

Participatory policy-making in education

The NEPC's Point of View

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Summary

We are witnesses of the change in nature and perception of policy-making, where policy-making broadens its understanding towards more inclusive process. Since problems and issues that require solutions have becoming more complex, there is no single actor who has the knowledge, resource and capacity to tackle problems unilaterally. Education is a sector where it is especially important to involve all actors in the policy-making process. NEPC meeting on participatory education policy making seeks to provide answers on questions of relevance, role and interaction between various actors within the field and clarify contemporary education policy decision-making process.

KEY WORDS: Education, governance, policy-making, participation

Introduction

The real role of leadership in education ... is not and should not be command and control. The real role of leadership is climate control, creating a climate of possibility.

Ken Robinson

In the recent two decades, two key terms of this position paper have become of greater interest for policy and wider community. Education and (participatory) policy-making are "buzzwords" and part of mandatory vocabulary in almost every paper in the area of public policy and general social sciences. Public policy is considered to be one of the most propulsive field in social sciences over the past several decades (Fischer, Miller, Sidney, 2007). Analogue with the development of public administration and increased complexity of modern Western states, public policy analysis has rapidly started finding its spot at universities, civil society organizations, governmental bodies etc. It is worth pointing out the varieties of approaches and attempts that try to define policy. Hogwood and Gun (1983) in their remarkable book Policy Analysis for the Real World distinguish "policy as a label for field activity, policy as an expression of general purpose or desired state of affairs, policy as specific proposal, policy as: decision of government, formal authorization, programme, output, outcome, and policy as theory or model" (13-19). By sketching different definitions, Hogwood and Gun are trying to show multilayered nature of this concept. If we keep in mind that this book was written 30 years ago and since then public policy analysis has been developing rapidly, we can only imagine how many definitions and approaches on public policy exist. In addition to this, Michael Hill says that different actors will use the concept of "policies" in different ways and that we have to be aware of it (2010:15).

Ever since Aristotle in his Politics introduced a differentiation between oikos, an ancient equivalent of a household and its opposition polis, being political community or koinonia politike, active citizenry became an important factor of every polity

until today. In the history of political and social thought, we can find a difference between three or even four sectors that all together create societal life of a humankind. Apart from the private sphere (family), there is a state and public sector. This and similar trichotomies have been an analytical tool used for explaining the structure and dynamics of the polity and mutual influence of one sector to another. Given sectors have found their niche in the public policy studies as well.

Education, on the other hand, is a term that is even more complex. In the most general view, it is understood as a process of acquiring new knowledge, skills and attitudes that are being transferred from one generation to another. Frankenna (1965), an education philosopher, gives a four-fold definition of education:

- 1. What parents, teachers and schools do, or in other words, the activity of educating the young.
- 2. What goes on in the child, or the process of being educated;
- 3. The result, or what the child acquires, or has in the end, namely 'an education;
- 4. The discipline that studies, that is, the discipline that studies (1), (2) and (3). The field that reflects on all of the above to build up a body of knowledge is education; roughly, what is studied and taught in schools of education.

Scholars and practitioners have been analyzing the mere concept of education and participatory policy analysis, writing chronologies of their development, mapping various actors within those fields, trying to

understand weather the role of state is weakening or just transforming, investigating inclusiveness and sustainability of education, comparing various educational systems, seeking to find a way of how to reconciliate classical and participatory approach in public policies etc. All that has resulted with two outcomes, firstly it generated a large amount of knowledge on education and education policy making based both on empirical and theoretical insights and secondly it created a confusion due to the lack of systematic overview of theories, models and frameworks referring to the relationship between education and policy-making.

The aim of this policy paper is twofold. The first one is to offer a literature review on the participatory policy-making, as a method of creating contemporary public policies. Apart from offering mere definitions, a conceptualization and development of this approach will be presented as well as benefits and

downsides of it. The second aim is to contextualize participatory policy-making in the realm of education policy. By sketching the main features of education policy, a plausibility of merging participatory policy-making and education policy will be investigated and the concrete applications of participatory policy-making into education will be presented.

The position paper consists of two main parts. In the first part, a theoretical framework will be introduced and the main dimensions of participatory policymaking and education policy explained. Building on the contemporary literature from public policy a conceptualization of the issue will be constructed. The second part will be dedicated to the application of education making throughout the participatory points of view on a school and a national level. Here, possibilities, constrains and challenges will be analyzed while the general position on the matter, in the light of previous parts, will be offered in the conclusion.

Conceptual framework

The pivotal value of democracy is equality. Every actor should be having the same possibilities to construct one's life and the life of community as any other. This refers not just to the ecess to vote, but to the access to form public policies that determine the direction of a certain community. In the Western world, the public policy point of view is the most vital and comprehensive understanding of the political and social reality, while varieties of policy-making are a subject of lots of discussions wanting to achieve the most effective, efficient, adequate, just and responsive fashion. Perhaps Ana Petek summarizes the complexity of public policy the best when claiming that public policies are the interplay of (i) rules made by the state apparatus (ii) outputs of the interaction between state and non-state actors and (iii) social construction of problems (Petek, 2012: 1). Over time, multiple actors started to claim their right to influence policy, which resulted in the shift of the paradigm in which the state has the absolute right to determine the way a society will be governed.

Governance and participatory policy-making

Coupled with above mentioned contemporary inclusive tendencies, Jessop (2004) sees the policy arena as an "unstructured complexity", while Kenneth (2008) warns that the policy arena has become visibly more crowded (p 4). This change is not merely the question of the number of actors, but also their background. Public and private stakeholders together in collective forums with public agencies engage in consensus-oriented decisionmaking. In a policy science, this is known under the name of collaborative governance (Ansell, Gash, 2007). Under the influence of the multiplication of actors, in political science and public policy studies, governance has become the unavoidable concept for the analysis of modern public administration but as well as for the public policy analysis. Governance, as a polity for participatory policy-making is defined as a "development of governing styles in which

boundaries between and within public [, voluntary] and private sector become blurred (Stoker, 1998: 1).

Kooiman (1993), having in mind the complexity of decision-making and policy characteristics related to it, writes that there is no single actor who has the knowledge resource capacity to tackle problems unilaterally, while Peters and Pierre similarly conclude that state actually loses the capacity for direct control and replaces that faculty with a capacity to influence (1998: 226). Therefore, one of key concepts in the analysis of the contemporary polity is the interdependence of actors. Governance as an ideology tends to break the monopoly of the executive in the policy-making process by introducing various actors in the policy arena. In the classic policy science, a state was perceived as the most important policy actor who usually had mechanism to impose the architecture of the polity and the rules of the policy-making process. As we have seen in the governance perspective, a state is just one of the actors in the polity. Its role is derogated to steering and mechanisms include more soft rather than hard power. Some authors with extreme positions, such as Matthew Cahn, claim that policy in the new age is "a result of institutional processes influenced by non-institutional actors" (Cahn, 2012: 203)

By giving the non-state actors the right to participate, governance aims on more participatory and transparent way of creating policies. Due to this change, traditional stage model of policy-making where the government has the ultimate power to impose its will is today considered as being anachronistic. The role of government becomes to map out the problems and to devise answers to policy problems in a dialogue with non-institutional actors (Edelenbas, 2014: 570). Generally, depending on policy problems and ways of solving them, there are three levels of policy approach to solving problem: macro, meso and micro level. Civil society is one of key actors important for understanding the meso-level. According to Hudson and Lowe "Mesolevel analysis is the middle part of policy process.

Table 1 - Advantages of Citizen Participation in Government Decision Making

	Advantages to citizen participants	Advantages to government
Decision process	Education (learn from and inform government representatives) Persuade and enlighten government Gain skills for activist citizenship	Education (learn from and inform citizens) Persuade citizens; building trust and allay anxiety or hostility Build strategic alliances
Outcomes	Break gridlocks; achieve outcomes Gain some control over policy process Better policy and implementation decisions	Gain legitimacy of decisions Break gridlocks; achieve outcomes Avoid litigation costs Better policy and implementation decisions

Source: Irvin and Stansbury, 2004

It deals with how policies come to be made, who puts them on agenda, and the structure of the institutional arrangements in which policy is defined and eventually implemented" (2009:11)

Durning (1993) contextualize participation and arguing that 'participatory' means greater involvement of those who affect and are affected by a policy problem. This mode of governance, when both institutional and non-institutional actors share responsibility for creating policies is called participatory or deliberative policy-making. Rietbergen-McCracken in her text on participatory policy-making argues that participatory policymaking is more of a general approach than a specific 'tool', as the overall goals, no matter which method is followed, are to facilitate the inclusion, via consultative or participative means, of individuals or groups in the design of policies, and to achieve accountability, transparency and active citizenship. The push for this participatory process can be topdown (i.e. by the government/organization initiating participatory approaches to policy-making) or bottom-up (i.e. by particular stakeholder groups advocating a participatory approach or seeking to influence a specific policy).

Currently, we know very little about the actual role of citizens in participatory policy-making processes (Forester, 1999), yet we do know that an engaged

citizenry is better than a passive in terms of policymaking (King, Felty, Susel, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Arnstein, 1969). If used participatory methods, policies are, as argument goes, grounded on citizens' needs and the public is more sympathetic towards them. More positive sides of citizens participation include, among others; education of citizens on the current issues of their community, gaining skills for activist citizenry, but increased legitimacy for government, strategic alliances etc. (see table 1). Some authors (such as Nelson and Wright, 1995) go that far and emphasize participation process as a transformative tool for social change.

However, every cloud has its silver lining. Cisca Joldersma (2010) warns on the diversity paradox, which may occur in the contexts of participatory policy-making. She claims: "diverse perspectives of stakeholders are needed to obtain creativity as well as innovation, but diversity can also undermine these effects through communication difficulties and weak commitments. When stakeholders perceive incompatibility of interests it could hinder their ability to communicate with each other. Diverse power distributions, for example, can increase competition between stakeholders". In addition, participatory policy-making is time consuming, subject to the power of inters groups, costly and sometimes chaotic. (see Table 2 for disadvantages)

Tim Decision process	Disadvantages to citizen participants	Disadvantages to government
		Time consuming
	Time consuming (even dull) Pointless if decisions ignored	Costly
		May backfire, creating more hostility toward government
		Loss of decision-making control

Table 2 – Disadvantages of Citizen Participation in Government Decision Making

Worse policy decision if heavily influenced by

opposing interest groups

Source: Irvin and Stansbury, 2004

Outcomes

Participatory policy-making is not inherent only for the national level; it can be used on local and regional levels as well. For instance, Michels and De Graaf (2010) write about the example of one Dutch local community: "Since its inauguration in 2006, Eindhoven's current city council has made participation through participatory policy making a high priority [...]. Since 2006, the local government of Eindhoven has initiated 38 interactive projects of policy making in which citizens, often organized in residents' associations, social organizations, and entrepreneurs have been involved. These projects vary from the revitalization of neighborhoods and the reconstruction of a square or shopping center, to projects that are aimed at improving neighborhood community safety and quality of life".

Moreover participatory policy-making is not exclusively the domain of politics, it can take place along any realm of human social activity, including economic (i.e. participatory economics), political (i.e. participatory democracy or par-polity), management (i.e. participatory management), cultural (i.e. polyculturalism) or familial (i.e. feminism). Recently, participatory economics is becoming more and more popular in various discussions related to crisis in capitalism. It refers to using different participatory decision-making methods as an economic instrument to guide the production, consumption and allocation of resources

in a certain society. Proponents of this approach (such as Albert, 2004) point out equity, solidarity, diversity, workers' self-management and efficiency as positive effects of participatory economics.

Possibility of bad decision that is politically

Less budget for implementation of actual

impossible to ignore

projects

The area of education policy is one where participatory policy-making can have lots of benefit. Education policy, due to its structural characteristics and specific outcomes is particularly interesting to study from the participatory point of view.

Education policy and participatory policy-making

There was a time when educational policy as policy was taken for granted ... Clearly that is no longer the case. Today, educational policies are the focus of considerable controversy and public contestation ... Educational policy-making has become highly politicized. (Olssen et al. 2004: 2–3)

Tons and tons of papers, books, documents and analysis have been written about education. It could be said that there is a consensus between practitioners, researchers and professionals in education field that education is relevant, both for individuals and society. Even though today it is important not to stick juts to formal education, but having in mind the importance of non-formal and informal education too, formal education and its features are still prevailing in educational discussions. Schools are institutions that lay the foundation of a child's development and play a key role in developing young people into responsible and informed citizens. Education builds character, prepares young people for career, develops social skills and critical thinking and enchases benefits of socialization. Nevertheless, education is not important just for individuals' it has certain benefits for a society and a state as well, such as transmission of values (Dewey, 2004), education for citizenship (Levine, 2000), poverty reduction (Middleton, 1993) etc.

In the light of this, it is evident why education is par excellence a political question. The content the children will be thought shapes them and de facto creates the society of tomorrow therefore it is of interest of politicians. The choice of the approach of teaching and the emphasize of one thing over another are policy issues that policy actors need to answer. In other words, policy actors create education policy, but the question is how do they do that?

Education policy is the authoritative allocation of values within the education system and is located in a political context. It deals with issues whose values are being thought and who has the legitimacy to decide as well as who benefits from given decisions (Lingard, Ozga, 2007: 3). Kogan identified four key values that underpin and inform educational policy – educational, social, economic and institutional values. In his study, he distinguishes between basic and secondary values with educational, social and economic values being considered as instrumental, or basic, and institutional values being considered as consequential or secondary. Kogan asserted that a basic value is one that 'requires no further defence than that it is held to be right by those who believe it' (1975: 53).

Actors

In formulating public policies actors are involved on the basis of authority, expertise or order (Colebatch, 2004: 24-37). Žiljak (2009) stresses out that it is important not to link education policy solely to the activities of government ministries, state administration and the goals that they set. Education policy alludes collective action of different actors: political agents, servants in ministries, scientists and analysts, citizens and their associations, international organizations and so on. Accordingly, educational policies are not only matter of choice of the political elite, but also the process of interaction between the people who run the organization and participate in various ways in the educational process (433). Bell and Stevenson, when describing educational polity and actors within it write: "policy development is fuzzy, messy and complex. It is the product of compromise, negotiation, dispute and struggle as those with competing, sometimes conflicting, values seek to secure specific objectives. Educational leaders are not simply faced with making sense of policy 'from above', but also the demands and aspirations from those below. Individuals and collectivities within organizations will naturally seek to shape policy and these pressures create a pincer movement in which educational leaders must seek to reconcile both external and internal pressures for, or in opposition to, change" (2006: 19).

Policy actors are therefore diverse and have different interest in different aspects of education policy. While teachers are more interested in teacher policies, students may care more for the content of the curriculum or the organization of classes. Ministry of education as well as expert agencies in charge for school support generally have wider point of view. All that leads us to differentiation between school education policy and general education policy. While former deals with the school management, such as school governance, school curriculum, students and staff, the latter is more focused on the general policy issues, for instance the implementation of societal values in curricula, educational funding, teacher policies (continuous teachers education, pre-service education, teachers' advancements etc.) and so on. In the light of above-mentioned brief overview of education policy, it can be concluded that the eclecticity of the education field requires careful contemplation and cooperation in order to cover the most important aspects adequately. Hence, evidence based education policy implies the multiplicity of policy actors and clear responsibilities each of them.

Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC) therefore sees participatory policy-making approach being complementary to quality education policy. The starting hypothesis, which stipulates that education is relevant, both for the society and for individual, directs NEPC's efforts towards promoting collaborative and comprehensive view on education policy. Only cooperation between various actors can result effective, consistent, integral, effective and flexible education policy, which is a necessity of every contemporary society.

In the last part, two cases of promoting participatory policy-making in education from the NEPC's portfolio will be presented.

Case studies

Since its foundation in 2006 and based on the analysis of the NEPC's strategic documents and project proposals it can be concluded that there are three main thematic areas of NEPC's activities, namely inclusive education, education for sustainability and teacher policies. In addition to those, NEPC has been dealing with problem such as privatization of/in education and corruption in education. Even though there are many examples of promoting participatory policy-making in education, in the continuation we are bringing two.

1. Support to Pilot Schools for implementing inclusive education policies and practices

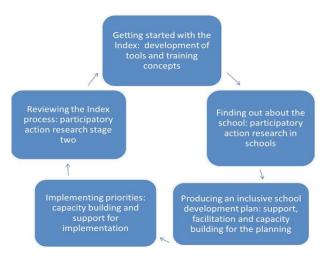
Thematic area: Inclusive education¹

Short description of the Project:

Its goal is to promote the concept of inclusive education as a reform principle that respects and caters for diversity amongst all learners, with a specific focus on those who are at a higher risk of marginalisation and exclusion. To increase the understanding of the benefits of inclusive education, the main activities focus on 49 pilot schools in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (seven per beneficiary: three primary, two general secondary and two vocational secondary). The experiences gained from these pilot schools will provide policy makers with firm suggestions on how to scale up identified effective practices. This will enable them to cater for increased social diversity and more

inclusive societies — for the benefit of all. The Project has a 'bottom-up' approach that will help policy makers move from experience in the field to mainstream education reforms. The project requires technical support to be provided to 49 pilot schools in seven countries, with the goal of assisting them in implementing inclusive education, introducing the Index for inclusion, developing individual school plans for inclusion, and eventually developing sustainability plans to make inclusive culture, policies and practices permanent and sustainable

Scheme of the Project:



Analysis:

The project designed in this way corresponds to the idea of participatory policy-making at the school level. It involves all stakeholders and enchases communication between them in order to produce just, efficient, effective, adequate, responsive and relevant decisions at the school level. Participatory action research (PAR), which is the focal point of the project, embodies the idea of participatory policy making. It is an approach that is well suited for involving important groups of stakeholders in making changes together, while also establishing their needs and identifying barriers that are to be overcome. The purpose of PAR is to overcome the monopoly of elite actors and institutions on research-based knowledge, to put research at the service of community development

According to NEPC's Strategy, NEPC understands inclusive education as follows: Inclusive education applies to a set of principles, values, and practices based on ensuring equal rights to education for all children regardless of gender, ethnicity, or social and developmental issues. Inclusive education thus applies to and is a right for all children. It is driven by the principle of social justice and the need to remove all forms of inequity from our education systems. It stems from the realization that when the entire school community promotes the best interests of each child, education promotes social cohesion, belonging, and active participation in learning.

and to build on the socially transformative power of shared knowledge and reflection. In addition to PAR, creation and implementation of school development plans, activities in the project is also relying on the facets of participatory policy-making. Co-creation of school developments plan by the school teams and key stakeholders, and facilitated by the NEPC experts, nurture the idea of cooperation and capacity building for creation of plans for; school-based approaches to inclusive pedagogy, distributed leadership and teachers' leadership, crowdsourcing and ways of organizing participatory planning process and the Index for inclusion and 'community as curriculum'. This activity designed in a way that stakeholders throughout the facilitated communication develop what they need is also compatible with the participatory policy-making model described in the previous section.

2. Schools: Leaders in Good Governance (together with Forum for Freedom in **Education**

Thematic area: Teacher policies² and education for sustainability3

- Teachers are the core agents of all real change at the grassroots level and without highly professional and motivated teachers, a quality education system cannot be built, nor can effectiveness in learning be achieved without proactive teacher policies. NEPC's Teacher Policies Program is an intrinsic part of the sustainable paradigm shift the organization seeks in the field of education. On one hand, the purpose of this program is to collect and assess existing and new evidence concerning teacher policies that can inform national public policies and promote quality public dialogue for effective and coherent teacher policies and underlying practices. Although this approach would generally lead towards constructing a model or guide for robust national policies that will ensure teachers are prepared and supported in ways that facilitate effective teaching and learning in the classroom, NEPC's program also intends to offer direct support to teachers. NEPC does this by involving teachers in the network's activities and projects, and by sharing best practices related to teacher development and training programs implemented by its members.
- Education for sustainability should be a core value and one of the principles on which modern education is founded. It is a comprehensive concept for quality education and learning that addresses global key issues such as global citizenship, health, solidarity, new economic models, poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, climate change, gender equality, corporate social responsibility, and other key issues under

Short description of the Project:

This action aims to foster the principles of good governance in educational system. In contributing to this overall objective three specific objectives are set. First, in order to secure consistent and durable support to the schools' governing bodies the action will examine and asses the modes of school governance in Croatia. Second, principals are key persons when speaking about good governance in schools and therefore the action aims to build capacities of schools' principles in good governance. Third, participation as a principle of good governance means cooperation between key stakeholders. Teachers, along with principles, are key stakeholders that have to be empowered. Therefore, this action aims to empower teachers for leadership and active involvement in processes of good governance.

Activities: (1) Research which will examine the model of school governance in Croatia and identify possible gaps between the policy on school governance and its implementation and asses the most common leadership styles of the school principals in Croatia. Research findings will be used in advocacy and policy change, as well as Principals' Leadership Academy (PLA) program development. Further, findings will be base for future policy monitoring and improvements. (2) the Principals' Leadership Academy composed out of four meetings and the final - follow up conference. As mentioned, the PLA will build on research findings, but also will provide principals with inputs from international experts, good practices and trainings. Overall, 15 principals from schools of action's areas will attend the PLA. (3) Leadership Program of support and monitoring program that

the core values of NEPC. Education for sustainability is a very beneficial overarching topic that incorporates most of the issues that NEPC has been engaged with in the past, such as equity in education, education of ethnic and other minorities, and corruption in education. This topic also covers issues that the network has been shifting its interest to, such as migration and education, privatization in education, and the impact of poverty on education. Moreover, education for sustainability is not only about academic content but also has serious pedagogical implications that allow teaching for (and through) social and cooperative learning, participation, and activism.

will build their leadership skills and support their involvement in good governance processes. Overall, 48 teachers will go through the programme.

Analysis

The idea of this project is to promote good governance. In its substance, this project relies on collaboration between various school actors at the school level and enchases their communication and leadership skills. Since in Croatia school principals are usually the most important and the most powerful entities that often neglect other school bodies, it was necessary to tackle this issue. The project's aim was to empower teachers and other interested stakeholders to take a part in school governance. Moreover, a parallel can be drown with the changes in the understanding of the policymaking. Before recently, the state was the absolute

decision-maker with a great power of deciding how will public policies look like. Even though with the emergence of governance perspective and by realizing all benefits of participatory policy-making this has been changing, at the school level in Croatia this is still the case. The principles are often perceived as the absolutists.

NEPC and Forum for Freedom in Education with this project wanted to stimulate school democracy and to multiply interested stakeholders in schools willing to take a share in school governance. NEPC, as seen from this project argues in favor of shared power distribution because it believes that complex issues in education can be solved better if consulted with more actors. Furthermore, school education policy should esteem governance point of view where principles are seen as facilitators who steer the process of school management.

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