

A Study of Community Participation in Community Learning Centers in the Kingdom of Cambodia: Components and Issues of Communication Participation

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive research study aims to analyze the components of community participation in community learning centers in the Cambodian context and to study the problems of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia. Besides, this research utilizes three main techniques to triangulate data collection and to respond to research objectives, and those techniques are an in-depth interview with the Cambodian experts in the field of non-formal education, conducting semi-interview with community people (Tboung Khmoum province and Phnom Penh city), and using observation. The result of the research is 1). There are eight components of community participation in community learning centers in the kingdom of Cambodia such as utilizing services, resource mobilization, attending programs, diagnosing needs, planning programs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and decision making demonstrating that the previous components of participation in the literature review are quite out-of-date and not so practical to imply in current situation; and 2). There are many problems of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia, such as the lack of knowledge, confidence, trust in the CLCs, Cambodian cultures, unattractive of the program, disoriented career pathway, deficiency of trainers and teachers, family burdens, and migration. However, three main problems have significant impacts on the future sustainability of community learning centers in Cambodia, which Cambodian government and other relevant stakeholder should take any measures and guidelines to solve those issues as well as to enhance community participation in community learning centers. Hence, those issues of community participation, the governments, and relevant stakeholders should have taken into their accounts to alleviate the impacts of those problems.

Keywords: Community participation, Community learning center, Components of community participation

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Introduction

If we looked at Cambodia approximately 20 years ago, which was a victim of rampant civil wars, Cambodia has achieved so much to transform itself from a country receiving support from United Nations peacekeeping forces to a country contributing the forces to UN peacekeeping forces [1]. In a similar vein, Cambodia has the ambition to transform her country to become an upper-middle-income country in 2030 and high-income in 2050 [1]. In order to achieve this desirable dream, Rectangular Strategic Phase IV of the Royal Government of Cambodia has put emphasizes on four priority areas and one of the four priorities areas is human resource development: improving the quality of education, sciences, and technology, vocational training, improving public health and nutrition, and strengthening genders equality and social protection [1].

In a general sense, by depending heavily on formal education, Cambodia will not be capable of improving her economic status and achieving sustainable development; therefore, non-formal education has played a complementary role in improving Cambodian people's potential to the fullest. Besides, based on UNESCO, community learning centers are one of the leading agents to implement non-formal education and lead education to become lifelong education [2]. However, the establishment of CLCs is not a difficult task to do, to make them become sustainability with full of community participation, which is the most challenging thing to do [3]. On the other hand, saying is easier than done; there are plenty of challenges in the CLCs such as community participation, shortages of funding, lack of human resources, no ownerships, and no practical implementation [4]. In a similar vein, community participation is one of the main issues that have a significant impact on securing the sustainability of the CLCs in Cambodia as community participation is a foundation to generate human resources, funds, and a concerted effort to build an active community learning center [5]. Also, without community participation, the CLCs will be at risk because there is a lack of contribution and involvement from community people [6]; consequently, the CLCs will be less sustainable [6-7]. For instance, there are around 356 CLCs in 2018, which have set up, but not all of them functioning well due to the lack of community participation and involvement from the surrounding community [8].

In conclusion, since there are not many previous studies regarding the causes of community participation and the components of community participation the CLCs in Cambodia [6-7, 9], in order to fill in this gap, this research aims to "STUDY OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS IN THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA: COMPONENTS AND ISSUES OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION."

Literature Review

The pilot project of the CLCs was first initiated by UNESCO's Asia Pacific Programme Education for All (APPEAL) in 1998 as the purpose of developing a community-based education program, particularly to elevate non-formal education (NEF) program as a delivery mechanism to promote education [1]. For instance, in the Cambodian context, CLCs are considered as schools of non-formal education [2]. Moreover, the primary function of this pilot project has tempted to promote CLCs as one of the critical drivers to foster non-formal education [3]. Based on the United Nations Literacy Decade, "Community Participation" has played a crucial role in encouraging the establishment

of CLCs [4] as community participation can foster CLCs to be more active and involvement. According to UNESCO (5), it has defined community learning centers as one of the resource centers which provides information activities, especially relating to lifelong learning for everyone, particularly in the local community as to make their communities stronger, and all the activities are organized by the community people. Of course, the centers will be as reservoir information and knowledge to reach out to the community people as to enhance them to construe on the common pathways [6].

In the case of CLCs in Cambodia, CLCs started under the supervision of the Department of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports since 1994 and supported by UNESCO [7]. Furthermore, based on UNESCO [8], community learning centers were traditionally considered as a local community venue for the community people coming to receive training activities, seemingly functional literacy programs, and non-formal education activities. Moreover, there are some popular programs such as income generation, skill training, community awareness, and developmental programs running in the CLCs [9]. Similarly, there are many programs and activities which have conducted in the CLCs in Cambodia. Those programs are functional literacy, post-literacy, equivalency program (EP), re-entry program, vocational training (mechanics, salon, weaving...), life skill training, and income generation programs [10]. However, based on the theory of Arnstein [11], citizen participation is a little like eating spinach, which means no one refuses it in principle since it served the purposes of everyone. In this theory “a ladder of citizen participation,” Arnstein has come up with eight rungs of community participation such as manipulation, therapy (nonparticipation), informing, consultation, placation (tokenism), partnership, delegated power, and citizen control (citizen power) as showing in figure 1.

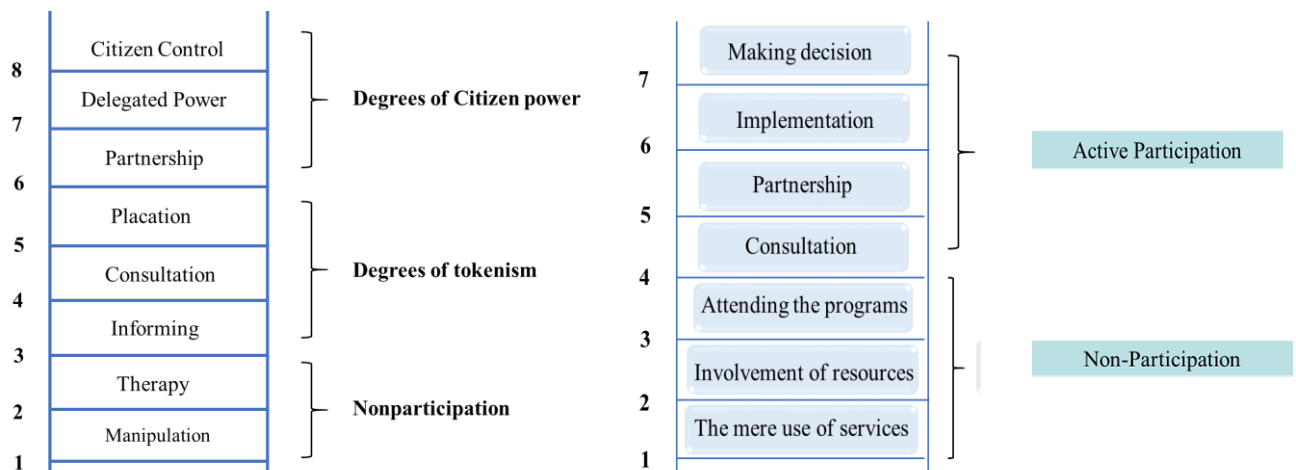


Figure 1 A Ladder of Citizen Participation & Ladder of community participation

Later on, Sheldon Shaefer has modified “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” by Arnstein (1969) to “A Rung of Community Participation” [12]. There are seven rungs of community participation, seemingly the mere use of services, the involvement of resources, attending programs, consultation, partnerships, implementation, and making the decision [12]. There are plenty of community participation problems preventing people from having full participation,

and those problems are arising because of the lack of information, knowledge, commitment and ownerships, the unattractiveness of the programs, family's burdens, and their attitude (apathy) [12].

The same is also true in the Cambodian context, community people have utilized CLCs for various purposes and got benefits from it, namely meeting rooms, reunion venues, training, and teaching classes or other purposes. For instance, there are around 544 classes in CLCs (449 classes are in the CLCs of governments, and 45 classes are in the CLCs of DPs); furthermore, the number of community people participating in CLCs is roughly 8,090 people which female is about 5,112 women, and male is about 2,978 men. As a result, there are around 7,272 people who completed the programs (4,680 are females, and 2,592 are males) [13]. It is significant to notice that there are different scope and context in terms of performing and sustaining their CLC; therefore, they have to pay more attention to maintain their centers; otherwise, the centers will become less sustainable, and the rates of emerging CLCs will keep going down to some extent [14].

In a nutshell, community participation is a backbone of community learning centers, which means that without the participation from the community people, CLCs will not be able to perform their function well. In any idea, it is crucial to hear a clear picture of the components of community participation, especially in community learning centers in Cambodia at large; then, the study of the problems of community participation should carry out.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were to:

1. Analyze the components of community participation in community learning centers in the Kingdom of Cambodia.
2. Study the problems of community participation in community learning centers in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Methodology

To analyze the components of community participation and study the problems of community participation in community learning centers in the Kingdom of Cambodia, the researcher has employed a qualitative research method to study because based on Clark and Creswell, qualitative research methodology can help the researcher to study phenomena and analyze components of community participation well [15]. This research methodology has divided into two main phases, which depend on the research objectives.

Phase 01: Analyze the components of community participation in community learning centers in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Population and Sampling Design

Population

Multiple sources and databases related to research problems and relevant documents compiled for the data collection. All the sources are books about non-formal education and guidelines for active community

participation, some well-known websites: UNESCO, UNDP, and other popular websites, articles, and journals. The experts working in non-formal education in Phnom Penh city and Tboung Khmoum province are the population of the study.

Sampling Method

The researcher has employed a purposive sampling method to select five key respondents to conduct an in-depth interview with them as five of them are living and working in Phnom Penh city and Tboung Khmoum Province. Moreover, they have vast experiences and in-depth knowledge of community participation in community learning centers.

Research Instrument

Due to limited time and resources, 05 experts working on non-formal education in Cambodia will be selected to conduct an in-depth interview to analyze the components of community participation in the CLCs in Cambodia as well as to clarify and apply the concept of community participation into the Cambodian context. In addition, data recording form has been used for collecting significant information from books, articles, journals and well-known websites to analyze the components of community participations.

Data Collection

The researcher collected both primary and secondary data. For the secondary data, the researcher collected the information regarding components of community participation and the issues of community participation, particularly in community learning centers from books, articles, journals, and other popular websites. Moreover, the primary data collected through conducting an in-depth interview with Cambodian experts who are working in the field of non-formal education to analyze the components of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia.

Data analysis

After receiving data from conducting an in-depth interview with those Cambodian experts, from analyzing components of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia, content analysis employed to analyze and extract information from secondary data. It is crucial for the researcher to discourse analysis skills to validate the information and to confirm components of community participation in the CLCs in Cambodia.

Phase 02: Study the problems of community participation in community learning centers in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Population and Sampling Design

Population

Community people who are living surrounding community learning centers in Phnom Penh city and Tboung Khmoum Province are the population of the study. Similarly, it is to study the problems of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia. Most of the community people are interested in learning and participating in community learning centers.

Sampling Method

The researcher has employed a random sampling method in order to select three community people in Phnom Penh city and three community people in Tboung Khmoung Province for conducting a semi-interview. By so doing, the researcher can acknowledge the problems of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia.

Research Instrument

The researcher conducted a semi-interview with 03 community people in the Phnom Penh city and 03 community people living in Tboung Kmoum Province to study the problems of community participation in the community learning centers in Cambodia. Furthermore, to triangulate the research instrument, the researcher also used the observative method by driving the motorbike around 1 km² in community learning centers and observed their behaviors and asked them some questions their participation in the CLCs.

Data Collection

The researcher collected both primary and secondary data. For the secondary data, the researcher collected that information from books, articles, journals, and other popular websites. In a similar vein, the primary data collected through conducting semi-interview and observation with community people who are interested in participating in community learning centers.

Data analysis

After receiving data from conducting a semi-interview and doing some observation with community people, the researcher studied the problems of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia by using discourse analysis to recode that relevant and credible information. Also, the researcher used observative skills to understand the behavior and cultures of community people to study the problems of community participation.

Results

The first objective: to analyze the components of community participation in community learning centers in the Kingdom of Cambodia

After conducting content-analysis in the secondary data, the researcher has synthesized those theories to make it conspicuous and easy to grasp. As a result, the researcher has come up with seven components of community participation based on synchronizing from various sources, and those seven components are utilizing services, resource mobilization, attending programs, diagnosing the needs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and decision making.

Table 1 Synthesizing components of community participation in the Cambodian context

Components of Community Participation	Authors					
	Arnstein (1969)	Shaeffer (1994)	David (1994)	MOEYS (2014)	Nipun Pich (2008)	
1. Manipulation						
Non-Participation	√					
No real objectives for participation	√					
2. Utilizing services/Merely uses/Therapy						
Convenient location		√	√	√	√	
Well-equipped facilities		√		√	√	
Conducive environment	√			√	√	
3. Resource Mobilization						
Contribute finances		√		√	√	
Contribute material (lands, woods...)		√		√	√	
Contribute physical labors		√		√	√	
4. Attending Programs						
Have up-to-date information	√		√	√	√	
Attractive and responsive programs		√	√	√	√	
Flexible schedule of programs & activities				√	√	
Having good rapport among learners & teachers	√		√	√		
5. Diagnosing the Needs						
Receive and provide constructive feedback	√	√		√		
Invite for attending the meeting		√	√		√	
6. Implementation						
Volunteering work		√	√	√		
Have a high degree of responsibility	√			√		
7. Monitoring and Evaluation						
Participate in the appraisal of final work		√	√	√		
Recognize the working improvement	√		√			
8. Decision Making						
Have power in the making in any plans	√	√		√	√	
Sense of ownership and commitment	√	√		√		
Advocacy and raise their voices	√			√	√	

Based on the expert 01, 02 and 03, they have agreed with those seven components (utilizing services, resource mobilization, attending programs, diagnosing the needs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and decision making) of community participation, particularly in the community learning centers in Cambodia. The component “Manipulation” has been deleted from components of community participation, especially in the Cambodian context because “Manipulation” got the least frequency (only one stated in Arnstein, 1994) comparing to other seven components (having more than one supporter). Moreover, the Cambodian expert 04 and 05 requested the researcher to take “Manipulation” out from components of community participation in community learning centers since it is quite extreme to state that the information of community participation is manipulated, there are no authentic participation in community learning centers. However, expert 01, 02, and 05 would like to researcher to add one more component of community participation which is ‘Planning Programs’ because they have stated that planning programs is one of the main components of community participation to help the community people to have meaningful participation in community learning centers in Cambodia.

In conclusion, after the data collection from both main sources (primary and secondary data), we can see a crystal clear that there are eight components of community participation in the CLCs in Cambodia such as utilizing services, resource mobilization, attending programs, diagnosing the needs, planning program, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and decision making.

The Second Objective: the study problems of community participation in community learning centers in the Kingdom of Cambodia

There are various answers regard to the causes of community participation in the community learning centers through conducting semi-interview with 06 community people (03 people living in Phnom Penh city and the other 03 living in Tboung Khmoum province) as you can see in table 2 below.

Table 2 Issues of community participation in the CLCs based on interviewing community people

No.	The Issues of Community Participation in the CLCs	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
1.	Lack of confidence and trust on the CLCs	√		√	√	√	
2.	Lack of understanding of the benefits of the CLCs towards their community.	√	√	√	√	√	√
3.	There is still a low level of government commitment to enhancing community participation.		√		√	√	
4.	There is a lack of transparency in terms of recruiting CLCs’ management and leaders.	√					√
5.	The problem of Cambodian people’s mindset is a major cause of community participation.	√	√	√		√	√
6.	There is a lack of trainers and teachers in the CLCs	√	√	√	√	√	√

Table 2 Issues of community participation in the CLCs based on interviewing community people (Cont.)

No.	The Issues of Community Participation in the CLCs	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
7.	Some CLCs do not have well-equipped facilities to respond to the needs of community people.	√	√	√	√	√	
8.	Most of the people are living in a poor living standard.	√	√	√	√	√	√
9.	Lacks of willingness to participate in activities of CLCs	√		√	√		√
10.	Having family burdens (they are busy with their livings)	√	√	√	√	√	√
11.	Cambodian culture (do not like studying)		√	√	√		√
12.	Many people migrate to work in the city or abroad (Thailand, South Korea, Malaya, China, and Japan).	√	√	√	√	√	√
13.	The training programs and activities are not attractive and do not respond to the community's needs.	√	√	√	√	√	√
14.	Lack of information dissemination from the CLCs towards community people.	√	√	√	√	√	√

Moreover, one of the participants living in Phnom Penh city has mentioned that ‘there are not many people who participate in these CLCs due to some particular issues. First, they do not understand the benefits and main functions of these CLCs, which they lack information about these CLCs. Second, they do not put education as their main priority while their stomach is still starving. Third, most of the senior people are busy to take care of their grandsons and granddaughters, so they do not have to have access to education in terms of their personal development.’ What is more, another participant living in Tboung Khmounm province said that ‘In terms of levels of Community participation, it very low because there is no resource mobilization, monitoring, and evaluation, partnership, diagnosing their needs and decision making happening. There is only a small amount of participation in terms of attending training programs.’ It can imply that there is inactive participation in the CLCs in Cambodia. Based on the opinion of community people living close to these CLCs, they said that ‘they did not see the point of participating in this CLC, and they prefer to use their spared time doing their own business or spending their time with their families.’ One more thing to be noticed, they are willing to participate in activities of these CLCs if they get some token like money and any in-kind gifts to compensate for their sacrificed time. They also said that there is not enough information provided by the official government, and most of the participants are the relatives of CLC’s staff because they will select only their favorite people (cronyism and favoritism).

In conclusion, there are enormous numbers of the problems of community participation in the CLCs in Cambodia, which have been perceived by community people’s perspectives and based on the observation of the researcher. Nonetheless, there are three prioritized issues of community participation in community learning centers, such as lack of information dissemination from the CLCs, unattractive and unresponsive activities and program, and poor living standards of community people. Hence, three main issues have significant impacts on the future

sustainability of community learning centers in Cambodia, which Cambodian government and other relevant stakeholder should take any measures and guidelines to solve those issues as well as to enhance community participation in community learning centers.

Discussion

The result of the research study has supported the finding of the current literature review relating to the components of community participation and the issues of community participation in the community learning centers in Cambodia; however, some components have added to compromise with Cambodian context. Also, the issues of community participation in the community learning centers in Cambodia have great significance with existing literature.

In terms of the components of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia, there are eight components, such as utilizing services, resource mobilization, attending programs, diagnosing needs, planning programs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and making the decision. We can see the research results are quite different from the theory the ladder of citizenship participation of [11], which are manipulation, therapy (nonparticipation), informing, consultation, placation (tokenism), partnership, delegated power, and citizen control (citizen power). It is similar to the theory of [12] "A Rung of Community Participation," as the mere use of services, the involvement of resources, attending programs, consultation, partnerships, implementation, and making the decision [12]. Moreover, through the content analysis, the research has found that there are seven components of community participation, such as utilizing services, resource mobilization, attending programs, diagnosing needs, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, making the decision. Based on the literature review and research findings, we can see that the components of participation raised by Arnstein and Shaefer are quite out-of-date and cannot apply those concepts in this contemporary world.

Concerning the result of issues of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia, there are plenty of issues that have been raised by community people who are living close to community learning centers. Most of the community people do not know about community learning centers, as the researcher also conducted some observation by driving a motor around the area of CLCs (1 km²). The researcher can see that most of the community people do not know where the location of CLCs is and do not know and understand the functions of CLCs. To any extent, most of the Cambodian people do not care about CLCs, and what they care about is their living. As in the literature review, Nipun Pich has mentioned the about knowledge of community people regarding the location and function of CLCs, it is because of Cambodian people do not care about the CLCs, and they think that CLCs do not matter to them. David Wilcox (16) has emphasized their apathy attitude, which considered one of the main problems of community participation. More often than not, it is very vital to consider the government system and information dissemination as participant number one has mentioned about the information barrier, which means CLCs' staff are not so active in updating and disseminating information to reach out to the community people. The lack of transparency and confidence makes community people feel reluctant to participate in community learning center, particularly in

terms of resource mobilization as the participant number four has said that ‘we do not think that our contribution would go to the development of CLCs and the CLCs, itself, could do something to help the community to solve the problems.’ According to Shaefer [12], confidence and trust are the main factors in drive community people to take part and participate in social activities.

All in all, the components of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia have great significance and value-added to the existing literature, particularly regarding components of community participation. Those components of community participation are the steppingstones for community people to have full participation in community learning centers in Cambodia. As aforementioned, the problems of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia and most of the problems align with other issues of community participation, as stated in the literature review. The most interesting is that most of the Cambodian people do not know the location of CLCs as their settlements located close to the CLCs.

Conclusion

In order to achieve the first research objective, 03 experts in the field of non-formal education have selected to conduct an in-depth interview as well as to analyze the components of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia. Moreover, the second research objective, the researcher has randomly selected 06 community people (03 people living in Phnom Penh city and 03 people living in Tboung Khmoum province) as participants to conduct a semi-interview to study of the issues of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia.

As a result, there is an emerging component of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia, which is planning programs which the two experts highly recommend this component to the researcher because they have explained that ‘community people have to attend in the planning programs to meet their demands and needs as well as to make programs more attractive to them.’ Hence, there are eight components of community participation in community learning centers in the Cambodian context, such as utilizing services, resource mobilization, attending programs, diagnosing needs, planning programs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and making the decision. Furthermore, there are many issues of community participation in the community learning centers in Cambodia perceiving from community people and the researcher’s observation. For instance, those issues are the lack of trust, confidence, and knowledge regarding benefits of CLCs, the unattractiveness of training programs, information barriers, the lack of transparency and accountability of CLCs, deficiency of trainers and teachers, low economic status, Cambodian cultures, and migration.

In conclusion, there are eight main components community participation in community learning centers in the kingdom of Cambodia: utilizing services, resource mobilization, attending programs, diagnosing needs, planning programs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and making the decision. Besides, there are many issues of community participation in the CLCs in Cambodia due to some omnipresent issues such as lack of ownership and a sense of belonging, deficiency of trust and understanding about the benefits of CLCs, unattractive programs, lack of

transparency and accountability, information barrier, Cambodian culture, not enough teachers and trainers, low socio-economic status, and immigration.

Implications

The result of this study provided implications for community people, CLC committee members, the Cambodian government, and other relevant stakeholders regarding the components of community participation and issues of community participation in the CLCs in Cambodia.

As we can see that there are many conspicuous issues of community participation in community learning centers in Cambodia, in which Cambodian government and other relevant stakeholders should have taken those matters into their accounts in order to enhance and strengthen community participation in community learning centers as community participation is one of mainly driving factors to develop community learning centers in Cambodia to be an active and sustainable centers in the future come.

Recommendation

For future research and study, the prospective researchers should look at the issues of community participation in larger scales and broader senses. This time, the researcher was not able to study it in a large population due to the constraint time and resources. Furthermore, it would be great if the prospective researchers can propose guidelines to strengthen community participation in the community learning centers in the kingdom of Cambodia in order to have proper guidelines to enhance community participation and to cope with community participation issues.

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The reasons were amended based on the opinion of two committee:

1. Regarding in research instrument of phase 1, I agreed to add data recording form for collecting information from books and websites since it is a very suitable tool for me retrieved useful information from those sources.
2. In the data collection of phase 1, I have added the information, which I gathered such as components of community participation and the issues of community participation, particularly in community learning centers.
3. Under table 1, there is no information about the deletion of "Manipulation" from community participation. Hence, I have provided a concreted reason of deleting this component from the components of community participation with supportive arguments.

4. At the conclusion of the second objective, the committee asked me to prioritize the problems of community participation. As a result, I have chosen only three main problems of community participation in community learning centers.

5. I have agreed with the committee, who recommended me to adjust with my reference and citation. As a result, I have made an adjustment with my reference and citation accordingly since it needs to be fit with the format of the journal.

6. The committee have mentioned about inappropriateness of the selection of research methodology. Hence, I have added more reason of the selection of my research methodology to be more concrete and clearer.

7. The committee also me to readjust the data analysis to make it stronger in terms of its argument. For example, I have explained more about the reason why I have deleted "Manipulation" from the component of community participation. Moreover, I also chose only three main problems of community participation to make it succinct and tangible.

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