OPTIMIZATION COMMUNITY PROGRESS THROUGH EMPOWERMENT IN THE FIELD OF SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

Suryanti Suryanti[1], Chusnul Rofiah[2], Asfahani Asfahani[3], Agustin Hanivia Cindy[4], Hersiyati Palayukan[5]

[1] Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton, Indonesia
[2] STIE PGRI Dewantara Jombang, Indonesia
[3] IAI Sunan Giri Ponorogo, Indonesia
[4] Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia
[5] Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja, Indonesia
e-mail: suryanti042516@gmail.com[1], chusnulstiepgridewantara@gmail.com[2], fahan380@gmail.com[3], agustincindy@unesa.ac.id[4], hersiyati@ukitoraja.ac.id[5]

Abstract
This service focuses on Optimizing Community Progress through Empowerment in the Field of Sustainable Education. The background of this article emphasizes the need for holistic global education that integrates environmental, social, and economic aspects. This service aims to empower the community to actively participate in sustainable education initiatives actively, fostering a sense of ownership, collaboration, and long-term impact. This service method uses participatory approaches such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), emphasizing collaboration between stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, and community members. The results show significant increases in community ownership, participation, and commitment to continuing education programs. A participatory approach facilitates designing contextually relevant solutions and identifying locally relevant problems and opportunities. Asset-Based Community Development utilizes existing community strengths and resources for educational support, increasing independence and resilience. The conclusion is that community empowerment and collaborative partnerships are important in optimizing community progress in sustainable education. Empowered communities drive positive change, address local challenges effectively, and contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future. Collaborative partnerships ensure sustainable education initiatives' scalability, impact, and long-term sustainability and foster empowered communities.
Keywords: Community Progress, Empowerment, Optimization, Sustainable Education

Abstrak
Pengabdian ini berfokus pada "Optimalisasi Kemajuan Masyarakat melalui Pemberdayaan di Bidang Pendidikan Berkelanjutan." Latar belakang artikel ini menekankan perlunya pendidikan global yang holistik yang mengintegrasikan aspek lingkungan, sosial, dan ekonomi. Tujuan pengabdian ini adalah untuk memberdayakan masyarakat agar berpartisipasi aktif dalam inisiatif pendidikan berkelanjutan, menumbuhkan rasa kepemilikan, kolaborasi, dan dampak jangka panjang. Metode pengabdian ini menggunakan pendekatan partisipatif seperti Participatory Action Research (PAR) dan Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), yang menekankan kolaborasi antar pemangku kepentingan termasuk badan pemerintah, LSM, lembaga pendidikan, dan anggota masyarakat. Hasilnya menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kepemilikan, partisipasi, dan komitmen masyarakat terhadap program pendidikan berkelanjutan. Pendekatan partisipatif memfasilitasi perancangan solusi yang relevan secara kontekstual dan identifikasi permasalahan dan peluang yang relevan secara lokal. Pengembangan Masyarakat Berbasis Aset memanfaatkan kekuatan dan sumber daya masyarakat yang ada untuk dukungan pendidikan, meningkatkan kemandirian dan ketahanan. Kesimpulan yang diambil adalah pemberdayaan masyarakat dan kemitraan kolaboratif berperan penting dalam mengoptimalkan kemajuan masyarakat dalam pendidikan berkelanjutan. Komunitas yang diberdayakan mendorong perubahan positif, mengatasi tantangan lokal secara efektif, dan berkontribusi terhadap masa depan yang lebih adil dan berkelanjutan. Kemitraan kolaboratif memastikan skalabilitas, dampak, dan keberlanjutan jangka panjang dari inisiatif pendidikan berkelanjutan, serta mendorong masyarakat yang berdaya.
Kata Kunci: Kemajuan Masyarakat, Pemberdayaan, Optimalisasi, Pendidikan Berkelanjutan.

INTRODUCTION

The background introduction for an article could begin by highlighting the global significance of sustainable education and community empowerment. Sustainable education encompasses a holistic approach to learning that focuses on academic knowledge and integrates environmental, social, and economic aspects (al Aliyawinata et al., 2021; Ap. Moreira & Wanda Rutkoskwi, 2021). In today's rapidly changing world, the need for sustainable education is more pressing than ever, as it equips individuals and communities with the knowledge and skills to address complex challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and economic disparities (Agbedahin, 2019; English & Mayo, 2019).

Community empowerment plays a crucial role in the success of sustainable education initiatives. Empowering communities involves fostering active participation, decision-making abilities, and ownership of educational processes (Holst et al., 2020; Ortiz & Huber-Heim, 2017). When empowered, communities become agents of change capable of driving progress and creating positive impacts in their contexts. This empowerment is particularly important in marginalized or underprivileged communities with limited access to quality education and resources (Ardiyanti et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021).

Moreover, optimizing community progress through empowerment in sustainable education is a multifaceted endeavor that requires collaboration among various stakeholders. These stakeholders include government bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions, local leaders, and community members (Asfahani et al., 2023; Dewantara et al., 2020). By working together in partnership, these stakeholders can leverage their strengths and resources to implement effective and sustainable education initiatives that benefit the community (Asfahani et al., 2022; Goralski & Tan, 2020; Holst et al., 2020). Overall, the intersection of sustainable education and community empowerment presents a powerful opportunity to foster positive change and create a more equitable and sustainable future. This article explores and discusses strategies, best practices, and case studies that demonstrate the potential impact of empowering communities in advancing sustainable education goals (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021; Franco et al., 2019; Khushik & Diemer, 2018).

My previous engagement in this field laid a strong foundation for understanding the challenges and opportunities in sustainable education and community empowerment. However, several gaps were identified that necessitate further exploration and intervention (Ariyanda & Arifyani, 2020; Mavani et al., 2020); (L. Nugroho & Hidayah, 2020; Prabowo et al., 2021; Soliati, 2019). One significant gap was the need for comprehensive strategies for integrating sustainable education into community development initiatives. While there were efforts to promote environmental awareness and conservation practices, these often needed to be more cohesive and connected to broader educational goals and community empowerment frameworks (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Gouezo et al., 2021). Another notable gap was the need for more emphasis on participatory approaches that actively involve community members in decision-making processes related to education and sustainability. Although some initiatives included community consultations or feedback mechanisms, there was room for improvement in ensuring genuine collaboration and empowerment of community voices. Additionally, existing programs' scalability and long-term sustainability were areas of concern, as many initiatives needed help to maintain momentum or expand their impact beyond initial pilot phases.

This engagement empowers communities to participate actively in and drive sustainable education initiatives. Through empowerment, the aim is to foster a sense of ownership, collaboration, and responsibility among community members towards sustainable education programs. By involving communities in decision-making processes, curriculum development, and implementation, the objective is to create educational initiatives that are contextually relevant, impactful, and sustainable in the long term. The expected impact of this engagement is multifaceted. Firstly, empowering communities is anticipated to increase ownership and commitment to sustainable education, resulting in more effective and inclusive educational programs. Secondly, by fostering collaboration among stakeholders and leveraging community strengths, the engagement aims to optimize community progress in addressing environmental, social, and economic challenges. Ultimately, the desired impact is to contribute to developing empowered and resilient communities capable of driving positive change and creating a more equitable and sustainable future through education.

METHOD

One method of engagement that could be applied is Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR involves collaborative research and action between researchers and community members to address

real-world problems and create positive social change. In this context, PAR could involve community members in identifying educational needs, co-designing sustainable education programs, and evaluating their effectiveness (Brydon-Miller et al., 2020). Through PAR, community members become active participants in the research and decision-making processes, which enhances their sense of ownership and empowerment. On the other hand, researchers benefit from gaining valuable insights from the community's lived experiences and perspectives, leading to more relevant and impactful interventions. Another method that could be employed is Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) (García, 2020). ABCD focuses on identifying and mobilizing existing community strengths and resources to promote sustainable development. In sustainable education, ABCD could conduct asset mapping exercises to identify local talents, knowledge, infrastructure, and networks that can be leveraged to improve educational outcomes. By highlighting and building upon community assets, this approach fosters a sense of self-reliance and resilience while promoting collaboration and collective problem-solving. Additionally, ABCD aligns well with empowerment principles by shifting the focus from deficits and needs to strengths and capabilities, thereby empowering communities to drive their progress in sustainable education initiatives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The engagement outcomes yielded significant findings that underscore the potential impact of community empowerment on advancing sustainable education initiatives. One key finding was the enhanced sense of ownership and participation among community members in educational processes. Through active involvement in decision-making, curriculum development, and implementation, community members felt a greater sense of responsibility and commitment to the success of sustainable education programs. This increased ownership improved program sustainability and fostered a culture of collaboration and mutual support within the community.

Moreover, the engagement revealed the effectiveness of participatory approaches such as PAR in co-designing and evaluating sustainable education interventions. By engaging community members as co-researchers, PAR facilitated the identification of locally relevant issues, barriers, and opportunities in education. This collaborative approach led to developing targeted solutions that addressed specific community needs and challenges, resulting in more impactful and sustainable outcomes.

Another significant finding was the role of Asset-Based Community Development in leveraging existing community strengths and resources for sustainable education. Through asset mapping exercises, communities could identify and mobilize local talents, knowledge, infrastructure, and networks to support educational initiatives. This approach empowered community members by recognizing their contributions and promoted a sense of self-reliance and resilience in addressing educational challenges.

Overall, the findings from this engagement highlight the transformative potential of empowering communities in sustainable education. Community empowerment initiatives can play a vital role in optimizing community progress and creating sustainable educational outcomes that benefit all stakeholders involved by fostering ownership, collaboration, and resource mobilization.

Figure 1. Education community empowerment activities

The analysis and discussion of the outcomes from the engagement reveal several key insights and implications for sustainable education initiatives; Firstly, the enhanced sense of ownership and participation among community members signifies a fundamental shift in the traditional top-down approach to education. By involving community members in decision-making processes and

curriculum development, sustainable education programs become more responsive to local needs and contexts (Matkovic et al., 2014; Wijngaards-de Meij & Merx, 2018). This participatory approach increases the relevance and effectiveness of educational interventions and fosters a stronger sense of accountability and commitment within the community. As community members take on active roles in shaping their educational pathways, they become more invested in the success and sustainability of these programs, leading to long-lasting positive impacts (Pradhan, 2022).

Secondly, the effectiveness of participatory approaches such as PAR highlights the importance of co-creation and collaboration in addressing complex educational challenges. PAR enables researchers and community members to collaborate as equal partners, leveraging their respective knowledge, experiences, and insights. Through PAR, local issues and barriers in education can be identified and addressed in a contextually relevant manner, ensuring that interventions are tailored to the specific needs and priorities of the community. This collaborative approach improves the quality and relevance of educational initiatives and strengthens relationships and trust between stakeholders, laying a foundation for sustained progress and continuous improvement (A. P. Nugroho et al., 2023); (Farooq et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the role of Asset-Based Community Development in leveraging community strengths for educational support underscores the importance of asset-based approaches in promoting resilience and sustainability. By recognizing and mobilizing existing talents, resources, and networks within communities, ABCD empowers community members to take ownership of their educational outcomes. This approach reduces dependency on external resources and promotes self-reliance, creativity, and innovation in addressing educational challenges. Additionally, ABCD fosters a sense of pride and agency among community members, as they see themselves as active contributors and problem solvers in sustainable education.

Upon delving deeper into the analysis and drawing conclusions from the engagement several crucial insights emerge. One of the primary observations is the profound impact of community empowerment on the sustainability and effectiveness of educational initiatives. When communities are empowered and actively involved in decision-making, there is a notable increase in ownership, commitment, and accountability towards sustainable education programs (Nabilah Mokhtar et al., 2023). This shift from passive recipients to active participants fosters a sense of responsibility and pride within the community, leading to greater engagement and long-term sustainability of educational interventions.

Furthermore, the success of participatory approaches like PAR underscores the importance of co-creation and collaboration in addressing complex educational challenges. PAR facilitates a deeper understanding of local issues, needs, and aspirations, allowing for developing targeted and contextually relevant solutions. Through PAR, community members become co-researchers and co-implementers, contributing their unique perspectives and expertise to drive meaningful change in sustainable education. This collaborative model strengthens the quality and impact of educational programs and cultivates trust, mutual respect, and solidarity among stakeholders.

The role of Asset-Based Community Development in leveraging community strengths for educational support further solidifies the transformative potential of empowerment-oriented approaches. By focusing on existing community assets and capacities, ABCD promotes a culture of self-reliance, resourcefulness, and innovation in addressing educational challenges. Community members are encouraged to identify and mobilize their strengths, whether local talents, cultural heritage, or social networks, to enhance educational outcomes (Judijanto & Asfahani, 2022; Nursalim et al., 2022; Waham et al., 2023); (Bressane et al., 2024). This shift towards asset-based thinking reduces dependency on external resources. It fosters a sense of agency and resilience among community members, positioning them as active agents of change in sustainable education.

Analyzing the engagement's outcomes emphasizes the transformative potential of community empowerment in advancing sustainable education goals. By prioritizing participatory approaches, leveraging community assets, and fostering a culture of ownership and collaboration, sustainable education initiatives can optimize community progress and create lasting positive impacts on individuals, communities, and the environment (Jamiah et al., 2019; Mâță Liliana et al., 2023). This discussion underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue, reflection, and learning in refining and scaling up empowering practices in sustainable education.

In conclusion, the engagement's analysis underscores the critical importance of empowerment strategies in optimizing community progress in sustainable education. Sustainable education initiatives can achieve greater impact, sustainability, and inclusivity by empowering communities, fostering

collaboration, and leveraging local assets. This highlights the need for continued investment in empowerment-oriented practices, capacity building, and knowledge sharing to create meaningful and lasting change in sustainable education.

CONCLUSION

The engagement culminates in several key conclusions. Firstly, the empowerment of communities plays a pivotal role in driving sustainable education initiatives forward. Sustainable education programs become more relevant, impactful, and sustainable by involving community members in decision-making processes, fostering ownership, and promoting active participation. Empowered communities are better equipped to address local challenges, leverage resources effectively, and drive positive change within their contexts, contributing to overall community progress and development. Secondly, collaborative partnerships are essential in achieving sustainable education goals and optimizing community progress. Collaboration among various stakeholders, such as government bodies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, local leaders, and community members, enables the co-creation and implementation of effective educational programs. These partnerships leverage collective expertise, resources, and networks, leading to comprehensive and contextually relevant initiatives that address communities' diverse needs and priorities. By working together in partnership, stakeholders can overcome challenges, maximize impact, and ensure sustainable education efforts' scalability and long-term sustainability, ultimately fostering a more equitable, inclusive, and empowered society.

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