivate youths in slums to go back to school, for some student have dropped out and give them supports (school materials and personal spirit).

- Neglecting always happens with youths in slums, this comes from their environment like from their friends, family, and society. They are not aware of their human resources to make their community or this country develop. The reality is the same as the disability, only education can make them saviors. They need more support from stakeholders to make a change.
- Because of a low income, families can not financially support their children to go to school. Because they can't effort paying school informal fee, is that students drop out of school.
- Working under ages is very common in poor urban communities. Corruption, civilization, value of technology and environment depression, makes this possible.
- Gambling are very popular both youth and parent for who are unemployed. They use gambling as a way to reduce stress and an easy way to win or lose money.
- The behavior of youths in poor urban communities are very different from other youths living a normal life. Youths living in slums are living in bad conditions, they have bad experiences with their environment and some have mental problems.
- Family problems such as unemployment, no support and the huge loan from the

bank, is all because of their poor living conditions. Education can change their conditions, but residents sometimes think it is too late for them. Fortunately, the new generation has hope for the future.

- Safety is a big issue in poor communities, because people do not trust each other. Violence always happens within families and within the community.

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