Enhancing Community Development through Community Education

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Abstract

This study is aimed at highlighting the place of community education in the success of community development programmes and projects. The failure or inability of the government to adequately meets the development needs in the communities' calls for alternative approach. The concepts of community, education, community development and community education were fully examined. The various ways community education could enhance community development were also discussed. The study also proffered some recommendations which if followed will place the practice of community development in the right footing.

1. Introduction

Community development requires broad community involvement, if the goals of its programmes and projects must be achieved. The underlining principle in successful community activity rests on the idea that people should improve their social and economic conditions, as much as possible, through their own efforts. This demands the participation of community members in whatever programme and project designed to improve their welfare in the community.

Citizen participation in community development programmes and projects can only be assured where the interest of the people is sufficiently stimulated, and this can be achieved through community education. Community education arouses the enthusiasm and whole hearted involvement of the members of the community.

Since community development is a people-centered process, the goals of it's programmes and projects are usually geared towards the attainment of felt needs and the general welfare of the community members. To ensure progress in any community development programme or project, citizen's or community education is essential. For better understanding, there is need to examine all related concepts (Community, Education, Community Development, and Community education).

2. Concept of Community

The term community is a relative and cannot be subjected to any definite definition. Different people have defined community in different way. Social philosophers like Aristotle have tried endlessly to find an all inclusive and unequivocal definition for the term "community," but could not reach any scholastic accord in their endeavors.

Attempt on the concept of community reveals the emergence of two ideas. The common sense idea, and the social science idea of community. The common-sense idea sees community as a place where people live and work, associated with place and name having a geographical location. It is also perceived as a sanctum where more of the basic needs of the ordinary citizen are served with ease. It is also a local area in which people grow to perceive common needs and problems as well as acquire a sense of identity and a common set of objectives (Anyanwu 2002:28).

The social science idea of community portrays the community as a population group which has developed a degree of social consciousness and is working together as one body to satisfy common needs. The social science idea of community was first made public in the definition of (Galpin 1915).

Bola and Bello (1987) presented community as "a territorially bound social system within which people live in harmony, love, intimacy, and share common social economic and culture characteristics".

Lindeman (1954) viewed community as "any process of social interaction which gives rise to more intensive or more extensive attitude, which enhances co-operation, collaboration and unification". Trecker and Trecker (1979) quoting the random house Dictionary, defined community as;

> *A social group of any size whose members residence in specific locality,*
> *share government and have a common cultural and historical heritage, a*

> *social group having common characteristics or interests and perceiving*
> *itself as distinct in some respect from the large group* within which it exist.

According to Bello and Bola (1987), a community must fulfill four distinct purposes which are survival, self-fulfillment, display the nature of love throughout life and the enhancement of human culture.

3. Concept of Education

Understanding the concept of education will give us an insight into the nature of community education. The term "education" looks very simple and common, yet very complex. The attainment of education involves tasks, goals and processes (Nzeneri 2002:4). Wells (1929) in Anyanwu (2002:79) sees education as "the preparation of individuals for the community.

Rusk (1957) defines education as a process through which we foster in the individual desirable and relevant changes in behaviors and attitude. It is defined as any planned series of incidents, having humanistic basis and directed towards the participants' learning and understanding (Javis 1986).

Since life is not compartmentalized, education involves integrated experience. To Fufunwa (1973) education involves a combination of physical, intellectual training with character building, and manual activity. According to Akafor (1987) education embraces all experiences through which an individual acquires knowledge or ideas, develops his intellect and strengthens his will. Oduaran (1991) defines education using three basic criteria;

1) Education implies the transmission of what is worth while to those who become committed to it.

2) Education must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective which is not inert.

3) Education at least rules out some procedure of transmission on the grounds that they lack willingness and voluntariness on the part of the learner.

4. Concept of Community Development

The term community development has been viewed by many authors in several ways, each of them presenting his definition to reflect his educational background and profession. However, community development is an elusive concept, hence the various views and definitions of the concept. A number of reasons account for this.

In the first place, the concept (community development) does not have the same meaning to all those who make use of the term.

Secondly, community development is multi-sectional in nature. It involves a number of sectors ranging from literacy, development, youth development, agricultural development etc.

Thirdly, there is the problem of interpretation with the idea of community itself. Community development, though not generally new, yet its application in modern times, appears new and has its ancestry as a union of community, organization and economic development (Sanders 1968). The term community development first came into prominence officially at the British colonial offices initiatives in 1948, through the activities of the social welfare officers in attempt to stimulate self-help to improve health, nutrition and general community welfare. Its major objectives was to solve problems but this later changed from social to community development resulting to communities embarking on building of schools and constructing roads and bridges.

Nelson (1962) defines community development as "the process involved in the education of members to take deliberate action for community change, the nature of which is determined by them in terms of their own value system". To Nelson, social change should be man's cherished aspiration. In a related view, Biddle and Biddle (1988) describes community development as;

> *a process of social action in which the people of a community organize*
> *themselves for planning and action. Defines their common and individual*
> *needs and problem…, execute these plans with maximum reliance upon*
> *community resources and supplement these resources when necessary with*
> *services and materials from Government and non government agencies*
> *outside the Community.*

Mezirow (1967) had earlier argued that community development is "a planned and organized effort to assist individuals to acquire the attitudes, skills and concepts required for their democratic participation in the provision of effective solution to a wide range of community problems in order of priority".

In the same direction, the United Nations Organizations viewed community development as:

A process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and enable them contribute fully to national progress.

Community development Seeks to increase the capacity, confidence and self-reliance of community members so that they can take charge of their own future.

5. Concept of Community Education

Fletcher (1980) defined community education as "a process of commitment to the education and leisure of all ages through local participation in setting priority, sharing resources and the study of circumstance". Community education is an initiation into the values of the society. It is also the community's means of nurturing personal growth and a means through which cultural heritage is transmitted.

In the light of community education, emphasis is not only on the formal schooling but the informal which takes place at home and other social institution. Personal growth occurs through a series of learning process, leading to the development of certain capacities, physical, intellectual and moral, which enables the individuals to function as productive and effective members of the society.   Informal aspect of education is concerned with training and skill acquisition which is relevant to adults and youths. The central focus of this form of education is in the area of job and skill orientation, political and cultural participation, social and economic responsibilities; acquisition and exhibition of spiritual and moral values. All these constitutes life activities of adults and youths, which according to Okodudu (1998) are actors in community development scene. Community education is for socialization, building in people, communal spirit and respect for one another.

Minzey and le Tarte (1972) presented community education as

A philosophical concept which serves the entire community by providing for all of the educational needs of all of it's community members. It uses the local school to serve as the catalyst for bringing community resources to bear on community problems in an effort to develop a positive sense of community, improve community living and develop the community process towards self actualizations.

They further pointed out that the ultimate goals of community education is to develop the process by which members of a community learn to work together to identify problems and seek solutions to the problems.

The Canadian association for community education in Anyanwu (2002:84) defined community education as "a process whereby learning is used for individual community and global betterment", characterized by;

a)   The integrated involvement of people of all ages

b)   The use of community learning resources and research to bring about community change.

c)   The recognition that people can learn through with and from each other to create a better world.

6. Community Education and Community Development

A critical analysis of the definitions of community education, reveals distinct elements which are also in the definition of community development as given by Nzeneri (1995:50) thus, community development is self-help and hard work freely undertaken by youths and adults through the inspired vision for better standard of living for the community as a group. This implies a process whereby community members, individually and collectively learn to help themselves and to improve their lives.

The inspiration, initiatives, involvement and commitment which characterized successful community development programmes and projects are not isolated from the benefits of community education. Community education aims at raising the consciousness of members of a community, enhancing their initiatives in solving problems through the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination. The success of community development programmes and projects lies to a great extent on the collaboration of all segments of the community and the active participation of all concerned. According to Mousnsen (1993);

If we work together, may be, we can even make the government to listen to us. If we are organized, if we can come up with resolution, we can publish them in news papers and radio… then we can begin to fight for our own needs.

From this submission, we see the need for enlightenment and conscientization. For community development to succeed, enlightenment of members of the community and groups within the community is very necessary. This enlightenment will only be possible through community education, hence the relevance of community education in the success of community development programmes and projects.

The embedded spirit in community education is the spirit of oneness which eventually raises the consciousness of the people towards the standard of living of their community. Community education will essentially help people to put off their self-interest and replace them with community interest thereby helping the community to be progressive. The spirit of working together as one body is further stressed by Anyanwu (1994), he says "we must either live together and remain as one people, or we disintegrate and become nobody". The essence of community education therefore, is to educate people to be useful members of the community and contribute to the development of the community. To do this, community education has to manifest itself as "self-reliant process, democratic practice, a cultural artifact, an educational organ and an organizational model" (Anyanwu 1994). The holistic approach to life is being fostered by community education in the communities, hence, a useful vehicle in promoting the development of poverty-free society. It also provides avenue for the various aspects of the community such as agriculture, health, nutrition, improvement of family life, an ideology which synchronizes with the objectives of community development.

For any community to positively change, community education must devise a method of enlightenment that will help people to cope with the challenges of change, creating in members of the communities, the sense of human but without exploitation. Crises occur in the community due to the fact that real sense of community is lacking. Every community should plan for and promote community education directed towards the building of a free for all community which invariably will necessitate participation which will result to progressiveness.

Community education enhances community development by sharpening citizens to be patriotic, to inculcate love for the community and involvement in the establishment of a progressive community. Community education supports community development to equip people that will of themselves contribute to the building of a community, based on the principle of communal living. Communities, whose people are liberated from various forms of domination, will develop in itself the spirit of self-reliance.

Community education seeks to attain human liberation through individual efforts for self-reliance and to develop individuals who will be willing to take on active part in reviving the society. It also aims at promoting understanding of the masses, unifying them with their actions for freedom, enabling them to be ready to dedicate themselves to the course of community revitalization.

Since community education refers to educational activities organized by or in collaboration with the community to meet its education and development needs, using resources in the community including its institutions; it is then essential that it must seek to involve the community in determining the educational activities relevant to its needs.

7. Conclusion

If there is any time we need community education it is now. Because the society is changing rapidly, new demands are emerging this call for new types of education for social effectiveness. In the complex society of today, it is no longer easy or even possible to operate effectively in ignorance and in a close circuit. People no longer live happily with problems in their immediate environment without making inputs for its improvement. Community education is a basic education for livelihood. It calls for adjustments and the acquisition of new habits, attitudes and values. With community education, communities will be librated from retrogressive tradition, poverty and diseases, as it seeks to raise the people's standard of living, and encourages social efficiency in community and national life.

8. Recommendation

To enhance community development through community education in communities, the following recommendations are made:

1) There should be increased emphasis on citizen's/community education through informal settings.

2) Educational planners and Policy makers should incorporate community education into the school system at all levels, it should go beyond the frontiers of voluntary organizations like "man o war".

3) Curriculum designers should design practical oriented courses that will inculcate in the citizenry, the sense of patriotism and selflessness.

4) At tertiary level, community education shall be made compulsory, to prepare the grandaunts to be better leaders and patriotic citizens.

5)   Apart from communities recognizing their patriotic members, by giving them titles, the government at the state and local levels should identify such persons and encourage them.

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