

Achieving Sustainable Community Development Project through Community Education in Nigeria.

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Abstract

The most powerful and effective instrument of change and development in any society is education. Community education is therefore a key factor in determining the success of sustainable community development programmes. There should be placement of values before community development programmes be brought to members of communities. Maintenance culture must be imbibed before these programmes can be termed sustainable. Providing community development facilities (projects or programmes) to grassroots is not an answer in itself but how well these facilities can be maintained is the question. In view of the above, this paper seeks to address the essence of community education before community development programmes can be sustained. The paper explains the concept of community education and sustainable community development.

Keywords: Community Education, Sustainable Community Development, Instrument of change.

Introduction

Education being a continuous process from cradle to grave is the most important commodity to be possessed by any person. The acquisition of education is therefore crucial for the sustenance of a meaningful life. Basic Education provided to citizens will enhance delivery of other service like community development.

Every community has its own problems, needs and the dynamics for overcoming the problems or meeting the needs. The goal of self actualization cannot be reached without opening opportunities to all people in form of education. Thus, community education deals with important and urgent issues of the day in relation with the projects at hand.

The philosophy of community education is that there can be no genuine human up building be it social, economic or political development without concern for human values, personal culture and the expansion of peoples level of awareness about events going on around them. Education in this context serves to bring about a fundamental change in mans attitude and lifestyles. Through education, the individuals fulfils himself within the framework of his society. According to Ihejirika (2000) the more education an adult acquires, the more certain it is that he can participate voluntarily or be involved in developmental activities in his village. in his state and his nation.

Community Development Projects is said to be sustainable when they can serve the present and future generations effectively. In this study the essence of community education would be examined on how it has proved effective toward sustainable community development projects. This paper therefore focuses, on the relevance of community education in sustaining community development projects.

The paper seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- a. to highlight areas of emphasis on community education;
- b. to argue for community education as an instrument for people's empowerment ;
- c. to discuss the role of community education in sustainable community development and
- d. to state benefits accruing from community involvement in development.

Concept of Community Education

Community education according to Anyanwu(1982) is an educational process that encourages the utilization of all learning resources within the community for the purpose of mobilizing the community resources for its own development. Community education is therefore aimed at raising the consciousness, spreading understanding and providing necessary skills.(Ezimah 2004).

Oduaran (1994) citing Weaver defines community education as an attempt to marshal all the educational resources within the community to create a laboratory for management of human behaviour. Community education as a theoretical concept is a way of viewing education in the community and a systematic way of looking at people and their problems. It is based upon the premise that education can be made relevant to peoples needs and that the people affected by education should be involved in decisions about the programme. It assumes that education should have an impact upon the society it serves. It requires that all who are worthy of the name community educator are involved in all facets of the community at large.

Delargy as cited in Ezimah (2004) defines community education as “a process that identifies the communities educational needs, assesses available community resources and uses these resources to develop appropriate programmes and activities to meet the identified needs. Thomas as cited in Oduaran (1994) equated community education to a community school. According to him, community education is an attempt to devise an education practice which is based upon learning by doing fostering a belief that communities can help themselves, thus teaching the essential demands of democratic citizenship. Bearing in mind that education is a two way process in which teachers, adults, young people and children all play a part and learn from each other.

Weaver (1969) noted that the processes in community education are educational. Community education is seen as an element of community development”. He further defines community education as that kind of education established by, for and with the popular classes of the people according to their close interests. The international Community Education Association (1987) defined community education “as a process whereby learning is used for individual community and global betterment: The Board of Directors of the National Community Education Association in the United States of America had in (1968) proposed that community education be seen as:“ a comprehensive and dynamic approach to public education, a philosophy that covers all segments of education programming and directs the thrust of each of them towards the need of the community. Oduaran (1994) went further to cite Morcery and Le Tarke who considered that community education should be defined 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 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 the end of self actualization.

Amirize (2007) defines community education as a process of large scale or collective enlightenment, conscientization, socio-political awareness, mobilization and the inculcation of furthering values in all classes of people in society, both in urban and rural areas. Amirize (2004) sees community education as a crusade meant to improve and enhance personal awareness on the part of individuals and also the collective awareness of every adult member of the society. He further defined community education as an enlightenment programme that is quite necessary in developing nations when there is gross exploitation of under privileged community and minority groups. Community education can be defined summarily as a process of using educational means to meet developmental requirements.

Community Development Projects

Community projects in modern Nigeria are meant to provide not only the means of making life more tolerable and meaningful for the people, but also opportunities for people's empowerment, mass education, awakening, grassroots organization mobilization and collective actions towards self improvement (Amirize, 2004). Development projects are not always of structural or physical nature, but they can also include such arrangements as the creation of opportunities for people to interact, discuss, or address common problems and share some ideas and information which would facilitate the development of the people.

Development projects may be understood to mean any planned or deliberate programme of activity which can provide the support base to complement efforts of individuals to enhance their well-being and solve their peculiar problems. Definitely, planned programme of activities meant to facilitate human well-being would be of different kinds, according to the needs and problems which they are intended to address, as well as the peculiar nature of people that they are intended for.(Onyeozu,2007)

Sustainable Community Development

Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present generation of a particular country or community without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Ihejirika,2007) Its outcome becomes not only enduring but regenerative. The Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria limited (2010) defines sustainable Community Development as the strategic planning and application of available resources (material, funds and manpower) to improve capacity of community to generate and sustain socio economic projects health and quality of life.

Sustainable community Development in the International Journal for Rural Studies (2010) is the ability to make choices which respect the relationship between the three (Economy, Ecology and Equity).

Economy: Economic activities should serve the common good, be self renewing and build local assets and self reliance.

Ecology: Humans are part of nature which has its limits and communities are responsible for protecting and building natural assets.

Equity: This suggests full participation in activities, benefits and decision making of a society.

The journal further defines Sustainable Community Development to mean love and respect for land, care for and nurture the land so it can give back all we need to sustain life for ourselves and our future generation. The Northwest Policy Institute (2004) defines Sustainable Community Development as to foster commitments, to promote vitality, build resilience to stress, act as

steward and forge connection beyond the community. Sustainable community Development involves long term prospect for continuous existence.

In a sustainable community, resource consumption is balanced by resources assimilated by the ecosystem. The sustainability of a community is determined by the web of resources providing its food, fibre, water and energy needs and by the ability of natural system to process its waters. A community is unsustainable if it consumes resources faster than they can be renewed, produces more wastes than natural system can process or relies upon distance sources for its basic needs.

Areas of Emphasis in Community Education

(i) Environmental Education: Much emphasis has been placed on protection of the natural ecosystem, effective waste disposal and environmental sanitation. For the protection of physical environment, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) was established whose duties are to.

- a) Ensure that the solid wastes generated are properly disposed of ;
 - b) Ensure that the countries water bodies are not polluted by industries;
 - c) Ensure clean air by checking indiscriminate burning;
 - d) Minimize sound pollution especially for cities.
- (ii) Community/School Relations: There is need to foster some rapport between communities and school located in them. Through such relationships, cases of juvenile delinquencies and the current rampant incidents of cultism can be addressed by stakeholders. Without a closer co-operation between communities and schools, problems of youth restiveness would become more difficult to handle by individuals homes and schools alone. Once a programme in this direction is initiated, support and suggestion would come from various quarters.
- iii) Poverty Alleviation: This programme should bring about more equitable re-distribution of wealth and amenities, reduce extremes of wealth and poverty.
- iv) Workers Education Orientation: productivity among the Nigerian working masses, especially those in public services can be improved and the dignity of labour, job satisfaction and commitment to duty be cultivated. A programme along this line is quite important in view of poor attitude to work by the average worker.
- v. Agriculture: Agriculture constitutes a major part of community development education programmes because a greater percentage of the population, particularly in developing countries is involved in agricultural activities. It is a feeder activity which sustains other economic and social activities in a rural economy (Ezimah, 2004). Therefore, extension education is a programme aimed at enabling rural people improves their subsistence level. Extension education is a process concerned with giving the adult farmers theoretical knowledge and the techniques of raising better crops and animals in better or improved varieties. It covers agricultural extension, veterinary extension, home economics extension, nutrition extension and so on.
- vi. Health: Rural populations suffer from many diseases resulting from unhygienic conditions of living such as lack of drinking and bathing water facilities. To ensure better health for the people elementary health education is a necessity and this would include, personal and community hygiene, waste disposal, water and air pollution, drugs, over-crowding, living conditions and recreation as they affect human health, happiness and continued existence (Ezimah, 2004).

- vii. Domestic Science: A programme design for domestic science should include simple home economics, food hygiene, house-keeping, decoration, child care, sewing and nutrition, etc
- viii. Rural industries: These industries can take the form of handicrafts, cotton or small-scale industries which is aimed at promoting skill acquisition in such areas as, bakery, poultry, pottery, soap making, tailoring, weaving, metal work, canning, carving and other handicraft. They offer opportunities for self employment, rural based jobs and investment etc.
- ix. Housing: Self-help method for building houses are conventional in the rural areas, the programme should educate the people about house ventilation, roofing, designing and location which could be incorporated into the assessed learning needs of rural adults
- x. Cooperatives: According to Ezimah (2004), education about cooperatives either as social organizations or a socio-economic movement is to promote the formation of farmers marketing credit, consumers, housing, stock-breeding and fisheries cooperatives, etc. They are formed to help members to pool their resources together. Cooperatives foster self-help, local initiative and team work for the mobilization of communal effort for rural transformation. Other areas of community education include public amenities and recreation.

Community Education as an Instrument for People's Empowerment

A community of people would be helpless and powerless and liable to undue exploitation and abuses if the people are not awakened and enlightened about their rights and responsibilities.(Amirize,2007). One form of community education is the area of making people to know that power lies in members, which calls for the necessity of the people uniting and organizing themselves for power. In any community, the concept of people's empowerment demands as follows:

- i) Freedom and responsibility of individual to think and reason independently for themselves.
- ii) Freedom to make choices and decisions rationally, independently without external pressures.
- iii) Responsibility to examine issues critically and be convinced of their implications before embracing them.
- vi) Duty to fulfill personal individuals and civic obligations.
- v) Courage to stand for what is just, right and noble, and the courage to expose and oppose what or who seeks to destroy these values.
- vi) Right to expand personal consciousness and awareness far and wide, beyond immediate or major environment and interests

The Role of Community Education on Sustainable Community Development

Good quality education is an essential tool for achieving a more sustainable world. This was emphasized at the United Nations submit in Johannesburg in 2000 where the re-orientation of current education system was outlined as key to sustainable development. Education for sustainable development promotes the development of knowledge, skills, understanding values and actions required to create a sustainable world which ensures environmental protection and sustainability

Community Education is organized with the use of a corps of well trained field workers comprising organizers, supervisors and facilitators. It has specific contents, purposeful delivery

system and control as cited in Barikor (2005). Community education is aimed at raising consciousness, at spreading understanding and providing the necessary skills including the human and material resources for the social, economic political and cultural development of the community. Community Education is seen as an educational process that encourages the utilization of all learning resources within the community for the purpose of mobilizing the community resources for its own development.

The aim of education for sustainability is to enable people to improve on the quality of life without compromising the planet. It also aims to integrate development into all aspects and levels of learning. Community education should thus be broad in the curriculum in an inter disciplinary and holistic manner, share values that underpin sustainable development, promote critical thinking and problem solving employ variety of educational method, allow learners to participate in decision making, address local and global issues, then look to the future if sustainability must be achieved.(Amirize,2004). Community Education further equips community residents with basic number and literacy skills, yield high rate on investment thereby achieving productivity. In this process investment in human capital through community education become crucial for sustainable development. Community Education has therefore become a decisive tool to integrate local communities into the global economy. Community education will enable adults take advantage of developmental projects and make them better persons in the nearest future. Adults in these communities can therefore contribute to socio economic development of their various communities. The International Journal of Rural Studies(2010) highlights other roles played by community education in trying to promote sustainable community development. They include:

- Integrating science in its curriculum;
- Strengthening co-coordination between different levels and education;
- Mitigating information and knowledge gap between different parts of the world.
- Re-orienting education towards sustainable development;
- Increasing public awareness; and
- Promoting training

Benefits Occurring from Community Involvement in Development Efforts

It is now a settled issue that no government no matter how benevolent is capable of providing its communities and people with all the amenities to meet their requirements for comfort. That community can no longer wait for impossible miracles to happen have prompted they take pragmatic steps to find solutions to their own problems. What the government cannot do or will do for the communities are tackled by the communities themselves. Community education programmes have proved to be the only answer. The benefits or advantages accruing from community involvement in self help development efforts within the framework of sustainable development include the following:

- i.) Self sufficiency: The journey towards self sufficiency is deemed to have started when communities go about meeting the basic needs by initiating projects in relevant fields. This elicits the full and conscious participation of all members of the community in the planning and implementation stages and making the success of the project to produce the required amenity which is the concern of the people

The people learn to accept challenges and do all in their power to sustain the entire enterprise then take the credit for their efforts on the completion of the projects. Through this process, the communities and groups are proud to claim the project as truly theirs. They feel free to use it protect it and service it, this works like magic. Once successful,

adventurous spirit in community development is rekindled, the replicability of the projects or having to undertake other ventures with the same enthusiasm is never called to question. Generally it becomes a tradition in which the communities are responsive to solve their problems and to procuring their needs. Dependency syndrome is overcome and the people in their collective responsibility have become self directing and self reliant.

ii) Creation of National Wealth

All projects without exception involve the purchase of inputs (labour and materials). etc. This involves improved business activity as money changes hands. What is spent by the buyer is earned as income by the seller. The socio-economic community projects and investments are all income yielding ventures. Salaries are earned through the jobs created, which all contribute to national income and wealth.

iii) Creation of Employment Opportunities

Small scale industries such as the cottage industries, blacksmith, weaving carpentry etc also offer gainful jobs to community members. Every completed community project means some employment is created and gained. Projects handed over to state government for maintenance, e.g electricity and water supply projects, handed over to the ministry of public utilities, hospitals and health centers handed over to the ministry of Health, schools handed over to the schools management board. A number of the personnel are indigenes of the communities. Even where highly qualified personnel do not come from the localities, the unskilled personnel e.g. security guards, labourers and cleaners come from the communities.

iv) Improvement in Technical Education

Education has been described as the most viable industry. It is believed that with adequate professional training and preparation, indigenes can look for jobs elsewhere even outside the country.

v. Check on Rural Urban Migration

When community people are not engaged meaningfully in their development process, it causes a drift of people from rural areas to urban areas in search of “greener pastures”. This of course has adverse effects in both areas.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, it is pertinent to make the following recommendations

- i. Community education should be given more attention than it already has as a veritable tool for promoting sustainable community development
- ii. The frontiers of community education practice should be moved to the next level by allowing professionals to handle the process so as to achieve the desired results.
- iii. There should be increased capacity building in the communities to enable them initiate and participate actively in their development.
- vi. Local government authorities in the state should assist in providing some funds to rural communities under their jurisdiction to promote community education projects/programmes
- v. State government should consider their various rural communities in providing socio-economic infrastructures and employment opportunities.
- vi. Adult basic literacy programmes should be encouraged by community members and local government authorities so as to reduce illiteracy.

- vii. Community members should be effectively involved in project identification process and implementation to enhance sustainability.
- viii. Government should endeavour to consolidate on the gains of community education programmes by considering additional budgetary allocations and partnership with NGOs to promote the scheme, ensure sustainability and reduce poverty level.
- xi. Scope of community education programmes in terms of skill acquisition and training should be diversified to accommodate skills for small scale industry establishment.

Conclusion

This paper has revealed that community education has done well in its roles in promoting sustainable community development projects. Through community education adults and youths are equipped within the basic skills knowledge and attitudes to live in harmony in their communities. Furthermore, member of communities place high values on developmental projects when they are involved this sustainability is achieved.

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