GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP WITH TRADITIONAL AGENCIES IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

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Abstract
This work discussed the place of government and traditional agencies in community development. It looked at key concepts like development and what it stands for, the idea of partnership in doing business, what community development is and the merits and demerits of partnership in community development. It saw a positive relationship in such partnership if it is handled well.

Key: Government, Development, Partnership, Community development

Introduction
Scholars have at least agreed that society arose out of the social contract reached between the people and their leaders. When this began is what nobody can say with any degree of certainty. How it actually began is also not traceable. Finding out who or which society began the activity of social contract first is today a venture nobody can take with success. However, scholars like Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Locke and other have tries to come up with hypothetical theories of how civil society began. Today we call these theories the social contract theories even though they were not verified. Though not verified, their explanations of what they thought happened look very logical that we now call them theories instead of hypotheses which shows that at most science is also speculative in nature. Thomas Hobbes’ theory was the outcome of what he observed during the English civil war fought between 1640 and 1660. The war had been caused by social, economic, constitutional, and religious problems. However, the last straw that broke the camel’s back was the attempt by the English king Charles I to impose the Anglican liturgy on the people of Scotland. People had rioted to show that the king could not just impose his will on the people without their consent. This violated the voluntary agreement among people that defined the relationship of individuals with one another and with government. Jean Jacques Rousseau on his part also wrote a social contract treatise in which he developed a case for civil liberty and helped prepare the ideological background of the French revolution. In it he had defended the popular will against the divine rights that tended to give kings absolute power over the people. John Locke in his social contract treatise also attacked the theory of divine rights of kings. He argued that sovereignty did not reside with the state but with the people. To him, the state is supreme only if it is bound by civil and natural law. Civil laws at least arise out of social agreement.

Today, we witness social contract in democratic activities when political office aspirants draw up manifestos and canvass people to vote for them. The contract actually comes to life when the people vote in a candidate during election. It is expected that the government, which is the instrument of governance should help the people and communities to achieve the goals that help them to live well since the people have helped such a government to be in power. This is partnership and a partnership is an arrangement where parties, known as partners, agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests. The parties in a partnership may be individuals, businesses, interest-based organisations, schools, governments or combinations. In this work the partnership of interest is that between the government and the communities that make up the territory where the government exists. This means that the earlier any government realises this, the better the relationship it will have with the people. The people give up most of their liberties to the government in return for some very crucial services that only the government can render to the people and for the people. This therefore brings us to the main point of this paper which seeks to discuss the advantages and the disadvantages of the partnership between the government and the communities that make up the territory where the government exists. We will now attempt the definition of the concepts in this work for clarity.
In development issues, many agents are involved in bringing development to bear. Governments are agents of development. People including men, women, youths and their organisations are agents of development. Institutions like the political, educational and religious institutions are all agents of development either at the individual level or at the community level. Traditional agencies in community development therefore include a lot of things. Traditional agencies include traditional and village associations, rural men and women organisations, rural youth organisations, and corporative associations and workgroups. Traditional rulers like Chiefs, ‘Ezes’, ‘Emirs’ ‘Obas’ can be included in the list of traditional agents of community development. Non-governmental organisations whether township or rural based are in the main strong agents of community development. The above individuals or organisations act as agents of community development which partner with governments in bringing about development activities and structures in communities.

Government

The concept we are going to look at here is the household name government. What is government? To this question we will begin by saying that the word government is a hydra headed concept which is viewed by people according to how it affects them. While some people in the category of the German philosopher Karl Marx see nothing good in government. He had seen government as the executive committee of the rich people in society. He saw government as the instrument of oppression in the hands of the rich to oppress the poor. Many others see government as the only viable source of order in human society. At least, human beings claim that they are the only ones that have government for organisation. As far as this paper is concerned, this is debatable when we observe the high level of organisation among some ants and animals. But be that as it may, Robert Burke (2009) defined government as ‘political organization comprising the individuals and institutions authorized to formulate public policies and conduct affairs of the state. He further maintained that governments are empowered to establish and regulate the interrelationships of the people within their territorial confines, the relations of the people with the community as a whole, and the dealings of the community with other political entities. From the above, we can see that government is actually an instrument or tool used in the activity of governing. This governing relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power, or verify performance. Government as a tool for governing or carrying out governance is found in every sphere of human life. Looking back at the introduction of this work, we see that government is a social set up for administration wherever it is found. A government arises out of people’s agreement. Government as an agency comes to life when people agree to have one to help them achieve a collective goal that cannot be achieved individually by members of a community or society. A good government is therefore one that exercises power that assures the governed a worthwhile pattern of good results, while at the same time avoiding the undesirable ones. As an instrument, government at whatever level should strive to help people in achieving the good things of life which actually sum up to development.

Development

The question here is what is development? Development is a word that has become difficult to lend itself to any single definition. The reason for this is because of the many ways in which it is used in everyday discourse. The conception of development therefore depends on who is concerned. For instance, Gomery (1972) described it as a seamless web without clear lines of distinction among its social, political, economic, religious and scientific strands. Seers (1972) also would see development as a process which reinforces all aspects of the society and involves alteration in human activities and attributes so that what is called economic, social and political relations become more productive and for more people. According to Rodney (1972), development at the individual level ‘‘implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being.’’

Many times, people use the word development in a confused way. Some think it is all about and the same thing as economic development. However, we have to note that though development and economic development are related; the word development independently describes improvement in human conditions. The word development means the use of man’s creative energy to understand the environment. It is the use of local resources to transform the environment. It means the removal of obstacles so as to move on ahead. This will improve standard of living. In research terms, development therefore is a measure of the number of the research minds a society has. To Ekwonwa (1990), development is a normative concept whose goal is improvement in human conditions.
Individuals are the prime movers of society. They aid or hinder development. Availability of resources, education, man power, and technological increase is all important in development, but all these depend on the personality of individuals concerned. If the few scientists we have manufacture computer but we do not know how to use them, they are of no use. There is an interaction between people and development. An individual personality can make a difference in the development or non-development of a society.

Economic Development
What does economic development aim at? It aims at increase in the income capital of the individuals. Economic progress is always aimed at increasing productivity and a rise in the income per capital of individuals. It aims at increasing national income. It means help in the provision of employment for all and reduction of taxation to increase private individual purchasing power. Economic development has several factors. All these are geared towards the good of the individual; to better the life of the individual. In the long run all these mean a rise in the people’s standard of living and well being. In most economic planning we use resources to promote the happiness of the individual in the social, political, social, and cultural development relating these to personality development.

Political development
This implies improvement in government and the political structure in the country. It also implies concern for the people. It implies internal autonomy or the existence of a nation which rules itself through indigenous organs and persons without interference from foreign rule or influence. It is a system which involves universal suffrage, freedom of the press and of speech for all. And equal opportunities for all especially in public utilities and social services. All these will lead to the development of the individual person.

Cultural Development
It implies that those elements of culture, traditional, values institution which are inimical to modernity are reformed or changed so that man can now live better. This is cultural development. This is done also to develop the individual person for a better society to be created.

Social Development
This is development in the social relationship of people in the overall surrounding of the individual. This embraces development in the economic, political, religion, education sectors. A society creates personalities as personalities create societies. The two shape and develop each other. A number of theories have been advanced over the years to explain the issue of development as it concerns people. In some cases, development is seen differently as it concerns the developed and the undeveloped or the developing economies of the world. Here, we consider the modernization and the dependency theories of development.

The modernization theory of development is that which sees development as a total transformation of the pre-modern societies into the types of technologies that characterize the western nations of the world. Most of the countries of the west are seen as the economically advanced, prosperous and stable nations of the world. As a result, it is thought that development should mean knowledge of the complex western systems and the application of the same in transforming the less developed or the less complex nations of the world. Therefore, development then means building more schools and colleges, expansion and enrolment at all levels of education, purchase and equipment of mass communication gadgets, building of hospitals, eating foods considered modern in nature and style etc. On the other hand, the dependency theory of development rose as an alternative to the modernization theory. The dependency theory arose when it was seen that the modernization theory did more harm than good to the people it was thought to help. Development is therefore something we achieve at a price and most of the time the price becomes too enormous for one person or a few persons and requires greater partnering to achieve.

The dependency theory had its beginning in the work of Rostow (1963) who believed that it is possible to identify all societies in their economic dimensions. He had advanced a five stage theory of economic development for the third world countries which they must follow if they wanted to develop. Of note is that these theories all turned out to be economic theories of social development excluding the other aspects of social development including the political, religious, and educational. At this point, we will look at community development which cannot just be tied to one aspect of development alone but to every aspect of development.
What is community development?

Community development according to the United Nations Organisation is "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems." Community wellbeing (economic, social, environmental and cultural) often evolves from this type of collective action being taken at a grassroots level. Community Development Exchange defines community development as: both an occupation and a way of working with communities. By an occupation, community development focuses on such a work as a community development worker in a local authority. Community development’s key purpose is to build communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect.

Community development involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channelled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals.

Community development practitioners work alongside people in communities to help build relationships with key people and organizations and to identify common concerns. They create opportunities for the community to learn new skills and, by enabling people to act together, community development practitioners help to foster social inclusion and equality.

Community development practitioners have over many years developed a range of approaches for working within local communities and in particular with disadvantaged people. Since the nineteen sixties and seventies through the various anti poverty programmes in both developed and developing countries, community development practitioners have been influenced by structural analyses as to the causes of disadvantage and poverty i.e. inequalities in the distribution of wealth, income, land etc. and especially political power and the need to mobilize people’s power to effect social change.

Personal, the family and the community development at large

Development stands for positive alteration in the activities and life of people. It is all about people both at the individual, family and community levels that help in raising people above poverty level.

Individual level

Development at individual level would not be anything less than achieving the three aims of education which includes affective, cognitive and psychomotor effects. To be able to do this, an individual will have to undergo the process of education. Education gives knowledge which we know is power. Education helps in equipping every individual with knowledge which makes such a one to become employable. And it is only a person’s employability that helps raise such a person above poverty level in any society. It should be noted that the more educated a person become, the better the chances of being employed. The higher one goes in education the higher the skills such a person acquires. And from the above, the greatest direct approach to a person’s development is by giving such a person proper and quality education. This proper and quality education should be provided at every level.

Family

At family level, efforts should be made to provide them with education, technology and economic opportunities to help them rise above poverty level. There should be co-operative formations that would lead to economic integration. This would give families power to achieve together what an individual family or individual cannot achieve alone.

Community

At community level, there are numerous approaches to community development. They include: Community capacity building which focuses on helping communities obtain, strengthen, and maintain the ability to set and achieve their own development objectives. Social capital formation focuses on benefits derived from the cooperation between individuals and groups. Economic development focuses on the "development" of developing countries as measured by their economies, although it includes the processes and policies by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people using Community economic development (CED). This is an alternative to conventional economic development which encourages using local resources in a way that enhances economic outcomes while improving social conditions. Sustainable development seeks to achieve, in a balanced manner, economic development, social development and environmental protection outcomes. Community-driven development (CDD), an
economic development model which shifts over reliance on central governments to local communities. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a methodology that seeks to uncover and use the strengths within communities as a means for sustainable development. Faith-based community development utilises faith based organisations to bring about community development outcomes. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a partnership approach to research that equitably involves, for example, community members, organizational representatives, and researchers in all aspects of the research process and in which all partners contribute expertise and share decision-making and ownership, which aims to integrate this knowledge with community development outcomes.

From the above discusses, it is clear that development and community development at that are multi-faceted and requires many instruments for tackling it. Development requires very many strategies for it to be even scratched at. It requires both the government and the people’s efforts. Traditional agencies as mentioned in the introduction of this work can be very viable tools in development, since he who wears the shoe knows where it pinches. Traditional agencies can contribute knowledge on areas of development needs. They can contribute manpower during project execution through the mobilization of community youths for work. Since traditional rulers are custodians of the people and land, they can always advice on issues of clash between the tradition of the people and development activities. They can also provide development needs in an area through assisting the government in determining what steps to take in bringing about development in other areas.

Advantages of government partnership with traditional agencies

1. One of the good advantages of government traditional agency partnership is that it helps in creating important and strong links sustained between the government and the local community. It brings the government closer to the people. This breeds a consciousness on the people that the government they helped put in power cares and recognizes them. This is a sense of trust which breeds strong cooperative spirit.
2. It creates important and effective anti-poverty strategies which actually require integrated social action between the government and the community. One of the major concerns of both government and people in the world today is the task of combating the scourge of poverty. And since no people can boast of achieving any meaningful development when they are poor, it then needs concerted efforts to fight poverty which is the very first point of call when it comes to development. On the main therefore, to fight poverty requires the cooperative effort of the people and government in a strong development partnership.
3. It helps in the mobilization of the people for action since weights are made lighter by many hands. There is a contributory effort at achieving development goals of the people in a partnership. Social development requires conscious mobilization. It requires mobilizing both people and resources in a cooperative manner. In partnerships, contributory efforts are pulled together to achieve great aims. The community and government can do this now that the increase in human population puts much strain on the economy. Government efforts as well as that of communities should be complimented. This complimentary effort can be made between the government and communities in development partnerships.
4. This creates a lifeline for the communities in issues of achieving their goals. With government assistance in partnership, communities can actually put their development needs to manifest realities. This at the same time lowers the strain of development efforts on the part of the government with the people’s help. In an effort of ‘‘aka nri kwoo aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwoo aka nri’’ none of the parties suffers much.

Disadvantages of government partnership with traditional agencies

1. There is a lack of debate on the continuance of such issues as poverty, inequality and social exclusion and on the strategies required to combat these negative aspects of social life in view of the fact that the government sometimes ‘babies’ the communities. Here only the government says what it can contribute in development efforts which may not actually have a bearing on people’s needs.
2. To a reduction in collective action in relation to key issues, while absorbing significant time and energy. Truth is that decisions take many debates and time to arrive at in partnerships, and since the government is often far from the community they may want to partner with many resources are spent trying to reach an agreement that will be fitting for all.
3. This can create a general lack of concern since the actors, community people, would see such partnership as an end in itself instead of a stepping stone for action. This can in turn threaten some strongly articulated action of change which can be very effective for community development work. This arises when the government cannot just rise and say this is what we want to do, and this is how we want to do it.
Conclusion

Of note is that partnership in whatever form is good when it comes to achieving an aim. In government-traditional agency partnership, development efforts can be rewarding when we note that government-people relationship is a contract. This contract should always be in place and respected. Of note in this work is that we have chosen to inter use the word community with traditional agency which has to do with the local people. Development requires collective effort which sometimes creates it problems since interests may clash. Resources may be meagre to go round, creating a crises situation in most cases. However, whatever has an advantage must also have a disadvantage since nothing is inherently good or bad. But when we apply the ideal type thesis of analysis, we see that in many areas, partnership in development issues out class a one-party show. In today’s world, neither the government alone nor the traditional agencies can make much headway in community development without help. Therefore, we conclude that there is the need for partnering for meaningful development to be achieved.

References

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