

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AS A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of community education as a panacea for sustainable development in Nigeria. The objective is to determine the relevance of community education in contemporary Nigeria. This is achieved by examining the content and concept of community education, the concept of community and sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper concludes that community education is functional. It will promote development in our rural communities and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Community, Community Education, Panacea, Sustainable development.

Introduction

Community is a concept that has been defined in different authors and writers. Some defined it from the geopolitical point of view while others defined it depending on their area of specialization. Onyenemezu (2008) defines community as a territorially bounded social system within which people live in harmony, love, intimacy and share common, social economic and cultural characteristics.

The term community according to Wikipedia (2011) has two distinct meanings: one confined to living organisms used in biology and other referring to a group of human beings. In biological terms, a community is a group of interacting organisms sharing a populated environment with regards to humans, possibly living in close proximity, and often refers to as group that shares some common values, is attributed with social cohesion within a shared geographical location generally in social units larger than a household. The word can also refer to nationals; community or international community. In human communities, intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, risks, and a number of other conditions may be present and common, affecting the identity of participants and their degree of cohesiveness.

Hegmon (2002) notes that community is used in two ways in archeology, paralleling usage in other areas, the first is the informal definition of community as a place where people used to live. In this sense, it is synonymous with the concept of an ancient settlements, whether a hamlet, village, town or city. The second meaning is similar to usage of the term, in other social sciences. A community is a group of people living near one another who interact socially. Socially interaction on a small scale can be difficult to identify with archeological data. Most reconstructions of social communities by archeologists rely on the principle that social interaction is conditioned by physical distance. Anyanwu cited in Ewelum (2014) defines community as:

1. A population living within a legally established area;

2. A group of people living with a legally established area;
3. A group of people living in a given geographical environment.

Such groups may include: The family, the village, the town or clan and tribe, state or nation in which people share in common the basic conditions of life. Anyanwu further stated that, a community, therefore, is a social group, occupying a more or less defined geographical area, and based on the feelings people have for one another. Such feelings can accommodate the facility to identify a common sentiments, the ability to share a recognized way of life, and the possibly of living wholly within such groups. Anyanwu cited in Ewelum (2014) further states the six principal characteristics of community as:

1. Shared territory: a community occupies a territorial area, within which its members live and develop the ways of life that give the community the unique features that tend to makes its identity easily recognizable;
2. Shared belief; these are the beliefs which are nurtured and cherished by the people in the development of their common ideas, objectives, attitudes and values.
3. Shared bond of fellowship: this is a feature that distinguishes one people from another. It may be typified by the demand of obligations from citizens and conferment of benefits upon them;
4. Set standards or patterns of behaviour: the idea behind this characteristic is that a community arises from the living together of human beings, The psychological situation that ensues from such living together is that people perform mutual actions and reactions towards one another. Such interaction is incessant; and no citizen can wholly cut himself off from such social relations.
5. Common culture; this is the aggregate of social, ethical, intellectual, artistic, governmental and industrial attainments of the community, and by which it can be distinguished from any other community. it includes the ideals, traditions, customs, usages, institutions, association, and material objects characteristics of such community.
6. Common Administration: the preservation of culture of a community necessitates the establishment of a common administration for running the affairs of the community. This connotes the formulations of process, involving responsibility and accountability, for the effective regulation of the operations of such a community. It presupposes effective leadership and the reorganization of a chain or functionaries to get things done in the community.

A community may be defined as a group of people who live I and are traceable to a particular geographical, local area which may or may not be traceable to a common ancestry, who have identical cultural beliefs and traits developed over a long period of time as a result of their day to day interactions/communication (Clement, 2009). Similarly, Anyanwu (1991:1) defines a community as “a group of people living in one place, village or town and working for the good of the community”. Also, a community in the world of Polsby cited in Anyanwu (1991) is “a population in a legally established area”. In a traditional community, people live in the same locality and all the people can be traced to a common descent, the people share similar beliefs and use same language; they have strong bond of fellowship and homogenous set of standards and culture. Relationships are mostly informal.

According to Hornby (2010) defined community as a group of people living in the same place or having particular characteristics in common. Scott as cited in Ejeh et al (2016) on the other hand defined community as a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honesty with each other, whose relationship go deeper than their masked composure and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together and to delight in each other, make others conditions their own. For Ejeh et al (2016) sees a community as a group of people living together in one place or having a common religious race or culture.

According to Anyanwu cited in Clement (2009) maintains that a community is characterized by;

1. The existence of shared territory
2. The practice of some beliefs
3. The sharing of common bond of fellowship by its members
4. Existence of a common set of standards among members.
5. The existence of a common culture and
6. The use of a common administration to run the community's affairs.

Community Education according to Anyanwu cited in Oyebaniriji and Kajuru (2016) 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 people's needs and that the people affected by education should be involved in decisions about the programme. It assumes that education should have impact upon the society it serves. It requires that all who are worthy of the name community educators are involved in all facets of the community at large.

Delargy as cited in Ezimah (2004) defines community education as “a process the 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 as cited in Oyebaniji and Kejuru (2016) noted that the processes of a 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. Amirize (2007) defines community education as a process of large scale or collective enlightenment, concretization, socio-political awareness, mobilization and the inculcation of furthering values in all classes of people in the

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 groups. Community education can be defined summarily as a process of using educational means to meet developmental requirements. Community education is a philosophy and set of principles that advocate for the creation of life long learning opportunities for community members to become partners in addressing community needs. These community members include individuals, schools, businesses, public and private organisations (Alabama community Education Association (2018).

Community education is also a process of personal and community transformation, empowerment, challenges, social change and collective responsiveness (Wikipedia, 2011). It is community led reflecting and valuing the life experiences of individuals and their community. Through its ethos and holistic approach, community education builds the capacity of groups to engage in developing a social teaching and learning process that is creative, participative and needs based. Community education is grounded on the principles of justices, equality and inclusiveness.

Education is the process of training and developing the mental potentials, physical knowledge, skills and character of individuals through formal and informal schooling. It is equally regarded as an instrument per excellence in achieving national development (Ejeh, Okenjom, Ohizi-Uloko and Agbom, 2016). Education is an important tool for development and literacy is expected to be an instrument for better insight for both men and women to take advantage of development. Adult education is intended to help appreciate the better life in the various communities. Silkhondze (2000) refers to community development as an integral part of adult education for the fact that it is needed as a forum for acquiring knowledge through which adult members of the community will be exposed to the value, culture and norms of that society through community development. Development can only be possible if made up of a human centered process and this can be achieved through adult education programmes.

This is based on the fact that literacy is the development of human potentials, if an individual is educated, he is developed in intellect, in outlook, in skills and equipped to develop himself and others in economic and political spheres of life and community. The most common relationship is that community development serves as medium for teaching of adult education programmes for meaningful development to be achieved, as it is stated in the objectives of community development. Olaitan (2008) outlined the objectives as follows;

1. Provision of educational facilities
2. Provision of essential amenities such as feeder, roads, culverts, bridges, markets, stalls etc.
3. Provision of cooperative organization
4. Participation in environmental sanitation
5. Construction of dams and sinking of wells to provide water for both humans and animals.
6. Provision of health care facilities such as dispensaries, maternities and leprosy clinic.

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Definition of Development

People, societies, communities, nations, other living and nonliving things, etc., are either growing or developing or both growing and developing. According to Dara cited in Clement (2009) defines development as the multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions as well as acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty. In this definition, development is seen as positive alternations or changes in the quality of infrastructure, social amenities, health and educational institutions, people's welfare, attitudes and behaviours of people and general positive improvement in the quality of life of the people in a community.

Rogers (1992) see development as the process of changing attitude as well as providing the new knowledge and skills and understanding which development programmes uses is what is properly meant by education and training. Openjuru (2004) defines development as the general improvement in economic, social and political conditions of the whole society in terms of reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality, injustice, insecurity, ecological imbalance and unemployment within the context of growing economy. Development includes economic development measured by an increase in the GNP of a country, social development measurable in terms of good democratic practices. Development can also be defined in terms of physical needs and self-fulfillment.

The concept of sustainability

The term "sustainability" means the ability to sustain something. It is also a means of configuring civilization and human activities so that society, its members and its economies are able to meet their needs and express the greatest potential in the present, while preserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems, planning and acting for the ability to maintain these ideals or future generations. Sustainability can equally be described as the ability to continue a defined behaviour indefinitely. The three pillars of sustainability include; environment, economic and social. Again, sustainability is the enduring of systems and processes. The organizing principle for sustainability is known as sustainable development.

The concept of sustainable development

The term sustainable development appeared first in 1987 and was defined by the World Bank (2001) as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. In essence, sustainable development means meeting up the needs of the present generation without damaging the development achieved in the past. This type of development can be achieved by identifying the problems of people through joint discussion and carrying out need assessment in communities and solving the problems which can easily be achieved through adult and lifelong learning. Sustainable development is meant to stabilize the relationship between human activities and the natural world which does not reduce the prospect of the future generation to enjoy a quality of life at least as good as ours.

Sustainable development is not only about capabilities and access to resources but also about the environment we live and operate in. Achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria is dependent, qualitative and diversification of education. Education is the only instrument for sustainable development. No society can develop without giving good and proper education to its members since illiteracy results to ignorance, poverty, exclusion in decision-making, backwardness, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of issues which normally lead to social issues (Orji 2002).

Sustainable development also involves promoting pluralism and democratic participation, improving the quality of human life, reduction of hunger and betterment of nature so that generation to come will not be worse than us.

According to Nnabuo cited in Obidiegwu (2013), education for sustainable development is a lifelong process that leads to an informed society and involved citizens having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy and commitment to engage in responsible individuals and co-operative actions. It involves joint responsibility of the entire population in order to improve the quality of life today without damaging the planet of the future. It is clear that the world all over is witnessing diminishing resources, environmental problems and increasing inequality of opportunities. For these problems to be properly addressed, every adult citizen should be involved in adult and lifelong learning to acquire the capabilities of survival and progress in life now and years to come. In pursuit of the achievement of the sustainable development, the UN in 2015 set sustainable development goals (SDGs) to continue from 2016 where the millennium development goals (MDGs) stooped after 2015 that was set as target for achieving MDGs.

Conclusion

Sustainable development represents development that meets the needs of the present population without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. Therefore, development initiative is said to be sustainable when its objective is realized and the effects of its outcome becomes not only enduring but regenerative. Sustainable development must be seen in terms of change in growth process leading to a more enduring process of development for the future. This implies that the process of growth or development is a learning process. The people must have the understanding that the desired growth clamoured for must lead to meaningful growth processes for the future generations.

Recommendations

The form of education should have the norms, tradition and culture of community at heart.

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