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**EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: EXAMINING THE
EDUCATION-COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NEXUS IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

This research paper qualitatively examines the concepts of education and rural development, differentiated education and “training” or “schooling”, the implication of the rural development praxis against the object of education in the community development of Nigeria. This paper views education as not just a tool for rural development, but the most fundamental tool for rural development. However, the paper discovered that in Nigeria like in other developing countries, education has not been able to play this role of community development optimally. Findings from this paper reviews that, the reason for this underdevelopment is due to the dissonance between the educational curriculum and developmental needs of the communities. The paper thus recommends a critical re-examination of the extant development praxis and harmonizes it with the socio-cultural and environmental realities in the polity and to design an appropriate educational curriculum.

Keywords: Education, Community Development, Nigeria.

Introduction

The topic “Education and community development or (The role of education in community development)” is apt in trying to bring to view the responsibilities placed on the shoulders of education in order to bring our communities to the part of sustainable development. It is important to note that all over the world, education is regarded as effective instrument for sustaining cultural patterns. It is via the process of education that the desired general ways of life for a given people (community) could be transmitted from one generation to another. It was this that informed Fafunwa, (1974) and Obara and Enyekit (2010) to opine that “the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives is through education”.

This suggests that for the purpose of continued existence and development of societies, their educational processes need to be properly guided or monitored through effective management of resource allocation to all sub sectors of the education industry. It is the realization of the links between education and national development (community development inclusive) that prompted the federal government of Nigeria to adopt education as an “instrument par excellence for effecting national development”. Plato has also illuminated elsewhere on the crucial inevitable role education should play in the

leadership and full development of his society. Others have asked if it is not development that affects education. To them “education” came with the development of society and so it is development that affects education. Fundamentally, education has become a veritable tool for national development. Even contemporary western scholars and technocrats have also viewed education as an index of national development as presented in the much talked about millennium goals. However, educational policies and goals indicate even as they derive from the ideology of national development and or perspective which the social system seeks to attain, sustain, acculturate and project (Thomas 2010). Education thus, may be an end but in itself a means to an end. The end of education is development (rural or community development inclusive).

While we may not allow ourselves to delve into such contentious issues, some of which have philosophical origins, we will try as much as possible to explicate the relationship between Education and community development by looking at only one “side of the coin” – what role has education played or is likely to play in community development. Just before we do that, it suffices that the key concepts in the topic be clarified and operationalized.

Conceptual Clarification/ Review of Related Literature

Education

All over the world education whether in primordial or modern form has played and is still playing the role of transforming human society to better condition than was hitherto the case. This transformation of human society is done through transforming relevant and desirable components of societal culture from one generation to succeeding generation. Such components or elements of societal culture include; values, traditions and beliefs, accumulated knowledge, ideas, thoughts, principles and theories of old and current knowledge, skills and competencies (Taylor, 2010a).

What then is Education? The term education is a universal concept that has to do with teaching, learning and development of both the individual and the society. From a global perspective “it refers to the process of socializing the young of the community into the value systems and ethos of society” (Agina-Obu. 2003:1).

As a word, education has its origin from two Latin words “Educere” and “Educare”. Educere means to “Draw out” or to “lead out”. This literally means physical development. The latter word “Educare” means to “educate”, “to raise”, to “bring out” certain potentialities which the child naturally is endowed with. From these two roots, education becomes the slow and skillful process of extracting latent potentialities of comprehension and dedication in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. It is therefore a universal practice engaged in by all societies at all stages of development.

However, there is a general consensus among educators and educationists that education involves a desirable change in human behavior through the process of learning. That is to say that an individual who still exhibits undesirable behavior from the point of view of accepted and desirable societal norms cannot be said to be educated in the real sense of the word. This is a fact that we would like us to hold on to as we later examine education and community development in Nigeria.

Taiwo (1975) spoke of education as the “total efforts of society to raise its social, economic and political standard of living”.

At this juncture, it will be pertinent that we distinguish education from both schooling and training. Education is more than schooling and training. Agina-Obu (2003) conceptualizes schooling as an aspect of education which involves the formal organization of subjects, syllabuses, scheme of work, lesson notes, time tables, venues of teaching and learning, teachers and student's evaluation of which is usually denoted by the award of certificates.

Trying to distinguish between education and training, Omorogbe (in Dukor 2003) said that;

“... to train a man is to impart to him a certain skill or expertise through a process of instruction. A man can be trained as a medical doctor, as an engineer, as a carpenter, as a lawyer, etc., it has to do with intellect, not with the will, whereas education has to do with both the intellect and the will”.

Put differently education involves both intellectual as well moral formation and has to do with the whole man, his personality and not just his intellect. Nor is education limited to any specialized competence or skill. Since morality is an aspect of human nature, the education, of the whole man must involve the education of man's moral nature. Thus any formation of a man which does not include moral formation is no education. “such a person has, at best gone through a process of training aimed at acquiring a specific skill or expertise, but he has not been educated, such a process does not qualify as education” (ibid). It is in the light of this that R.S. Peters says that “it will be logical contraction to say that a man had been educated but that he had in no way changed for the better” (Peter, 1980). The fundamental aim of education thus, is not limited to preparing some-one of a particular kind of job or profession, but the development of personality which involves the development of both the intellect and the will. Education belongs more to “the category of values known as intrinsic values, as distinct from extrinsic values. Intrinsic values are things that are good in themselves by their very nature (Omeregheop. cit).”

Community Development

The United Nations Organisation (UNO) (as cited in Anyanwu, 1981:165) sees community development as “the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of the governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate those communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national development”. The Economic Commission of Africa (as cited in Amirinze, 1998:27) defines rural and community development as “the outcome of a series of quantitative and qualitative changes occurring among rural population”. It is a process “by which a set of technical, social, cultural and institutional measures are implemented with and for the inhabitants of rural areas, with the aim of improving the socio-economic conditions of the rural populace”.

Community development thus constitutes a deliberate effort to raise the level of awareness and living conditions of rural dwellers. The emphasis tend to focus more on the poor, ill-educated and ignorant masses whose physical environment, social, economic, political and living conditions are usually pathetic. Community development programme usually include, rural agricultural development, primary health care, education, cottage industries and infrastructural facilities. A successful community development programme usually manifests in improved living conditions of the people and in an increase conscientization (Amirinze 1998).

The Role of Education in Community Development

It will be difficult for one to over emphasize the role of education in community development. Education appears to be the orbit on which all other aspects of development revolve. Thus, it will be near impossible for one to envisage community development outside the domain of education. This role will be more appreciated if we consider human capital development as a sine-qua-non for community development. Education provides the needed skills, competencies and intelligence needed by the indigenes and residents of the community to spear head any development programme. Education also plays important role in encouraging family planning and ensuring birth control. This reduces the population growth rate of the rural communities and in turn improves the economic growth rate of communities.

In our earlier assertions, we have recognized education as one of the components of community development programme. Other components which we stated alongside education include agricultural development, primary health care, cottage industries and infrastructural facilities. It is however worthy to note that education does not only constitute a component of community development but also serves as the pivot on which the achievement of other elements of community development rotates. For instance, if agriculture must be developed in the communities, the indigenous farmers must be taught modern skills of farming which include how to apply fertilizer etc., also personal hygiene and primary health care which are needed to increase the health and life expectancy of rural dwellers are better achieved if the people are literate and educated.

In terms of political representation and infrastructural development, the role of education is even more convincing. To fully participate in representative or appointive capacity in the politics of Nigeria One must have acquired a minimum of the West African School Certificate or its equivalent. This is more so in appointive offices as more often than not they consider technocrats and expertise who are graduates of the institutions of higher learning. Of course as we all know, it is these classes of elected and/or appointed officials who attract infrastructural development to our communities from the government. Thus, communities which are blessed with them are communities which also enjoy more infrastructural facilities.

Furthermore, education plays vital role in the maintenance and sustenance of peace in the communities. Peace as we know provides the enabling environment for development to strive, as development cannot be conceived in a violent and war situation. The well-educated man will always look for other means of resolving conflicts instead of unleashing violence and war, all things been equal. It is therefore not a mere coincidence that the more educated societies of Europe, North America and Japan are also the more developed nations of the globe. The Japanese miracles would not have been possible without revolution in their educational sector. Education is thus an instrument of transmitting and sustaining community development.

It is however worthy of note that in Nigeria like in other developing countries, education has not been able to play optimum role in community development. This is partly due to the dissonance between the educational curriculum and the developmental needs of the communities. The curriculum is often situated within the paradigm of the extant Western development orthodoxy and thus manifests features of the culture of underdevelopment and dependency. That explains why the application of prescriptions

from such educational diagnosis over the years had not availed much. Even though the educational system in Nigeria has insistently purposed development (community development inclusive), the results have been unsatisfactory (Thomas, 2010). The several reforms, educational summit, conferences and workshops, legislation and programmes put in place to actualize the fundamental objective of community development via education have not assuaged the dilemma. In the circumstances, education as an instrument of transmitting and sustaining rural development is rather manifesting the replication of poverty, crime, unemployment, corruption, frustration and despair, especially on the part of the community youths, and related social pathologies inimical to community development (Thomas, 2010).

Incidentally, attempts at addressing the observed inadequacies in the educational system have never ever considered the link between the development praxis and the educational goals and between these and the socio-cultural and environmental realities in Nigeria. The educational outcomes have in same vein been contrary to expected goals. Hence, community development has become an illusion and an observable paradox of education's role in community development.

Recommendations

A panacea to this bane is to critically re-examine the extant development praxis, and harmonize it with the socio-cultural and environmental realities in the polity and to design an appropriate educational curriculum. In this regard, as Thomas 2010 would opine, a construction and evolution of an indigenous social science with relevant praxis applicable in the circumstances of the national cultural heritage and environmental exigencies in the light of contemporary global realities is instructive.

To this end, it is paramount to re-orientate the value system in the polity and to reconstruct an educational system that would interact and transact with government at all levels and relevant industries and business organizations to structure out an economic producing, rural development oriented and directed educational system. These if and when done will rejuvenate the ability of education to perform its role of community development adequately.

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