



ACHIEVING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COOPERATIVES AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND MOBILIZATION

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Abstract

This paper explores the critical role of cooperative and community education in fostering sustainable community development. It argues that effective mobilization of community members, through organized cooperative efforts, can significantly enhance social capital, improve resource management, and stimulate local economies. The study highlights various models of community education that empower individuals by equipping them with necessary skills and knowledge to actively participate in collaborative initiatives. By analyzing case studies and best practices from diverse communities, the research identifies key strategies for promoting engagement and cooperation, including participatory learning, capacity building, and advocacy. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes the importance of inclusive approaches that consider the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts of communities. The findings suggest that intentional and strategic cooperation, rooted in education and community mobilization, can lead to more resilient, equitable, and thriving communities. This work advocates for policy frameworks that support cooperative models and educational programs as vital components of holistic community development strategies.

Introduction

The development of societies, communities and villages are known to be achieved through concerted efforts of the members and citizens of the societies through conscious and voluntary self-help activities in a co-operative spirit. Achievements in most societies is known to have been achieved through co-operatives even before colonial incursion into the shores of Africa, communities. self-help activities to develop their rural communities. In Nigeria today, we can still point to most projects or facilities that were achieved through self-help activities by cooperatives.

Community Development is actually the movement to promote voluntary participation of the people themselves in the efforts (co-operative spirit) aimed at improving economic, social and physical conditions in the community to raise their standards of living. Community development, entails an integrated approach in transforming the lives of the members of community. This approach is a process and method in adult education aimed at enabling community members to initiate projects by and for themselves. As a method in adult education, it involves the approach of adult learning through community education which enables the effective mobilization of all community members who are adult by criteria given, participate in the programmes of development. The mobilization process is achieved through community education which must be organized for the development of human potentials and participation in the local decision making process (Kerensky 1989).

This definition according to Kerensky assumes equality regardless of race, class or gender to increase participation of the community members in providing projects for the citizens. The idea is



that, with citizens participation in education, other community problems may be identified and addressed accordingly.

The aim of community development according to Anyanwu (1981) cited in Beshel, and Anthony (2019) includes to educate and motivate people for self-help; to develop responsible local leadership; to inculcate among the members of rural communities a sense of citizenship; to initiate self-generative, self-sustaining and, an enduring process of growth achieved through community enlightenment self-help activities and education. Mobilization at this level is a key to achieving defined goals and objectives of the community.

The Concept of Community

The international dictionary of Adult and Continuing Education gives various meaning of community which include: a group of people who either live or work together in any geographical area in which people live, an educational activity beyond the walls of educational institution, an ideal arrangement of people living and working in harmony. Hillery (1955) as cited by Pophin (1982) defines a community as “consisting of persons in a social interaction within a geographic area and having one or more additional common ties. This means that community members have a set of shared behaviour expectations such as common values, beliefs, moral; and norms to which individual must conform

Odokara (1973) cited in Betiang (2017) highlighted the basic features of a community to include;

- i.* a population aggregate
- ii.* inhabiting a delimit able territory
- iii.* sharing in historical heritage
- iv.* processing a set of basic service institution
- v.* participating in a common mode of life
- vi.* conscious of its unity and
- vii.* able to act in a corporate way.

It is also pertinent to explain who an adult is since a community is made up of people who live together. An adult is a person who has attained certain criteria which includes’

1. Biological: this suggests the concept of individual of adulthood determined by the physical look of the person and has undergone biological development of certain features such as enlargement of breast, broadening of shoulders change in voice for boys, onset of menses for girls etc.
2. Chronological: This suggest the concept based on age and wealth of experience which make him more useful to both himself and his society. The age tend to vary from society to society but normally between 15 and 21 years
3. Historical: The ability of a person to recount past important experiences and history vividly
4. Social: The ability of an individual to rise to the challenges of his social responsibilities including those of a worker, parent, a friend, an association member, a spouse, a citizen, and a neighbor which makes the adult person responsible and to take part in community development projects

Community Development

Community development is an organized action in which people in the community organize themselves for planning and action, define their own common and individual problems and needs, make group and individual plans to meet their needs and resolve their problem, and execute their plans with maximum reliance on the community resources. (Ezimah 2004). United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines community development as the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental activities to improve the economic, cultural and social conditions in the communities. To Mezirow (2010), community development process is in essence, a planned and organized effort to assist individuals to acquire the attitudes, skills and concepts required



for their democratic participation in the effective solutions of as wide a range of community improvement problems as possible in an order of priority determined by their increasing level of competence. Community development is at times seen as a matter of projects producing physical facilities such as roads, water supply, clinics, health centers etc. On the other hand, community development as a process suggest a personal and social growth involving the introduction of new ideas, skills, and the infusion of new attitudes and behaviour. To an adult educator, community development is a call for action and a process of problem solving for filling voids, in knowledge and understanding of the adult and his environment.

Odokara (1973) as cited in Baio and Tawo (2005) defines community development as “a process which includes a set of interrelated activities like agriculture, economic, political, social, educational, industries etc. of organizations and information flows”. According to Monoz and Garcia-Blanco (1989), cited in Akamkpa, Beshel and Eyarm (2012) a community is the configuration of people we live next to, as well as of people with whom we share deep common bonds; work, live an ideology, artistic talent, a religion, a culture, a sexual preference, a struggle etc. The needs and common bonds brings about the involvement of people in achieving specified goals thus known as community education

Anyawu (1967) cited in Beshel, Asor, and Erim (2014) defines community development as being tied up with such ideas as ultimate control by the people, a substantial degree of freedom by individuals and groups. This means that people are given the opportunity to identify their "felt need", deal with their problems and learn from their problems. These automatically calls for understanding of the peculiarities leading to acquisition of knowledge and skills which will enable them act accordingly in finding answers to the problems, through self-help approach, (cooperative spirit) and community education.

Features of Community Development

The features of community developments as pointed out by Erim, Akpama and Beshel (2016) are;

1. Total community/felt need: concerned with improving the quality of lives of the people
 2. Initiation: The need to initiate such changes by embarking on community development programmes must come from within (community participation)
 3. Educational purpose: While initiating such programmes of development, members must be educated on the benefits of embarking on such actions.
 4. Fullest participation: Every community member must participate fully and actively.
- From these features and essence, community development and community education are interrelated. For instance, while the members of any given community are pooling their resources to better their lot, they are at the same time being educated to see the justification for engaging in community development activities generally. According to Lowe (1975) community development is a highly effective form of education, because it not only forces people to learn, but enables them to apply what they learn to actual conditions. It has the advantage of further making people aware that their standard of living does not solely depend upon the earning power but upon the quality of the amenities made available through the resources of the local community.

Dore and Zoe (1981), defines community development as a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community through intentional qualified and target direct changes or a manipulation mechanism of social control which obscures the true nature and cause of under-development. Community development in essence becomes a function of people who live together in a geographic area joining hands to provide amenities such as water, roads health facilities etc. to better the standard of their living.

Community Education

Like every other concept in Education, community Education has different meaning to different people. Many activities are often erroneously labelled as Community Education, while several other



agencies and individuals have promoted Community Education as activities which fall short of the tenets of its operation. There is also the misconception between the concept and programmes of Community Education. The programmes as stated by Anyanwu (2002) are the activities related to the solutions of specific Community needs. These include such programmes as, 'An awareness programme for progress of the Community, a women's education training programmes, and a development leadership capacities programme; or empowerment programmes aimed at tackling specific problems of a Community. Community Education is all-embracing conceptual base. It is not only its programmes, but constitutes the most important aspects of Community Education. What is therefore fundamental to the concept is the relationship between the process and the programmes which in the middle of it lies cooperation and mobilization as the propelling force that brings both to fruitfulness.

Having these clarification to some extent, it is therefore pertinent to define the term 'Community Education. Fletcher (1980) suggest a definition of Community Education as "a process and commitment to the education and leisure of all ages through local participation in setting priorities, sharing resources and the study circumstances" Anyanwu (2002) maintain that the roles of Community Education extends from the rather traditional idea of teaching children to the broader concept of identifying the needs, problems and wants of Communities and developing facilities and programmes for the improvement of the whole community. Furthermore, Minzey and Le Tarte (1972) cited in Asor, Erim and Beshel (2017) look at Community Education as "a philosophical concept which serves the entire community by providing for all the educational needs of all its community members. It uses the local school to serve as the catalyst to bring community resources to bear on community problems in an effect to develop a positive sense of community, improve community process towards the end of self-actualization". They maintain that the ultimate goal 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 these problems (cooperation). It is through this process that an ongoing procedure is established for working together on all community issues.

The fact in this definition lies in the recognition of the basic community education which include, citizen involvement, sharing of ideas through decision-making and total community participation in the education enterprise.

The Canadian Association for Community Education has to a large extent provided what is regarded as an all-embracing acceptable definition of the concept when it states that, Community Education is "a process whereby learning is used for individual, community and global betterment. It is characterized by;

- a. The integrated involvement of all ages;
- b. The use of Community learning resources and research to bring about community change; and
- c. The recognition that people can learn through, with, and from each other to create a better world"

This definition lays emphasis on the need for people to realize that they can and must play a part in the determination of the direction of their lives.

From the foregoing it is therefore pertinent to understand that it is only when people are properly guided and come to understand their individual and collective needs that they can be effectively mobilized to take actions that can bring about changes in their lives and the lives of the community members. Self-help is the driver towards achieving community well-being in all ramification

Cooperative and Community Development

Cooperative and community development are the oldest form of African traditional or indigenous education. Both arose as a result of the realization of the fact that man cannot live nor achieve his goals in life alone. This make the traditional African man in his local community to begin to



cooperate and depend on each other to achieve his purpose in life in such area as farm work, building of houses, village halls, collective clearing of path ways to their farms, streams and adjourning villages, understanding environmental work to keep their compounds save from diseases and pest, reptiles and insects infestation. Beshel, Asor and Erim (2014).

Infact, cooperative spirit of self-help is believed to be the bedrock of survival I the traditional African society. From the primitive to the present day; there is the consciousness of man to rise above the limitations of traditional and the paucity of need for material things and the hazards within the community. Hence man has always being in search of things to do in a collective fashion to overcome the myriad of problems that stirs him in his face daily. This automatically drove the local members of the community to want to aspire to overcome their problems faster in their society, economic and political growth through cooperative self-help method in all their endeavours. Beshel and Anthony (2019).

In essence, cooperative or cooperation denotes the coming together of a group of persons for the purpose of working together in mutual trust and in self-help spirit towards achieving goals and objectives which cannot be easily achieved by one person alone. It is the joining of hands and working together to get things done in the community in a cheaper, faster and collective way for the benefit of the individual and the community at large. Beshel (2016) stated that cooperation utilizes the various groups in the communities such as the Age grades, Youths organizations, Women Association and men to achieve community projects for effective development.

The Concept of Mobilization

The mobilization of people for effective participation in development programmes is a critical factor with which the goal of any development plan must be achieved. To ensure effective mobilization, the participation of people whose unpleasant living conditions is required must be part of the development programmes which are meant to alleviate their plight.

Mobilization is seen by Beshel (2016) as the process through which people increase their level of awareness of certain problems in the community with a view of achieving solutions to them. Anyawu (1992) cited in Akpama (2010) states firmly that mobilization creates a sense of urgency in the action to be taken. It prepares and conditions the minds of the people towards the achievement of success. To him, the mobilization approach for community development entails the pulling together of the human and material resources of a people in measure designed for their betterment in their communities. To Akimpelu (1988) it is an essential ingredient in the conception and implementation of any programme tailored towards community development.

Anyanwu (1992) cited in Akpama (2010) asserts that mobilization creates a sense of urgency in the action to be taken. It prepares and conditions the minds of the people towards the achievement of success.

Effective mobilization of people for grassroot development is necessary. The mobilization process also entails a good communication relationship between the adult facilitator and the community people. The communication could be grouped or mass and carried through the various media such as;

Age grade: The leaders of each age grade could employ any punitive or disciplinary measures to ensure that it members compiled when community projects arise.

Town criers: They carry relevant information which educate the individual and bother on development programmes.

Public address system: Loud speakers could be mounted on mobile vans to enlighten the citizens about the objectives and potential benefits derivable from the implementation and involvement in community development programmes.

Printed media: Newspaper and hand bills could be employed to disseminate information about a particular projects and the need for people to take active part in its speedy implementation.



Electronic media: The radio and television are also means of educating people. Youth clubs and women associations: These are avenues for effective mobilization of people for projects implementation. House to house visitation: Visiting of people in their homes help sensitize them about the need to contribute towards developmental projects implementation. These sensitization enable people know that they will all benefit from the projects.

These forms of mobilization media enable community education to be possible, thereby erasing in individual minds that their participation in community developmental projects is for other people's benefits. In essence cooperation paves way for effective mobilization of the community members, for a robust integrated community projects for the development of the communities.

Essence of mobilization of people towards participation in development programmes Akpama (2000) cited in Beshel (2017) asserts that effective mobilization of the citizenry has implications for active participation, implementation and completion of such development programmes. The achievement of the programme objective is determined by the holistic mobilization of the people. Mobilization here is pertinent because its purpose is to increase the level of awareness of people about the obligations and potential benefits derivable from the programme.

Anyanwu (1981) cited in Akpama (2000) and Beshel (2017), states that mobilization should transform the members of the community into effective and active citizens. It should equip them with values and attitudes, which are conducive to their general acceptance of the community as their primary motherland. Also, it largely should shape their attitude which should enable them participate positively in the decision making process of the community and scrutinize effectively the performance affairs.

Furthermore, the active involvement of the people in solving their own problem helps them to evolve a generally positive attitude to life, which is forward looking, and to shun the old habits and commitments, which are detrimental to the growth of the community. The people must see the need to cooperate with each other to make things happen in their community.

It should as well free all members of the community from a feeling of inferiority, and a tendency to depreciate things, which are essentially indigenous, and this will increase their level of self-relevance.

Mobilization also obliterates ignorance, disease, Squalor or superficial consciousness which enhances self-development mentally, morally and physically.

Okora (1999) cited in Beshel, Asor and Erim (2014), also maintains that community cooperation and mobilization serves as a veritable tool for mobilizing both the elitist class and other existing development associations such as age grades, and social clubs for a robust community efforts towards project development.

Anyanwu (1992: 221) stated that the active participation or involvement of people in development programmes which of course is the crux of mobilization has the under listed merits.

1. It enables the people to learn to help themselves and grow in the process.
2. It enables the people for them to define and determine their own objectives.
3. It enables them to identify their needs and work towards the satisfaction of such needs.
4. It helps them to use their resources to execute their plans and evaluate their results
5. It helps them to define new goals and to formulate new ways and means of achieving them
6. It enables them to view situations comparatively other than their own.
7. It enables them to appreciate the need to change towards better life and their capacity for effecting such change through their purposive actions.
8. It gives them the deliberate intent to study and act in order to bring under control such limiting circumstances of life as poor education, poor housing, ill health, poverty, inadequate employment and improvised environment.
9. It helps the people to make their change for better living more significant and meaningful by enhancing their control of the change through popular involvement in the change process.
10. It enables them to see the self-imposed change as more meaningful, more permanent and better than any change imposed from outside, no matter how well intended.



Achieving community development through cooperatives/community education and mobilization

In order for community development to be possible, community education must be organized for members of the community. The education rendered is the functional literacy education aimed to develop in an individual existing skill in social, political, economic or vocational aspect. It expands the consciousness and horizon of man, it increase man thinking power, liberate man from the shackles of ignorance and independence. The minds of the people must be educated to ensure the development of their cultural, morals, standard of living, and the environment

According to Anyawu (1981) cited in Beshel (2016) mobilization must transform the members of the community into effective and active citizens. It must equip them with values and attitudes which are conducive to their general acceptance of the community as their primary mother land.

A combination of community education and cooperative spirit should shape their attitude which should enable them participate positively in the decision making process of the community and scrutinize effectively the performance of their affairs which to a greater extent is to bring about the improvement in their standard of living. Again, the active involvement of the people in solving their own problem helps them to also build a generally positive attitude to life, which is forward looking and to shun the old habits and commitments which are detrimental to the growth of the community. Mobilization should free all members of the community from feeling of inferiority but increase their level self-help, self-reliance and self-esteem. Positive attitude should be encouraged and emphasized at all times for a better community living. Community education should increase their level of consciousness, thereby enhancing self-development, manpower development, improve health, family life and to protect the social amenities provided to them by the government, and other donor agencies and philanthropist.

Mobilization has become a veritable tool in community development because it enable them to identify their needs and work collectively towards the satisfaction of such needs, helps them to use their resources to execute their plans and evaluate their results, helps them define new goals and to formulate the ways and means of achieving them, enable them appreciate the need to wipe off poor education low employment and bring about improvement in their standard of living and the environment as a community.

Cooperation of the community members in every affairs or issues that concerns the progress of the community is the key to effective community development. Without cooperation and mutual agreement and trust, good leadership and commitment to the course of the general wellbeing of the community members, no meaning development can effectively take place. In all, cooperation is the key to ensuring effective community development.

Conclusion

It is true a truth that no meaningful development can be achieved without the cooperation of the members of the community in issues that needs to be addressed for the growth and progress of the community. The members of the community must identify and agree on what constitute their felt needs and with an understanding work towards tackling the issues with the support of the government and other donor agencies. Community education plays a greater role in training in skills and knowledge that will help them move ahead while mobilization for action toward self-reliance and self-position is a must at all times. It is therefore concluded that self-help spirit, cooperation, community education and effective mobilization are the main ingredient for a conducive and robust community living and therefore must be applied and taken seriously for a meaningful community transformation for the good and betterment of the members of the community.

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