

## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

### Participatory Development: A Promise Revisited

States around the world continue to delegate to localities the task of educating their own populations. This purported change in the locus of control of educational systems may be attributed to increasing external and internal political pressure to respond to local educational needs, as well as diminishing educational resources from central governments. It is meant to make education more relevant to local needs and enable communities to have more power and control over their lives. As policies encouraging decentralization have proliferated throughout the world and escalated into a reform epidemic, many scholars have questioned whether the promises that fueled participatory processes have been kept. In other words, have decentralized education systems translated into empowerment and community involvement in decision making? Who is actually participating, and who is not? How do different communities define 'participation'? In the context of decentralization, what factors contribute to local participation? What kinds of decision-making processes are communities now involved in, as a result of decentralization?

Authors such as Ilan Kapoor (2002) have extended the dialogue on participatory development by criticizing the lack of theoretical grounding for participatory methods that enable many of the pitfalls already discussed in the literature. As diverse answers to the questions above are brought to the fore, it is critical that we continue to look more closely at the theories and methods related to participatory development and question its more common assumptions. In response to Kapoor and Robert Chambers' work, this issue of CICE presents diverse perspectives, research findings, and commentaries concerning the participatory development discourse.

#### References

Kapoor, I. (2002). The devil's in the theory: A critical assessment of Robert Chamber's work on participatory development. *Third World Quarterly*, 23(1), 101-117.