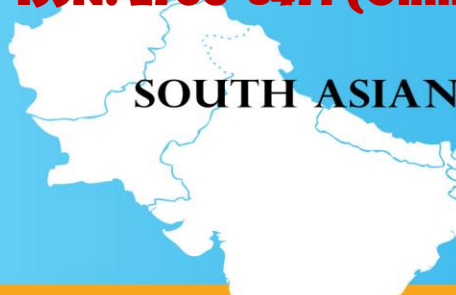


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THE CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THE THEORIES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF EKITI RURAL COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary issues in the theories of community development were examined in three rural communities of Ekiti State using two instruments tagged 'Questionnaire for Dwellers' and 'Questionnaire for Community Leaders' administered on 60 rural dwellers and 15 community leaders respectively. The contemporary issues identified by the rural dwellers include epileptic supply of electricity; urbanisation; poor road network; poor access to portable water supply; limited access to education, market and health facilities. All these resulted in poverty and lack of necessary infrastructures. Information obtained from the community leaders revealed that residents in these communities had been previously involved in community development projects which is the panacea for alleviating poverty and enhances the provision of infrastructures in the communities. Practical and visionary leaders are required to enhance development. Also community collaborations with governments and non-governmental organizations on community development projects are also recommended.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, most communities felt that it was the responsibility of the Government and its agencies to respond to the needs of their communities. Hence government was expected to develop society by providing all necessary infrastructures, social and physical facilities (Onibokun 1976, Obayelu, 2007). Previous development projects embarked upon in the country have always been based on the - traditional top-down model. This is a strategy adopted in which community development planning activities are carried out at the top hierarchy of government. The choice of what problems to address, what priority project to execute, how the project will be executed and those to be involved in the execution was decided by the top government personnel or the central government. People at the community level were only involved during implementation as directed by the top government personnel. This constitutes a bane to development as members of the communities demonstrated an apparent lack of willingness to contribute to developmental efforts.

Evolution is about people and if it is to be meaningful, members of the communities must be its active agent and not just passive beneficiaries (Odo, 2012). Many development projects in the local governments failed due to non-involvement of the local communities in the conception, design and implementation of such projects. As Odo (2012) noted any development programme, which marginalizes the contributions of the primary beneficiaries, could hardly make serious impact on the lives of the people including lack of sustainability.

The community development theories enumerated the practical framework for enhancing lasting

change for individuals and the communities and societies in which they live (Tan, 2009). Thus the ability of people to work together to achieve their common interests is described as Community Development (Maser, 1997). Ikeanyibe (2009) described the basic development objectives of Nigeria to include: reduction in rural poverty and unemployment in rural areas; incorporation of grassroots communities into national socio-economic and political development through effective participation in their own affairs; improvement in incomes of rural people whose main activity is agriculture and non-agricultural activities such as handicrafts, wholesale and so on; improvement in the quality of people's lives by providing basic products such as food, drinking water, electricity, health services, schools, etc.

Consequent on the above, this study aimed at defining the contemporary issues in the theories of CD using three rural communities in Ado-Ekiti as case study.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The community action model is used for this study. This involves participatory action research approaches and is asset-based (that is, it builds on the strengths of a community to create changes from within (Racher and Annis, 2007). Its intends to create changes by building community capacity, working in collaboration with communities and providing a framework for residents to acquire skills and resources necessary to assess their socio-economic conditions (Lavery *et. al.*, 2005). Hence, they can then plan, implement and evaluate actions designed to improve those conditions.

The community action model is based on five assumptions as follow:

1. it identifies inequality in the distribution of regional resources,
2. It believes that difference can be bridged through awakening of mind and self confidence,
3. it focuses on changing an individual's lifestyle and behaviour to mobilizing community members and agencies to eliminate undesired conditions,
4. it places responsibilities on the individual, and,
5. it does not challenge the social structures that shape residents' choices and decisions.

Thus the model is designed to increase the capacity of communities and organisations to address the social and economic determinants that will positively influence their community.

METHODOLOGY

Three rural communities, Aba-Igbira, Ilokun and Irasa communities, located along Ado-Ekiti – Iworoko highway, were purposively selected for this study. Aba-Igbira is situated at the outskirts of Ado-Ekiti and residents were mainly farmers. The community possessed electricity, a primary school and a maternity centre. Ilokun community is located about 6 kilometres from Ado-Ekiti. Residents are mostly farmers and the community possessed electricity but lacks schools and maternity centre. Irasa community is situated at about 3 kilometres from Iworoko-Ekiti. Residents were farmers and the community possessed a primary school, a recently completed but a yet to function maternity centre and motorized borehole.

Two instruments were used in this study. A tool tagged 'Questionnaire for Dwellers (QFD)' was used for data collection from 20 randomly selected dwellers in each of the three communities. Another instrument tagged 'Questionnaire for Community Leaders (QCL)' was used for data collection from 5 identified leaders in each of the three communities. Thus a total of 75 respondents were used in this study. While the respondents were requested to identify the contemporary issues in community developments theories in their respective communities, the community leaders were requested to define the dwellers' perceptions on development issues.

Visits were made to the communities where the instruments were administered on the respondents.

The data obtained were set of respondents were analysed by using Likert rating scale as follow:

- SA - Strongly Agreed - 4 Points
- A - Agreed - 3 Points
- D - Disagreed - 2 Points
- SD - Strongly Disagreed - 1 Point

The scores obtained above were weighted to get their means and the means interpreted as follows:

1.0 – 1.49 = SD

1.50 – 2.49 = D

2.50 – 3.49 = A

3.50- 4.00 = SA

The data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics especially frequency, means and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained revealed that the rural dwellers considered electricity as the vehicle of development. The supply of electricity to the communities is presently erratic and epileptic. Interactions with the dwellers revealed that respondents believed that efficient supply will enhance processing of farm products into a storable form, enhance their social life, improve their access to information and impact positively on their income. The cost of electricity was considered expensive and exploitative as electricity provider, through the existing billing system utilised, made them pay for electricity that was not supplied. Provision of alternative and less expensive sources of electricity, such as solar power, is considered desirable.

Respondents considered the current rate of urbanization as a serious threat to their existence in the communities as their farmlands are rapidly converted to housing estates. Hence existing farmlands are becoming far from the communities. Man hours that ought to have been committed to farming activities are now used in accessing the farms. This exerts further pressure on the haulage of farm products from the farms. Field observation revealed that while Aba-Igbira and Ilokun have been sub-merged by modern houses, farmlands in Irasa are being threatened by increasing development activities of her neighbour, the Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. Hence Aba-Igbira and Ilokun dwellers suffered more in this regard. However, residents of the three communities now experienced difficulties in conveying their farm products from the farms thus affecting the economic returns from the farms.

Table 1 also revealed that respondents of the three communities described their access to education facilities as limited. Field observation revealed that while Aba-Igbira and Irasa possessed a public primary school each, Ilokun lacked such though four private primary schools abound but dwellers lacked the financial requirements to send their children to these schools. None of the three communities possesses a secondary, either public or private.

Children are sent to secondary schools located very far from the communities. Thus children sent to secondary schools trekked considerable distances to and from the schools. The time taken to achieve this hindered them from helping their parents in farm and house chores. Also, the trekking exercises, five days in a week, impact negatively on their health. Similarly, the communities lacked bookshops and public library. Field observation revealed a reasonable number of out-of- school children in these communities.

Table 1: Mean rating of the responses of respondents on contemporary issues in community development theories in three rural communities in Ekiti, Nigeria

S/n	Statement	Frequency of Responses				N	Total	Mean	Interpretation
		SA	A	D	SD				
		4	3	2	1				
1	Supply of electricity is epileptic	204	27	-	-	60	231	3.85	SA
2	Alternate source of electricity required	196	24	6	-	60	226	3.77	SA
3	Cost of electricity is prohibitive	232	3	2	-	60	237	3.95	SA
4	Rapid conversion of farmlands to housing	148	36	18	2	60	204	3.40	A
5	Increasing distance of farmlands	156	33	12	4	60	205	3.42	A
6	Difficulties in conveyance of farm products	172	24	14	2	60	212	3.53	SA
7	Limited access to education facilities	224	6	-	-	60	230	3.83	SA
8	Limited access to market facilities	220	15	-	-	60	235	3.92	SA
9	Limited access to health facilities	144	51	10	2	60	207	3.45	A
10	Lack of micro-credit	180	27	10	1	60	218	3.63	SA
11	Poor access to portable water supply	212	21	-	-	60	233	3.88	A
12	Poor leadership	164	18	12	3	60	197	3.28	A

Marketing facilities were also described as limited by the respondents. None of the communities possessed market. Hence dwellers were restricted to conveying their farm products to the urban on market days or sell them to the wholesalers who visit to buy from them at the communities. These methods impact negatively on their income. The costs of transporting farm products are prohibitive while wholesalers buy at ridiculous prices. Respondents also considered their access to health facilities as limited. Aba-igbira possessed a dispensary and maternity centre, a new dispensary and maternity centre has just been constructed in Irasa but not functioning yet, Ilokun does not possess any. Also, all the communities lacked portable water though a motorize water borehole has just been completed at Irasa but it is yet to be activated. Thus residents of these communities are liable to diseases attacks. Apart from Aba-Igbira which is close to several pharmaceutical stores, none is available in each of Ilokun and Irasa. Hence, residents have to contend with the prohibitive costs of drugs while additional charges were to be borne by Ilokun and Irasa residents to access health facilities.

The respondents lamented the lack of micro-credit facilities in the communities. Also they lacked the collateral being demanded by commercial banks to seek financial assistance for their farming and other economic activities. Farm implements and consumables, such as chemicals, could only be

purchased at the urban centre, Ado-Ekiti. Thus apart from their costs that are often beyond the reach of dwellers of these communities, addition costs, for transport constituted another burden.

Respondents described leadership in the communities as poor. Field observation revealed that respondents identified four sets of leaderships, the community leaders, the Local, State and Federal Governments. While respondents were of the opinion that no appreciable contributions to the development of their communities could be attributed to the Local and Federal Governments, respondents expected the community leaders and the State Government to be more caring and pro-active in their programmes geared towards the development of the rural areas.

Table 2 revealed the mean rating of the responses of community leaders to attitudes of dwellers to community development in three rural communities in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Community leaders revealed that their subjects believed that community development should be the duties of the governments particularly when politicians meet and promised dwellers of several infrastructures during electioneering campaigns. The community leaders asserted that it was not difficult for them to mobilization the dwellers for community development projects though funding may hindered such projects. Community development projects had been previously executed in all the communities and all dwellers participated in funding and execution of such projects. Field observation revealed that the previous projects in Aba-Igbira and Ilokun had been limited to security but that of Irasa included security, constructions of drainage, dispensary and maternity centre and a motorized water borehole.

Table 2: Mean rating of the responses of community leaders to attitudes of dwellers to community development in three rural communities in Ekiti State, Nigeria

S/n	Statement	Frequency of Responses				N	Total	Mean	Interpretation
		SA	A	D	SD				
		4	3	2	1				
1	CD expectations is on government	52	6	-	-	15	58	3.87	SA
2	Mobilization for CD projects is difficult	-	9	20	2	15	31	2.06	D
3	Funding for CD projects hindered by poverty	36	12	4	-	15	52	3.47	A
4	Previous CD project(s) abound	60	-	-	-	15	60	4.00	SA
5	Previous CD project(s) jointly funded / executed	60	-	-	-	15	60	4.00	SA
6	Poor community collaboration with government or govt agencies	-	-	26	2	15	28	1.87	D
7	Poor community collaboration with non-governmental organisations	-	-	22	4	15	26	1.73	D
8	Poor leadership-dwellers' relationship abounds	-	-	-	15	15	15	1.00	SD

DISCUSSION

Respondents in this study revealed that the deficits in infrastructures such as electricity, portable water supply, roads, limited education and health facilities, have impacted negatively on the economy of

inhabitants of the study area. All these are the contemporary issues in community development as the product of these deficits is the subjection of the rural dwellers into abject poverty. Though the government, NGOs, international agencies, organized private sector and households (including individuals) could play active part in the provision of these basic social services (Adebayo, 1999), but the people must actively participate in issues that affect them. This is known as community development. It is a prime mover of people and the employment of community structures to address social needs and empower groups of people (Mendes 2008). Therefore poverty reduction programmes will have to adopt a holistic approach involving the three tiers of government and the civil society for it to be sustainable.

Sustainable development requires that the infrastructure deficit must be addressed. Infrastructure is the rudimentary organizational structures required for societal operation. Shehu (2018) asserted that infrastructure-foundation can be described generally as the set of interconnected structural elements that provide framework supporting an entire structure of development. Poor infrastructure, particularly electricity, is a major obstacle to poverty alleviation. Power offers an important input into telecommunication, comprising simple telephone, radio, television and internet services. Thus, the provision of electricity infrastructure is indispensable for economic development, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability.

The results obtained from the responses of community leaders indicated that community development was not strange to residents of the sampled communities in this study. Though poverty could hinder the execution of community development projects but the fact that residents could be easily mobilized constituted an incentive to enhance peoples' participation in community development. Mendes (2008) described mobilization as the process of bringing together or empowering members of the community from various sectors to raise awareness on and demand for a particular development programme.

The alleviation of poverty in rural areas through community development also requires effective and transparent leadership. Effective leadership and visionary leaders are the designers of a new dawn, working with dreams, vision, and boldness (McLaughlin, 2001). Results from this study revealed that the dwellers regarded the leadership as being poor. This may hinder community development however the good relationship that abounds between the leaders and their subject, in this study, should be exploited to the advantage of active participation in community service. Effective partnerships should be maintained with both government and non-governmental organizations. Camfens (1997) opined that sponsorship of community development projects may emanate from an organized citizens' group, a particular profession, an NGO, an institution, or a state agency, or any combination of these. These diverse inputs enable community development to be a collective problem solving, self-help, empowerment and participation.

In conclusion, Checkoway (1997) submitted that the joining together in solidarity facilitates community members' understanding that their individual problems have social causes and collective solutions.

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