

## **Community Education and Informed Participation in Community Development**

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### **Abstract**

This study set out to investigate the influence of community education on participation in community development project. All the Local Government Areas of Oyo State constituted the population. The study focused on thirteen randomly selected Local Government Areas of Oyo State. A total number of 2,000 participants were randomly selected in the Local Government Areas under study. The participants included Community Development Officers, Community Leaders, Adult Literacy Organizers and the beneficiaries of the Adult Literacy classes and Community Development Projects in the various centres in the selected local government areas of the state. The study adopted a survey design. A questionnaire tagged (CEFCP) Community Education for Citizen Participation was used to elicit responses from the participants. The data collected were analysed using chi-square statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The study established that community education helped get citizens properly sensitized and mobilized for effective participation in community development projects. Community education is thus seen to be participatory and transformative in nature, therefore, it is a democratic process. Community education is therefore recommended to government, voluntary and donor agencies as a catalyst for participating in community development projects.

### **Introduction**

The burden of facilitating development in all its ramifications cannot be placed solely on the government. Development should not be viewed from the angle of economic growth of increasing only the per capital income alone. If this is done, the people, especially the non-educated ones, will not join hands with government in bringing about development since the term may be meaningless to them. For sustainable development to take place, development has to be people-

centred and for this to be realized, there is need for the active involvement and participation of the target population. There is also the need for their empowerment to take measures to solve problems of underdevelopment. This empowerment and active involvement will be dictated by the measure of awareness of the target population. Being made aware and being involved will help the people solve the problems identified by them and those problems retarding their progress.

When discussing the issue of development, some features need to be considered such as:

- (a) Provision of basic needs for the people for whom development is sought.
- (b) Seeing the people for whom development is meant as makers of their own destiny.
- (c) Emphasis must be placed on human beings since it has been stated that development is people-centred (Adedokun, 1998).

It is important to note that people engage in development activities that are calculated to bring about beneficial changes to them but if they are not really aware of what their development needs are, there might be problem of lack of adequate involvement in such programme of development. Development which is of genuine intent, should therefore eradicate inequalities in any community.

For any meaningful relationship to be established between the people and community development efforts, there must be an improved communication network between the government and the community. With improvement in this area, people will come together and work for the success of the development programme aimed at their lot. It should be made clear that development is achieved through participation and that any imposed development is not likely to interest people and neither will it be of benefit to them. When people are involved in self-development it will lead to greater creativity and sense of self-fulfilment. Efforts at bringing about development to a community should be based on conscientisation. Through this policy, people will see themselves not as tools but as subject of their own development.

In support of this, Adedokun (1998) is of the opinion that “people must refuse to give someone mandate to think for them, mandate to do research for them. It is the only way to avoid development by procreation; for real development occurs when people think they undertake their own research.” For success to be recorded in development effort, there is need for the infusion of everybody in the society both men and women, young and old. The two primary agents in the process of change, that is, the people and their government, must come together in a cooperative manner since development results from their continued mutual support and complementary functions. People have to be enlightened about development, for with enlightenment comes active involvement and participation. This enlightenment will be given through community education.

Community education, which helps to bring about community enlightenment, helps to bring about change. Change in all its forms is an important aspect of life and it continues as an important element of social life both in rural and in urban communities. Change in connection with community development may demote change from a condition of community dependency to that of self-reliance and a state where decision making is all encompassing. Since community education is needed to stimulate people’s participation in programmes of development, community education should therefore be given enough backing. The International Community Education Association at its fifth conference held in Nairobi, Kenya (1987) in Adedokun (1998) asserts that community education is:

*an educational process which is based on the needs, peculiarities and aspirations of the community and which relies on the involvement of community members in the educational process and in the planning and implementation of programmes for the community.*

A close link is established here between community education and local participation before results could be achieved realizing the fact that learning is basic and important to every human being, and every individual must learn from any experience he undergoes. Community education being viewed in an ideological sense is described as a “process of communal education towards empowerment both at an individual and a collective level..... it is an interactive, challenging

process not only in terms of its content but also in terms of its methodologies and decision-making process” (Defining Community Education 2008).

Community education has also been described as a process of empowerment, social justice, change, challenge, respect and collective consciousness (DANTES, 2007). If community education advocates empowerment for personal skills acquisition, knowledge and development of potentials, then, it must seek to motivate people into participating in those activities that will empower them.

Some of the elements of community education include outreach work which involves reaching out to those in the community, fostering participation with the aim that people will benefit from participation and social engagement with others with a view to encouraging further participation in community development to better the lot of the people. The approaches of community education are rooted in empowerment and social value and this is why it is intricately linked with participation. Community education acting as a catalyst for informed participation in community development emphasizes these values: inclusion and positive action which is anti-discriminatory, solidarity rights to care and respect, and a proud and confident attitude (Merriam, 2007).

These values go a long way in getting participants ready to put in their best in community development issues. In the view of Merzirrow (2008), community education can be equated with transformative learning since it seeks to transform people’s present mindsets and ways of thinking to make them more inclusive, reflective and open to change. Community education in aiding participation emphasizes self-awareness, making sense out of experience (which can only be gathered through participation), deconstructing and reconstructing meaning with critique and analysis (Brookfield, (1983). This means community education aids participation in such a way that people’s minds are empowered to ask questions and seek solutions to problems facing the development of their communities.

Some of the basic tenets of community education are citizen involvement, the sharing of decision-making and total community enterprise. This stresses the need for people to realize that they must play a key role in the determination and direction of their lives without waiting for any professionals to design their fate for them. Community

education therefore exerts a great impact on participation. In the context of community development, Anyanwu (1992) refers to community participation as an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receiving a share of the project benefits. Thus, community participation in community development projects entails the involvement of the people or their representative in the formulation and development of proposals, planning of programmes and its implementation.

Community participation in community development programme is an obvious strategy for programme success because it is a powerful tool for mobilizing new and additional resources within the community (Anyanwu, 1992). Community participation therefore implies that the community has to supply the necessary and needed stimulus for programme success. According to Paul (1987), the following serve as reasons why community participation becomes necessary in the process of community development.

1. More will be accomplished.
2. Services will be provided at lower cost.
3. Participation has intrinsic value among community members.
4. Participation is a catalyst for further development efforts.
5. Participation leads to a sense of responsibility for the project.
6. It guarantees that a felt need is involved.
7. It ensures that things are done in the right way.
8. It makes use of indigenous knowledge and expertise.
9. It provides freedom from dependence on professionals and fosters people's understanding of the nature of the constraints which hinder their escape from poverty.

Ogolo (1995) sees people's participation as an act through which the beneficiaries of the development effort share in the identification of the development priorities, planning, implementation, consumption and evaluation of development programmes.

According to Adedokun (1998), participation is spontaneous, voluntary and can be more participatory when it takes the structure of bottom-up and when there is no external support. On the other hand, participation is regarded as coerced when it takes the structure of top-down. Another view of participation holds that state promoted

participation is used to legitimize state policies while the state pursues other policies detrimental to the poor. In this case, community is being used as a mask to hide the exploitative motivations of national elites (Adedokun, 1998). The main thrust of participation therefore is high degree of citizen's involvement (Ekong, 1988).

Paul (1987) sees community participation as a means of empowerment, building of community capacity, increasing project effectiveness, improving project efficiency and project cost sharing. To him, community participation is mainly used to achieve effectiveness, efficiency and cost sharing with little emphasis on empowerment and beneficiary capacity building. Paul further pointed out that community participation will be regarded as relatively successful when: (1) project objective is empowerment and capacity building; (2) the design of the project calls for interaction among beneficiaries; and (3) where users rather than a weak bureaucracy are better able to manage part of the project.

Tuhungwa in Timothy (1996) opines that neglecting participation as a way of fostering power sharing, self-reliance and independence at community level might have adverse effects on programmes of development. Thus, genuine participation can be perceived as that which transcends contribution of labour and material resources but incorporates meaningful participation in decision-making process that affects the project. Participation is very important in community development because no matter how well developed the delivery of services is, unless the community is involved in the identification and definition of their problems, very little appreciation or utilization will be recorded for the services. It is, however, important to note that emphasis on community participation should not simply be a question of making services more acceptable but rather it is a way of planning the provision of these services in a way that will make them more compatible with the real needs of the community as identified by them. It is important to realize that the involvement of community in the identification of their needs often gives legitimacy of projects and contributes in no small measure to broadening project base. This form of involvement may motivate financial contributions from the community. For participation to achieve its main objective, the community must be strengthened to determine its own needs and to take appropriate actions without relying on the formal sector.

Making participation effective in community development will mean embarking on humanistic-democratic participative style. This promotes decision-making by consensus team work. To make the community development a success, the community must also be involved in programme evaluation. Adedokun (1998) noted that the involvement of the community in the collection and analysis of information could be an important way of introducing the community to the process of need assessment for programme development.

De-Silva (1998) noted that participation must be seen as political. To her, there are always tensions underlying issues such as: who is involved, how and on whose terms. Participation is perceived as having the potential to challenge patterns of dominion while at the same time it is seen as a means through which existing power relations are entrenched and reproduced. In talking of participation, all the group within a given society must be co-opted for true development to emerge in any community and participation should be at each important stage of development such as planning, decision making, implementation and evaluation. They must have the real say without anybody speaking on their behalf in an attempt to muster support for themselves. Participation rests on the assumption that citizens share a commitment to the common good of everyone. It is community education that will foster this spirit in people. Community education will instill in people the spirit of enlightened participation and not the participative method in which people are only warming benches. This type of participation will be built on a pillar of trust and understanding. Those who will be affected by decisions made or projects instituted must be involved in the making of the decision.

Popular participation can therefore be understood as active involving of people in making decision about the implementation process or programmes and projects which affect them. Alvan (1994) says of participation where consultation does not exist, disputes are neither pre-empted nor settled by negotiation but result in strikes. Participation is closely related to community development because the essence of community development lies in participation, the importance of which is working together.

Community participation can be achieved through the following steps as put forward by the report of an adhoc group of expert on Community Development and National Development (1963):

1. Creation of awareness among the people (which can be got through community education);
2. Regular dissemination of information;
3. The people are to be informed and made conscious of the issue for which their support and cooperation are needed; and
4. They need to be adequately informed about the overall goals and objectives of development that are undertaken in their community and how their efforts and contributions fit into the overall scheme of things.

The ultimate goal of community education is: (1) the creation of a humane communitarian society where there is no exploitation; (2) to develop a people that will by themselves contribute to the building of a community based on the principles of communal living, a community where people are liberated from various forms of domination and a community in which people can develop themselves based on a spirit of self-reliance as to Nyerere (1978) man must liberate himself as development is for man, by man and of man.

The point being made is that people should be made aware of what it is to participate in community development projects. Community education therefore enables an individual to be ready to dedicate himself to the course of community revitalization. It is against this background that this study investigates the impact community education exerts on participation in community development projects.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Based on the above, the study was carried out to examine how people would perceive the impact of community education on peoples' participation in community development.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which community education can help bring about informed participation in community development with the result that people are empowered to be committed to the course of community development.



### Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant relationship between community education and participation in local development.
2. There will be no significant relationship between participation and community development.
3. There will be no significant relationship between decentralization of policy making concerning community development programmes and people's participation.

### Methodology

The study adopted a survey design. The target population for this study consisted of the literate and illiterate community members from thirteen selected local government areas of Oyo State. Two thousand (2,000) participants were randomly sampled for the study.

### Instrumentation

Community Education Rating Scale (CERS) was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire items were submitted to a panel of experts in Community Development and Test and Measurement for appropriateness. The instrument's reliability was determined through a test-retest method, which yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.63.

The researcher with the help of research assistants distributed the questionnaire. The items were translated to Yoruba language for illiterate members.

### Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentage and chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

**Table 1: Local Government Areas Used for the Study**

Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Ibadan/Ibarapa	Oyo	Saki	Ogbomoso
Ona Ara	Afijio	Iseyin	Ogbomoso North
Akinyele	Atiba	Itesiwaju	Ogo Oluwa
Ido			

## Results

The results of the study are presented as follows:

**Table 2: Response Rate for the Study**

S/No	Category	Number of Questionnaire	Number Received	Percentage Returned
1.	Literates	954	808	84.69
2.	Non-literates	1046	987	94.35
	Total	2000	1795	89.75

**Question 1:** There will be no significant relationship between community education and participation in local development.

**Table 3: Response of Subjects to the Relationship between Community Education and Participation**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	889	49.52
Agree	599	33.37
Disagree	177	9.86
Strongly Disagree	130	7.24
Total	1795	100

$$X^2_o = 972.38; df = 4; < .05 \text{ level}$$

$$X^2_c = 9.488$$

S\* = significant at 0.05

From the table above, 1488 subjects (82.89%) agreed that there is a relationship while only three hundred and seven subjects (17.1%) disagreed with the stated question. It is therefore evident that community education is closely related to participation.

The chi-square analysis showed a higher calculated value of  $X^2$  observed of 972.38. This was significant when compared with the  $X^2$  critical value of 9.488, given 4 as the degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between community education and participation in local development.

**Question 2:** There will be no significant relationship between participation and community development.

**Table 4: Relationship between Participation and Community Development**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	572	31.86
Agree	483	26.90
Disagree	359	19.96
Strongly Disagree	380	21.16
Total	1795	100

$X^2_0 = 175.41$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $< .05$  level

$X^2_c = 9.49$

S\* = significant at 0.05

The table shows that 1056 subjects (58.77%) responded positively to the stated question while 73.0 (41.12%) subjects responded negatively. The above therefore attests to the fact that there is a great relationship between community development and participation.

The  $X^2$  observed of 175.41 is greater than the  $X^2$  critical of 9.49 given four (4) as the degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This confirms a significant relationship and thus lends credence to the submission that community participation is a great aid in community development programmes.

**Question 3:** There will be no significant relationship between decentralization of policy making concerning community development and people's participation.

**Table 5: Relationship between Decentralization of Policy Making on Community Development and People's Participation**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	579	32.25
Agree	571	31.75
Disagree	257	14.31
Strongly Disagree	388	21.6
Total	1795	100

$X^2_0 = 348.59$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $< .05$  level

$X^2_c = 9.49$

S\* = significant at 0.05

The table above showed that 1150 subjects (64%) agreed that decentralization of policy making on community development will aid active and effective people's participation. 645 participants (32.92%) were of the opinion that decentralization of policy making would not have anything to do with effective people's participation.

Subjecting the findings to chi-square analysis, it is established that there is a relationship between decentralization of policy making on community development and effective participation. This is because the  $X^2$  observed of 348.59, is greater than the  $X^2$  critical of 9.49 given 4 as the degree of freedom.

### **Discussion**

The results above indicate that community education can therefore be said to aid participation in development matters since it enables people to be aware of their situations and helps them to remove those things that stand as obstacles to their progress. The importance of community education can be taken on the value of education as stressed by the president of the World Bank, Barber Cornable (1990), that without education, development will not occur. Only an educated mind can command the skills necessary for sustainable economic growth. The key role of education is accepted as indispensable for any effective development. Community education thereby helps citizens to expand their knowledge base thus helping people to undertake socio-economic, cultural and political transformations necessary to achieve development. It is obvious that people must participate in bringing progress and improvement to their standard of living; for "to sit down and resign to fate is madness" (Okunlola, 1996).

This finding corroborates the views of Tobias (1969) in Adedokun (1998) that participation is requisite of authentic development. Development cannot be possible unless it is locally supported and unless the people can actively participate in taking major decisions. With people's participation in community development programmes, self-growth, self-reliance and creativity will be encouraged. Participation will thus lead to the development of problem-solving skills and this will eventually lead to self-esteem.

Robbins (2008) is of the opinion that participation involves the community members identifying what best their community needs and being at the heart of decision making about their needs.

The results above show that people react negatively to programmes of development that are imposed on them. This is buttressed by Anyanwu (1992) when he asserts that the principle of citizen participation is deeply inherent in the very concept of community development. It enjoins that whatever is done to improve the welfare of a people must endeavour to elicit the highest response from the people.

### **Conclusion**

The study revealed that community education could lead to improved people's participation in community development. This is because community education leads to informed participation, and this helps people to view themselves as shaping their own destiny. For community development to be promoted, there is need for decentralization of policy making, as this will help people to participate actively in their own development right from the level of planning through implementation to maintenance. The study revealed that with community education people will be made aware of their condition, and this will motivate them to participate in community development activities.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the outcome of the study. When programmes of community development are embarked upon, people should be enlightened and made aware of the programme objectives so as to arouse people's interest. People should be educated that for their life styles to experience improvement, they must be prepared to sacrifice their time and money to achieve their desired goals.

Community education in all its ramifications should be organized for the people (e.g. in the fields of health, education and agriculture) to make them aware of their deplorable condition and look for ways of ameliorating their suffering.

The study on the whole established that community education significantly contributed to the improvement of quality of lives of the community dwellers. It also helped get the citizens properly sensitized and mobilized for more effective participation in community development.

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