

CURRICULUM APPROACH OF MOBILIZATION OF THE RURAL COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The desire of every nation is to distribute equitably social and economic benefits across communities. This desire has most often been skewed in favour of the urban few leaving the mass majority of rural dwellers with social and economic inequality even though they constitute the mass of the taxpayers and custodians of natural and mineral resources. The aim of this paper is to guide on how the rural communities can effectively be mobilized using the curriculum approach to ensure sustainable development planning in Nigeria.

Keywords: Desire, rural, communities, urban

INTRODUCTION

The rural communities constitute the economically backward areas in Nigeria. This has been so since the colonial days, but it need not always be so. The objective of this paper is a simple one. It is to refocus attention of the government and the people on the basic principles which must guide sustainable rural development planning in Nigeria using the curriculum approach. Nigerian rural communities are not only economically backward, the gap between it and the urban sector has been widening in recent years. Despite the potential strength achieved through political independence, the type of development pursued by Nigerians who took control of government from the colonial masters continues to resemble in many ways those of colonialism. Consequently, the living conditions of the rural people have remained virtually unaffected by any development effort (Olatunbosun, 1975).

The most dominant and common features of Nigeria at the rural level are mass poverty and illiteracy, inequality in income and social amenities. The transformation of these handicaps at the base is the key to any meaningful programme of development and social change. It was based on this desire to transform the rural communities that in 1985 when the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida came to power, his administration made it a policy to give rural development in Nigeria a pride of place. Government appreciates the very important social, cultural, economic, political and security reasons for making an all-out effort to develop the rural areas. There is recognition in this regard that human, natural, and mineral resources are primary ingredients for the growth and development of the country. The administration policy for rural development is thus based on the appreciation of the fact that the bulk of Nigeria's human, natural and mineral resources are located in the rural areas. It is admitted in this regard that there will be no true development of the country, as long as the rural areas remain undeveloped. Government therefore adopted the policy of rural development to devise the means of awakening the people to effectively use their immediate environment, as well as all other resources available to them in the environment to start off the development process (Anyawu, 1992). This process of development and social change can be facilitated through a vigorous and intensive process of mobilizing the rural communities aided by a functional curriculum programme, for effective and efficient development planning.

Mobilization in the context of this paper, in line with the view of Gana (1987), is:

A process of pooling together, harnessing, actualizing and utilizing potential human resources for the purpose of development. It is a process whereby human beings are made aware of the resources at their disposal and are also motivated and energized to collectively

utilize such resources for the improvement of their social and material condition of living (P. 10).

Similarly, Oduaran (1989) sees mobilization as something consisting primarily of movements or drives or campaigns specifically designed to activate the masses into an accelerated process of change.

Consequent upon the above, one will agree that it is pertinent for the rural communities to be armed with effective empowerment potentials that will redirect and re-orientate them towards positive development planning. Retrospectively, during a joint Conference of UNESCO and UNDP soon after their formation, it was resolved that a World Wide attack should be launched on illiteracy and mass poverty. A policy which amounted, in short, to rural reconstruction was approved. Rural people have been, and are still, the overwhelming majority of the population in the developing countries of Africa, and constitute the mass of the tax payers and voters of their countries.

Thus, even as rural communities constitute a major political force, the established order in most developing countries does not appear to cater for their needs. Practical experience in most countries points to the fact that given the skills, the motivation, and the leadership, rural people can participate constructively in development activities (Anyawu, 1982).

PLANNING A FUNCTIONAL CURRICULUM PROGRAMME

Education is the prime instrument for the achievement of sustainable development planning in the rural communities. This takes the form of a properly articulated and functional curriculum programme. Curriculum may take the form of socially derived needs (Othanel, 1957). Olaitan, (1997), approached curriculum as a sequence of potential experiences set up in the school or any functional literacy programme for the purpose of disciplining children and youths in group ways of thinking and acting. This calls for education for self-reliance which is an ideology or a mental liberation. Thus the beginning point for its development

according to Ukeji (1991) is the mind. Corroborating, Ikoku (1977), has aptly observed that "The battle for self-reliance should begin with the battle for the mind, with a clear idea of what you are and what you want".

Maslow (1954) and Argris (1965) used the term self-actualization to describe the human tendency to develop in ways consistent with existing self-structure. Hence the schools through their programmes and experiences should stimulate and foster the development of self-actualized and fully functioning persons. Through proper education, the individual can be helped not only to develop proper self-actualization and become fully functioning person but can also be helped to transcend the existing self-concept when it is incongruent with his experiences and abilities (Ukeji, 1991). Stating further that, concepts, mass media jingles, exhortations can help proper and well organized educational programmes together with appropriate leadership at all levels must proceed *pari passu* with these mass programmes for the achievement of the desired and lasting results.

For instance, the schools through it curriculum programmes should be deliberately utilized to change our minds and attitude through appropriate programmes. The rural dwellers mostly farmers should be exposed to the need, the possibility and the desirability of being self-sufficient and self-reliant in food production. The mass literacy programmes should sensitize the rural dwellers on the importance of agriculture, interest them to the basic agricultural techniques and methods. The mass literacy programme is perhaps one possible strategy to make our education more responsive to the needs of the individuals and the development of his talents and creativity, and more in consonance with the development of self-reliance which is a product of sustainable development planning.

Essentially the curriculum programme of education should be a system for the development of the people excellence; that is the fullest development of the potentialities of every individual for his personal happiness and for his effectiveness in social reconstruction; it

should be the development of stimulating people to think critically and act scientifically; it should be tailored towards a process of developing our manpower resource through the development of the potentialities of the individual. This curriculum programme can only be reinforced and the objective achieved through a functional Mass Literacy Campaign. A campaign for mass literacy according to Anyawu (1998) should pin itself down to the training of the masses of Nigeria to acquire the skills of reading and writing as an essential starting point to the social, political and economic heights attained by the developed world, in the Nigeria socio-economic and political context, such training should be functionally oriented. Functional literacy is an important aspect of literacy training in that it combines the teaching of reading and writing with the teaching of another skill in a programme related to a given community, environment, or economic and social development.

ACTUALISING THE NATURE OF THE TASK

In order to help clarify the nature of the task it is important to identify its major components. Essentially, Mabogunje (1991) has identified five major components of the task of rural development planning.

These are:

1. **Spatial re-structuring:** This entails the comprehensive physical re-arrangement of farmland, villages, rural roads, rural markets to facilitate accessibility, to install an efficient and effective mechanism for mobilizing the farmers and to incubate a more adaptable frame for progress up-grading of productive capabilities of rural residents.
2. **Social re-orientation:** This entails the determination of the nature of the access to power and decision making by rural producer in those areas of activities that directly affect their lives and livelihood. For various reasons, it can be argued that

a new form of co-operative based solely on the farmers themselves (and not on outside, bureaucratic administrative agents) and on territorially defined communities hold great promise.

3. **Institution building:** This involves the establishment of various institutions committed to the maintenance and progressive improvement of the new rural order. Such institutions would include those concerned with ministering to the needs of the rural population in terms of credits, information and other vital inputs into their economic and social life.
4. **Administrative reform:** This would involve the over hauling of the existing administrative set-up and re-definition of functions. A high degree of decentralised decision-making is an essential component of this reform.
5. Legislative and legal formation, new sets of laws, rules and regulations would be necessary to bring about this major transformation in rural areas.

Of these five tasks the most exigent and therefore most critical for sustaining development is that of spatial re-structuring the physical development planning of rural areas. From the realistic approach, it is this that gives real meaning to all the other tasks, and that guarantee their chances of success. And, in a limited way, the federal government has initiated some efforts towards rural transformation and development. The government at one time or the other has made effort with the World Bank support at bring about physical rural development through granting of micro credit scheme, agricultural revolving loan, poverty eradication programme etc. is a testimony of this new realization.

Actualizing the above tasks can be complemented with a vigorous mobilization programme which should involve everybody in the rural communities.-

- i. The family in order to rescue it from its battered state;
- ii. The youth organizations as the vehicle of national regeneration;

- iii. Women organizations as the breeding and dissemination ground for the ideas and processes that will build the future and as agents for more meaningful role for the women and the family;
- iv. Farmers and farmers cooperative as vehicles in the march towards self-sufficiency in food production;
- v. The handicapped to assist them to lead successful lives and contribute to national growth; and
- vi. Policy makers and executors to give them and to receive from them the ideas and schemes necessary for success in our national endeavours and to get them realize and appreciate the meaning and services.

Clearly the mobilization programme geared to achieve the tasks should be a massive, colossal and comprehensive endeavour designed to involve every member of the rural community and to cover every facet of our national life.

SOME APPROACHES TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The goal of development is to achieve a rapid growth in output that is relatively equally distributed to the mutual advantage of both the urban few and the rural majority. The only way to achieve this goal in Nigeria, is through a shift of emphasis in overall planning strategy in favour of the rural sector. Based on this, Anyawu (1991) and Olastunbosun (1975) identified the approaches that can facilitate sustainable rural development.

1. IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCE

The colonial and national development strategies and policies in Nigeria continuously over-allocated resources to urban areas and under-allocated resources to the rural sector, further contributing to the prevailing inequality between the urban and the rural sector. Better public services such as education, health services, electricity, housing and nutrition which can help to improve human resource are usually concentrated in the urban

areas. This practice is a legacy of the former colonial masters but is still followed by the local elites who have replaced them.

Good health facilities, economic growth and development by contributing to the quality and productive potential of people. In Nigeria, health facilities are grossly inadequate. Doctor/population ratio could be misleading because it has no relevance to health care delivery. If the rural poor are to improve their living conditions and contribute to the overall development, they must not be denied the essential services to improve their human capital.

2. RURAL CREDIT SCHEMES

Rural poverty and the very low level of savings in the rural sector are some of the most serious problems facing rural credit in Nigeria. There is also lack of effective rural credit institutions. Various attempts by various administrations to make credit available to the rural sector by establishing institutionalized credits scheme have not been very successful. The government have at various times dispensed a large amount of credit, but not in collecting the loans when due, and it is far from clear what impact¹ these schemes have had on the overall living conditions of the rural people and production.

A common characteristic of these institutionalized credit schemes is excessive operational cost. As a result, most of the money meant to help the rural people is spent on administrative expenses. They are equally characterized by highly complex and centralized organizational structures. As a consequence, they often have complex procedures and excessive red tape in processing loan applications. These have resulted in undue delays in approval and in loans not being made available to the rural people when required.

If credit schemes are to be successful in improving the living conditions of the rural people such schemes will need to be able to mobilize credit resources from governments, private organizations, banks and individuals and makes these resources available to the rural people

in small loans of between N50, 000 to N100, 000, collect the amount loaned when due and perform all these at a small administrative cost per loan.

For the success of the rural credits schemes, training should be provided on a permanent basis for those who will run the scheme. In addition, the promotion as well supervising and servicing of the scheme should be on a permanent basis.

3. THE INTEGRATED APPROACH

The integrated approach is based on the appreciation that community development means more than road building or construction of dams through self-help efforts. The crux of this approach is that a comprehensive programme for community development should include provisions for the socio-economic, cultural and political development of the people. The integrated approach, therefore, calls for the effective coordination of all the human and material resources available in any community for the achievement of its maximum improvement. Its main aim is the integration of the economic, social, political and cultural aspects of the community effort to achieve development.

4. THE SECTORAL APPROACH

This manifests itself in compartmentalized approaches to community development, in this approach, different agencies, professional or government ministries may undertake various development programmes within the same community, such may include programmes on health, agriculture, housing education, recreation or cooperatives. Such sectoral programmes are usually undertaken separately and without any coordinating machinery.

The problem with this approach is that it is expensive in terms of manpower, finance and infrastructure. It can also lead to role conflict, in the providing agencies. This is because there can be the practical situation in which the departments or agencies may be encroaching on the areas of interest of the others.

CONCLUSION

The most dominant and common features of developing economies including Nigeria, are poverty, unemployment and inequality. The transformation of these handicaps at the base holds the key to any meaningful programme of development to achieve social justice. The rural communities constitute the bulk of Nigeria's human natural and mineral resources. These people can be effectively mobilized and motivated towards harnessing their natural potential for the transformation of their backward status. This transformational process of the rural communities can only be achieved through a conscious and deliberate development planning within the framework of sustainable development aided by functional curriculum approach.

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