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Village Education Committees and Primary Education Development in Houameuang District, Lao PDR

¹ Xengkham Xaysoulitchitthy, ² Thongthiane Vathanavong, ³ Sengdao Phetsombath, ⁴ Phaivanh Vathanavong

^{1, 2, 3, 4} Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University, LaoPDR, Laos

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Corresponding Author: Xengkham Xaysoulitchitthy

Abstract

This research aims to examine the participation of Village Education Development Committees in promoting primary education in Houameuang District, Houaphanh Province. The study involved a total sample of 108 participants, and the data were analyzed using SPSS to compute frequency, percentage, mean (M), standard deviation (S.D.), and One-Way ANOVA. The findings revealed that: (1) the overall level of participation among Village Education

Development Committees in promoting primary education was high ($M = 3.65$, $S.D. = 1.04$). Considering specific aspects, participation in student promotion was at a high level ($M = 3.75$, $S.D. = 1.01$), participation in personally knowing students was also at a high level ($M = 3.73$, $S.D. = 1.02$), while participation in screening or filtering students was at a moderate level ($M = 3.49$, $S.D. = 1.16$).

Keywords: Village Education Development Committee, Quality Education, Participation, Primary Education, Development

1. Introduction

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has set the goal of graduating from least developed country status by 2024 and gradually integrating into the international community, and aims to ensure all children access education from kindergarten through lower secondary, which is compulsory under the Education Law (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016). Education is placed ahead of other sectors, and the Ministry of Education and Sports, as the main organizer and implementer, has set priorities in the 5-Year Education and Sports Sector Development Plan, Phase IX (2021–2025) (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2015), covering all 10 sub-sectors. In primary education, the focus is on quality improvement, personnel development, and strengthening local education institutions. Notable achievements include: (1) increased primary graduates with stronger literacy and numeracy skills, with attention to disadvantaged groups and gender equality; (2) more teachers and principals meeting professional standards through regular evaluations; and (3) improved school management with sufficient resources (Government of the Lao PDR, 2016 ^[3]; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020).

Despite strong support from MOES and development partners, Houameuang District still faces major challenges: weak monitoring of Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs), insufficient teacher performance evaluations, lack of systematic supervision, limited teacher and VEDC commitment, multigrade teaching due to declining student numbers, budget limitations, delayed school funds, and weak school–community coordination. These issues have led to declining education indicators, such as lower enrollment of 5-year-olds, higher dropout rates, and slight decreases in promotion and completion rates. Research shows that strong VEDC and community participation is essential for improving education quality (Houaphanh Province, 2025).

From the problematic situation mentioned above and in order to expand the content and spirit of priority work and the directional plans of the management committee of the District Education and Sports Office, the researcher has become interested in conducting a study on the participation of Village Education Development Committees in promoting education work in primary schools in Houameuang District, Houaphanh Province, to serve as a scientific approach for developing primary education work within their own district to achieve better quality. This research has the following objectives to educate the participation of Village Education Development Committees in promoting education work in primary schools in Houameuang District, Houaphan Province.

2. Materials and methods

This research study was used a survey research methodology with quantitative data, and employing questionnaires as tools for collecting the data from sample groups, then analyzing the data and explaining the results through descriptive narrative.

2.1 Sample Group

The sample group comprised 108 individuals from Houameuang District, Houaphanh Province, including primary education administrators, primary school teachers, and village-level mass organization members (20 women, including Village Education Development Committee members and elders). Participants were selected via simple random sampling, with the sample size determined based on 15-30% criterion (Srisa-at, 2015) [11].

2.2 Research Instruments

The research instruments used for data collection and compilation in this study is a 5-level Rating Scale questionnaire, adapted from questionnaires by (Srisa-at, 2015) [11] and Vathanavong *et al.* (2021) [14], which has the following meanings:

Score 5 means participation at the highest level

Score 4 means participation at a high level

Score 3 means participation at a moderate level

Score 2 means participation at a low level

Score 1 means participation at the lowest level.

The questionnaire consists of 3 parts: Part 1) General information of respondents, Part 2) Data related to the participation of Village Education Development Committees in 3 aspects, namely: knowing students as individuals, student screening, and student promotion. Part 3) Additional suggestions.

The questionnaire's content validity was confirmed by an Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) between 0.67-1.00, based on reviews by three experts. Appropriateness was rated at the highest level ($M=4.63$, $S.D=0.25$). A pilot test with 30 participants, similar to the target sample, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. Following expert feedback and subsequent revisions, the finalized questionnaire was used to collect data from 108 participants.

2.3 Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis in this study is employed basic statistics for data analysis including: frequency analysis, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Analysis of Variance or One Way ANOVA for testing and comparing various aspects using the program (SPSS V.26) to assist in calculating and analyzing the data. After that, the mean values were compared with criteria to explain the results (Vathanavong, 2015) [13] as follows:

Mean scores between 4.50 – 5.00 mean participation at the highest level

Mean scores between 3.50 – 4.49 mean participation at a high level

Mean scores between 2.50 – 3.49 mean participation at a moderate level

Mean scores between 1.50 – 2.49 mean participation at a low level

Mean scores between 1.00 – 1.49 mean participation at the lowest level.

3. Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework was illustrates the conceptual framework used in this study. The diagram begins with the **top arrow**, which represents the **synthesis of** policies related to Village Education Committees and Primary Education Development issued by the Government of the Lao PDR (2016) [3], the Ministry of Education and Sports (2015, 2020), and Houaphanh Province (2025). This synthesized policy foundation is presented in step 1.

From this policy synthesis, the framework identifies **three key dimensions**, shown in **step 2**, which form the basis for assessing community participation. These dimensions include:

1. Participation in getting to know students as individuals,
2. Participation in student screening, and
3. Participation in student promotion.

These three dimensions are then used to design the survey and collect data from the participants of the Village Education Committees and Primary Education Development in Houameuang District, Lao PDR. The results derived from this survey process are presented in step 3, which represents the empirical outcomes based on the community participation indicators established earlier.

Overall, the figure presents a logical flow: **policy synthesis** → **three participation dimensions** → **field survey** → **research findings**, which together form the conceptual framework guiding this study as shown in Figure 1.

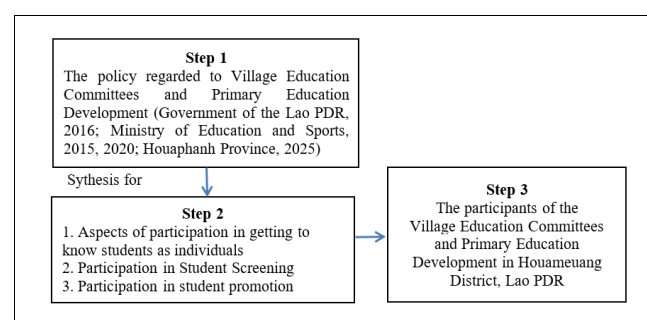


Fig 1: Conceptual framework

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, the authors present and discuss the results.

The participation's level of Village Education Development Committees in promoting primary education work in Houameuang District, Houaphanh Province was found to be at a high level overall ($M = 3.65$, $S.D = 1.04$). When considering each aspect individually, it was found that the highest aspect was participation in promoting education work ($M = 3.75$, $S.D = 1.01$). This was followed by participation in knowing students as individuals ($M = 3.73$, $S.D = 1.02$) and participation in student screening ($M = 3.49$, $S.D = 1.16$) respectively (as detailed in Table 1).

Table: The participation of Village Education Development Committees in promoting primary education work in Houameuang District, Houaphanh Province

S. No	Descriptions	M	S.D	Level of participation
1	Aspects of participation in getting to know students as individuals	3.73	1.02	High
2	Participation in Student Screening	3.49	1.16	Moderate
3	Participation in student promotion	3.75	1.01	High
	Overall mean	3.65	1.04	High

From the table 1, we could discuss that as follows:

4.1 Overall Level of Participation

The participation level of Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs) in promoting primary education in Houameuang District, Houaphanh Province is overall at a high level. This is because individuals have developed a deeper understanding of their roles in educational development. In-depth findings reveal that the sample group demonstrates strong self-control, acceptance of cause and effect, compassion, creative thinking, and imagination. Other contributing factors include the costs of attending school, the relationship between VEDC members and the community, communication between students and family members, family responsibility for students' duties, communication skills, understanding of specific roles and responsibilities in school, and active participation in various activities both inside and outside the school (Houameuang Education and Sport Bureau, 2025) ^[4].

Overall, VEDCs play an active role in developing education across all aspects, including student promotion, understanding students as individuals, and student screening.

4.2 Consistency with National Data

These research findings align with the Mid-Term Report on the Implementation of the 5-Year Education Development Plan Phase VIII (2016–2020) of the Ministry of Education and Sports (2020). The report indicates that, at the primary education level, multiple sectors across society have increasingly contributed to educational development through coordination with communities and VEDCs. This collaboration has encouraged and mobilized age-appropriate children to access primary education comprehensively.

As a result, the net new enrollment rate for Grade 1 remained at 100% from the 2023–2024 to the 2024–2025 school year. However, the overall primary enrollment rate slightly decreased from 102.1% in 2023–2024 to 101.75% in 2024–2025. Nationally, eight provinces recorded declining rates, one province remained the same, and nine provinces increased, with Khammuan Province showing the largest decline (nearly 4%).

In terms of gender equality, primary education has maintained high equality, reflected in a gender parity index of 1.00. Furthermore, private education has also made a meaningful contribution. In the 2019–2020 school year, private primary students accounted for 7.4% of total students, representing a 0.5% increase from the previous year (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018) ^[5].

4.3 Theoretical Consistency

These results are consistent with Colletta and Perkins' (1995) ^[2] theory of community participation in educational development, which states that education occurs not only in schools but also within families, communities, and society. Although each group has distinct responsibilities, no single group can take full responsibility for children's education. Parents and families alone cannot bear the entire responsibility, as children interact beyond their family environment. Thus, communities and society must support parents and families in raising, socializing, and educating their children. Schools, as social institutions, help prepare children to contribute to societal improvement by developing essential social skills.

Schools should not function as isolated units; instead, cooperation between schools, VEDCs, parents, and communities is essential. Education becomes most effective and efficient when these groups collaborate. Therefore, establishing and continually strengthening cooperative partnerships among these stakeholders is crucial.

4.4 Forms of Community Participation

Numerous educational studies have identified various methods for Village Education participation in education, illustrating how can engage in children's learning. Common forms of VEDC participation include: (a) Research and data collection; (b) Consultation with policymakers; (c) School management; (d) Curriculum design; (e) Development of learning materials; and (f) School construction.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion survey of village education committees and primary education development in houameuang district, Lao PDR, the level of village education development committees' participation in promoting primary education work in Houameuang District, Houaphanh Province is overall at a high level. Nevertheless, the authors have some recommendations for relevant sectors:

- 1) In the aspect of knowing students as individuals: All stakeholders including parents and teachers should pay attention to participating in promoting students' communication abilities, adaptation to groups, responsibility toward themselves, others, and society, discipline, and ability.
- 2) In the aspect of student screening: Participation should be intensified in studying information from home visits to students in the community regarding special groups, normal groups, at-risk groups, and problem groups to make it easier to monitor students in each group.
- 3) In the aspect of student promotion: The participation should be intensified in taking students with problems who have received help but have not improved and are difficult to help.
- 4) Opportunities: Should provide for communities to actively participate in determining policy plans and educational development strategies, educational curriculum development, curriculum management, and clear guidelines for coordinating cooperation with communities.
- 5) For future research, the researchers should be compare the general information of sample and In-depth interviews.

6. Conflict of Interest

This study and all information contained in this academic article is free from any conflict of interest with any individual or organization and that no party has received any undue benefit. In the event of any violation in any form, I accept full and sole responsibility.

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