The role of the community in community’s development: Promotion of self dependence through education

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Give a man fish; he has food for the day. Teach him how to catch fish; he has food for the rest of his life. If we feed people and respond to their primary needs, indeed we are making them dependent on us but if we teach them how to work, they are able to provide for their needs themselves. Community development facilitates life of people in a community. It is an action of not only to change people’s life, but also to promote the level of their self-dependence and self-reliance through education. Community development is in general a social learning process, which serves to empower individuals and involve them as citizens collectively, for the purpose of socio-economic development. This article is based on a review of literature on community development. The main idea of this article is that, community development means working with people, not for them; helping people become self-reliant, not dependent on others; helping people by means of education to put useful knowledge to work for them. Therefore, education is a major approach to change the mind and actions of members of the community to attain economic and social improvements.

Key words: Community development, change, education and development.

INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of community development is to help people become subjects instead of objects, acting on their situation instead of simply reacting to it. Community development is concerned with types of actions that not only affect people but also can be affected by people (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). The main target of community development is to change the status quo by achieving development.

Community development needs participation, empowerment and education. Community development changes the life of people and promotes their level of self depend- ence and self reliance through education. Community development as the general social process, empowers people and involves them as community members collectively aimed at social and economic development.

Community development

Community development focuses on the individuals at the micro level. It is concerned primarily with people as stimulators of social action process (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). Community development is a process by which the efforts come from the people themselves. Community development is a process in which the people of a community attempt a collaborative effort to promote what they consider to be the well being of their community. Community development should include the involvement of people in the community in an effort to attain common goals. A set of major principles of community development guide a flexible process of action as follows:

1. Start where people are: The existing concerns and situation of people is the starting point of community development.

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2. Community development creates a vehicle for people to act on existing concerns.
3. The passion and enthusiasm of local people drives action. Belief, motivation and commitment are the fuel in the tank of community development.
4. Community ownership/involvement: The community makes and implements decisions and the community’s initiative and leadership is the source of change.
5. People build motivation and community capacity through participation and active involvement in decision-making and implementation.
6. Inclusiveness, where all citizens should be given an equal opportunity to be involved. Effort is required to encourage diverse sectors of the community to participate.
7. External facilitators and resource people are “invited in” to work with people, rather than working for them, or delivering services to them. They have a responsibility to challenge and suggest, but not make or influence community decision-making.
8. Development activities foster leadership, entrepreneurship and altruism.
9. The existing capacity of people and their community need to be recognized and appreciated, as well as creating opportunities for them to build their capacity.
10. A holistic approach is used in building economic, human, social and environmental aspects of community as an interrelated whole.
11. Reframing community development helps people redefine problems and opportunities and discover new options.
12. Changed attitudes and networks are as important as material outcomes.
13. A diversity of opinion and perspective is welcomed; success, no matter how small, needs to be recognized and celebrated.
14. Activities should be fun and social.
15. Not all communities are suited to, or prepared for, development activities (Cavaye, 2007).

Participation

Participation is a main indicator of community development. Community development is defined as a group of people in a locality initiating a social action process that seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). Community development is defined as a group of people in a community reaching a decision to initiate a social action process to change their economic, social, cultural, or environmental situation (Indabawa and Mpofu, 2006). The central means of community development is the self-help approach that emphasizes on grassroots efforts that are directed towards central government goals (Robinson and Green, 2010).

Community development not only focuses on a community members’ programme with government aid but also focuses on a government programme with community members’ aid. The first of these approaches implies aided self-help; the second of these approaches implies aided technical assistance that doing things for community members.

Every community development project needs to be interpreted in terms of the particular population involved and of the problem it faces. It is the index of the stage of tension (problem, need) of the process of achieving development. Basic community development is the ability to mobilize people for involvement through participation. Generally, people who are informed about a community issue and are interested in resolving it, feel that they can be more effective in working with group. Therefore, people of the community should actively participate in community change; participation should be as inclusive as possible and participation should be through democratic organization.

Participation is central to community development, but not equivalent to it. Participation as a ‘means’ ensure local people’s cooperation/collaboration with externally introduced programs or processes to facilitate the effective implementation of such initiatives and to achieve a set of objectives; and participation as an ‘end’ focuses on the empowerment of people to take greater responsibility for their development through their lives (Hamilton, 1992). Participation is a good thing and important for many reasons. It has some benefits for individuals of community that is:

1. Awareness: Public participation also creates an awareness of the problem and possible solutions among the people and thereby equips them as citizens to exercise, relevant to development in a rational manner (Arora, 2006).
2. Confidence: Participation not only may include increased confidence and self-esteem, the chance to acquire new skills, but also leads to greater satisfaction and improved quality of life (Moriarty et al., 2007). Participation promotion aims at ensuring that decisions affecting the community are taken by all community members.
3. Find out own potential: By helping people realize their own potential, participation can make citizens feel that the decisions of the system of which they are a part are their own. This process can induce increased popular enthusiasm for the implementation of decisions (Arora, 2006).
4. Planning: Participation offers new opportunities for creative thinking and innovative planning and development. Participation is understood as giving a few influential people a voice in local decision making and planning, whereas the most needy and deprived, who may be the majority of the community, are not even consulted, let alone given a part in the process (Johnston, 1982).
5. Effectiveness: Participation can help us target resources more effectively and efficiently (Breuer, 1999). Participation promotes efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the total process of development (Arora, 2006). Hence, involving communities in decision-making will lead to better decisions being made, which are more appropriate and more sustainable because they are owned by the people themselves (Breuer, 1999). Participation can reduce the risk of project failure and the cost of the project.
6. Government programmes: The technical assistance in planning and in carrying out the various programmes is provided by the government (Arora, 2006).

Empowerment

The root word for empowerment is power. Power means the ability to influence others, to get things done using your own capacity. Empowerment means enabling oneself and others to move towards a vision. To empower is to enable others to act. Empowerment is a new approach in motivating people. Having understood the basic definition, empowerment then can be defined as giving power to others (Sabran, 2003). Community development is defined as a group of people in a locality, initiating a social action process that seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities (Christenson and Robinson, 1989).

In the community development context, empowerment has been described as a social action process that promotes participation of individuals, organizations, and communities in gaining control of their lives in their community and larger society. Empowerment represents the increased capacity of local citizens to make and control decisions that affect their lives (Hamilton, 1992). It is considered as more skills, more confidence, and more effective organization. Empowerment has different aspects. One aspect is, empowerment as behavior of a supervisor who empowers his/her subordinates and the other is psychological state of subordinate resulting from his/her supervisor’s empowering. Empowerment is also defined as a process of enhancing feeling of self-efficacy. Nevertheless, when empowered, you will be motivated but when motivated, you are not necessarily empowered. The concept of motivation is mainly focused on improving organizational performance through motivating individuals (Lee and Koh, 2001). There are several strategies for effective approach to empower communities:

1. Communicate the vision on a continuous basis.
2. Communicate the vision beyond just informing; excite people by connecting it to their values.
3. Encourage people’s involvement in deciding real ways to implement the vision, do not be manipulative.
4. Provide the right kind of support, so that the people in the communities can succeed in making progress toward the vision.
5. Offer sincere rewards and recognition.

They are not simply a random list of how to motivate people, rather, its a unified and workable strategy. Why is empowerment a more effective motivator than reward and punishment? With reward and punishment, people on the receiving end, often feel that they are being manipulated or that they are being treated as objects or things, but with empowerment, people on the receiving end usually feel that they are being enabled to act, and they are being viewed as responsible people (Sabran, 2003). Empowerment as more knowledge, skills and confidence is the index of community development. Individuals within a community for empowering need to change their current life.

Education and change

What does the change mean? In the Random House Unabridged Dictionary (1997) change means as to make the form, nature, content, future course, etc., different from what it is or from what it would be if left alone, to transform or convert, to substitute another or others for, to give and take reciprocally, to transfer from one to another, to become different, to become altered or modified, to become transformed or converted, the fact of being changed, a transformation or modification, a variation or deviation, the substitution of one thing for another, variety or novelty, and to vary the manner of performing an action or of discussing a subject. Education in any form is the production of changes in development. It is the index of stage of learning (knowledge, attitude, skill) of the process for achieving development.

The change describes as a how, what and why problem (Dudink, 2006). Education is the method employed in community development. This method is used for improving the quality of the human being and for improving his knowledge and skill. Education is the process of teaching people how to live better by learning ways that improve their life. Defined simply, education in any form is the production of changes in human behavior—changes in what people know, in what they think, in what they can do and in what they actually do. Wherever proper educational approaches have been made it has been found possible to change people in the following four broad areas:

1. Change in what people know – their knowledge of themselves, of their society and of their physical environment.
2. Change in what people can do – their skills, mental and physical.
3. Change in what people think and feel – their attitude towards themselves, towards their society and towards their physical environment.
4. Change in what people actually do - their actions related to factors determining their own welfare.

When a development programme has progressed, the people exposed to it should change in one or more of these four areas. If they have not changed favorably in any of these directions, the programme can be considered as non-successful. The capacity of man to develop himself through education is one of the most fortunate characteristics of the human race. His ability to improve himself, and the conditions of his environment that hinder or control his progress, are the primary difference between man and the lower species of the animal kingdom. Man’s progress therefore, is highly dependent upon his education. With appropriate education he does not have to exist continuously in a state of poverty, ignorance and disease (Kamath, 2007).

How does community development bring about development?

Community development frees the people from underdevelopment because changes occur when the community wants it to happen. The process of community development leads the people to development. When the program of community development occurs in the community, we can observe traces of development in that community. What is the result of community development? Is it development? How can community development bring about development? The primary goal of community development is to help people improve their social and economic situation (Christenson and Robinson, 1989) in order to increase the aspect of community well being. Increase skills of individuals, connect people with one another, connect existing resources, and produces self-reliant, self-sustaining communities that mobilize resources for their benefit. Community development is an organized effort to improve the conditions of community life, and the capacity for community integration and self-direction. Community development is a process to improve some identifiable aspects of community life. It is a process of social and economic action for solving community problems.

On the other hand, it was asserted that community development is a conscious and deliberate effort aimed at helping communities to recognize their needs and to assume increasing responsibilities for solving their problems (Sabran, 2003). Goals of community development are to promote the all-sided development of community, to develop a spirit of community life amongst the people, and to develop self-reliance in the individuals and cohesion in the community. The major aims of community development are:

1. To raise the standard of living of people by encouraging them to participate in community activities that can bring about positive changes in the community.
2. To bring about gradual and self choice in the life of communities. This means that community development empowers people to make decisions for their own good.
3. To empower people to determine their needs, decide on action, and take control and ownership of their own development (Ntini, 2006).

Self-help and technical assistance

As previously mentioned, the community development approaches are self-help and technical assistance, as mean indexes of stages of planning, decision making and taking action in the process of achieving development. The approaches of community development are locality development (self-help) and social planning (technical assistance) (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). Self-help is a process that builds or develops the capacity of a community to help its members. The intent of self-help is to create strong bonds, ties, and links between members of a community and use these ties to promote community action. The self-help process is frequently described as focused on locality development.

Locality development is primarily focused on increasing community capacity and integration through processes (Nelson, 1997). Without a commitment to self-help, a community may exist as a place, an organization, or an interest group but lacking the capacity to effectively act on its own behalf. While self-help emphasizes a spirit of cooperation and mutual enhancement of effort among community members, it also recognizes that many of the political, economic, and technological features of the modern world have been destructive of those kinds of relationships. Community members define their own sense of community, highlight and envision where their community is and where they think it should be, and find internal and external assets to use to facilitate the development.

Sometimes through the local community those individuals are unable to change their life, therefore they need extra assistance. The technical assistance approach is an approach that emphasizes the task orientation of community development by focusing on the vertical connections extra-local to the community; there is an assumed need for technical skills and services to assist and guide the development effort (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). With self-help, it is assumed that the problems can be resolved by employing only those resources found within the community. In this situation, people are able to gain on other approaches in community development, such as the technical assistance. This approach will enable the organization to bring together community residents and staff specialists to achieve the organization’s objectives (Hamilton, 1992).
Development

Development means a progression from a simpler or lower to a more advanced, mature, or complex form or stage (Baker, 2006). Development includes the prior process in which the initial problems and tensions are worked through by the people concerned and an identity of objectives is established and a community is formed. Community development includes in its early phase a process of community creation. Change is necessary to make the world a better place to live in. The fundamental goal of community development is to provide an efficient, attractive and supportive environment where people may live, work and enjoy their leisure, with maximum scope for individual choice (Mahlon, 2007).

Members of a community need to acquire knowledge of themselves, of the group they are in, and of their environment, skills of communication and decision making, and attitudes toward people inside and outside the group. A community has to be seen as a collection of community members who have become aware of some problems or needs; they have gone through a process of learning (Knowledge, Attitude and Skill), planning and making decision, and action. When the stages in Figure 1 occur step by step, we could hope to achieve development.

Conclusion

Individuals in a community have a basic role in the process of development. The role of individuals in the process of community development as actors is active. We can observe successes of community development, when the stages of development are fulfilled perfectly. In other words, people must not only be interested and involved in the process of development but they must also be bounded by strong ties, and collective sharing to facilitate the welfare of the community.

Education is an effective method for changing the mind and actions of people in ways where they “help themselves” in attaining economic and social improvements. Hence, the process is one of working with people not for them, of helping people become self-reliant, not dependent on others, of making people the central actors in the drama, not stage hands or spectators; in short, helping people by means of education to put useful knowledge to work for them (Jalihal and Shivamurthy, 2003).

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