Participatory Approach to Education Policy Development: Case Study of the U.S Department of Education Teacher Ambassador Fellowship Program

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Abstract

In the knowledge economy of the 21st century in which human capital has become the critical competitive advantage, countries across globe are in a scramble to reform their national education policies to meet this new challenge. This poster will provide information about the unique challenge faced by the United States in forging a national educational policy consensus given its horizontal, decentralized, and pluralistic national educational structure in which the locus of control rests largely at the state and local levels. The poster will present key components of a participatory policy-making model adopted by the U.S. Department of Education to bring teachers into the educational policymaking process. The purpose of the poster is to present information about the U.S. Department of Education Teacher Ambassador Fellowship Program (TAF), which is designed to enable outstanding teachers to learn about and bring their expertise to the national dialogue about education and in turn to facilitate the learning and input of other educators into education policy (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The mission of the TAF program is to improve education for students by involving teachers in national education policy. Now in its second year, the Teacher Ambassador Fellow program has the following objectives:

1. Create a community of teacher leaders who share expertise and collaborate with policymakers and leaders in the federal government on national education issues.
2. Involve teachers in developing policies that affect the classroom.
3. Expand teacher leadership at the national, state, and local levels.

The poster will be based on a qualitative survey interviews with key policy makers in the U.S. Department of Education and the thirty-eight past and present teacher ambassador fellows. The poster will present the following information:

1. The policy-making process in the U.S Department of Education.
2. The selection and organizational framework for the fellowship
3. The perceptions of respondents (policy makers and fellows) about the benefits of the fellowship to the U.S. educational policy making process.
4. The constraints to implementing a participatory approach to national education policy making.

5. Implications for agricultural and extension education.

The poster will provide the following recommendations and implications for agricultural and extension education:

1. Involving clientele in the policy making process is an essential factor in ensuring organizational effectiveness and to the delivery of demand-driven services.

2. Agricultural and extension education programs will be successful to the extent that clientele are involved in all stages of policy development and program development and implementation.

3. Lesson learned from the fellowship will shared with national policy makers and practitioners in the field of international agricultural and extension education.

**Keywords:** Policy; Participatory Policy-making model; Human Capital; Teacher Ambassador