**History of community development globally**

**Keywords**: history, community development, social work

**Introduction**

Over the years the struggle to eradicate poverty and maintain a satisfying standard of living has been the plan of every government. This is because every government craves for a developed nation (Bonye, Aasoglenang & Owusu-Sekyere, 2013; Amakye, 2017). Development is a vital necessity to the growth and sustentation of any vibrant nation (Lawal, 2011). Community development seeks to improve the quality of life a group of people. It helps the community strengthen itself in order to improve people’s lives and address issues that have been identified by the community and it builds upon existing skills and strengths within the community (Inkoom 2011). Significantly, over the years there have been improved changes in what was known as community development a hundred years and what it is today. Political shifts, population growth and changes in cultural dynamics have often times played a vital role in how community development manifests. Some of the classic concerns of community development found expression in the early 1990s in the notion of ‘capacity building’. There was an interest in developing the ability of local groups and networks to function and to contribute to social and economic development (Smith, 2012). Gilchrist and Taylor (2011) suggest three vital aspects of community development: Informal education, collective action, organization development (Gilchrist and Taylor 2011: 10-12). The notion of community development in Nigeria owes a great deal to the efforts of colonial administrators. After the Second World War, the British Colonial Office became concerned with community development (Smith, 2013).

Colonial community development was initially called 'mass education' by the Colonial Officers and they focused on adult literacy classes in rural areas (Skinner, 2010). After 1948 it became known as 'fundamental education' or 'community development' and it started to address a wider range of issues such as agriculture, health, transport, and even infrastructure (Smyth, 2004). In effect, it became what would now be called an 'integrated rural development strategy' and from the outset ideas of 'self-help'. The concern of community development was in response to the growth of nationalism and an outcome of a desire to increase the rate of industrial/economic development (Smith, 2013). These concerns were: with social and economic development, the fostering and capacity of local co-operation and self-help and the use of expertise and methods drawn from the local community. Community development entails the processes by which community members come together to take collective actions and generate solutions to a common identified problem (Ifeanyi, 2006). Mayo (1994) mentioned that community development has gained widespread emphasis, from very varied quarters, including international agencies such as the United Nations and the World Bank, as well as from national and regional governments and from non-governmental and community based organisations (NGOs and CBOs). The World Bank, for instance, sees community development as a means of ensuring that the Third World development projects reached the poorest in the most efficient and cost-effective manner, whilst the range of structural adjustment and anti-poverty projects imposed on national governments actually involved the poorest in making ever greater contributions to financing those programmes, for example in terms of fees for housing, health and education (Craig, 2014).

Various studies such as Community Work and Social Work (Baldock, 1974), Community Development in America: A Brief History (Phifer, 1990), Community participation, community development and non-formal education (Mayo, 1994) and The Roots of Community Development in Colonial Office Policy and Practice in Africa (Smyth, 2004) have been carried out on the history of community development but they are not recent studies. Hence, this paper will add to the recent accessible literatures on the historical view of community development.

**Missionaries and community development**

Community development is a movement to promote better living for the whole community, with active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community (Craig, 2014). Missionaries in the colonial era were the frontiers for community development. They engaged in various educational, health and empowerment activities as their means to effective community development. They converted people into various manual works such as gardening, marketing, cooking, and tending horses and on plantation work, agricultural field and coffee garden (Raghumani, 2012). They set up mission schools for children and adult classes for adults. Although their aim was to spread Christianity but it however rendered a valuable service and did a considerable amount of spade work for the growth and development of education in inaccessible area (Raghumani, 2012). One of such missionary work is presented in the Report of Secretary of Jeypore who revealed that the Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church which was established by missionaries, established a weaving Training School and subsequently a Co-operative society called Koraput Weavers Co-operative Society’ to help impart training to the poor weavers. Besides weaving, they also gave trainings on making baskets, weaving mats, carpentry, blacksmith work, bamboo work, weaving and pottery. All these were targeted at developing individuals in the community (Raghumani, 2012).

**History of Community development**

The concept of community development can be traced from about two hundred years ago and since then numerous organizations and movements have devoted their time to improving rural life which emerged in the post-civil war era (Phifer, 1990). The democratic political revolution of France and Britain as well as the Second World War played vital roles in the existing of community development (Farooq, 2012). These events were the major reasons for the emergence of community development. After the heavy destruction in these occasions, the community filed with social problems for which rehabilitation and construction was felt. From that point, sociologists, anthropologists, social workers and technocrats were activated to develop a programme named community development programme for the assistance and cooperation of the community people. The development of the community is not possible without the participation of the people. Community development is essential for national as well as international development for his purpose various countries launched community development program in the multi sector of under developed countries (Farooq, 2012). Later on the notion of community development became associated with and labeled as social action (Smith, 2012). According to Thomas (2012), five main strands or approaches characterized community work in the early 1980s. They are:

* Community Action: Community action was seen as focusing on the organisation of those adversely affected by the decisions, or non-decisions, of public and private bodies and by more general structural characteristics of society. The strategy aims to promote collective action to challenge existing socio-political and economic structures and processes, to explore and explain the power realities of people’s situations and, through this twin pronged approach; develop both critical perspectives of the status quo and alternative bases of power and action.
* Community Organisation: Community organization, according to Thomas, involves the collaboration of separate community or welfare agencies with or without the additional participation of statutory authorities, in the promotion of joint initiatives.
* Community Development: Community development was seen as emphasizing self-help, mutual support, the building up of neighbourhood integration, the development of neighbourhood capacities for problem-solving and self-representation, and the promotion of collective action to bring a community’s preferences to the attention of political decision-makers.
* Social Planning: This orientation/approach was presented as being concerned with the assessment of community needs and problems and the systematic planning of strategies for meeting them. Social planning comprises the analysis of social conditions, social policies and agency services; the setting of goals and priorities; the design of service programmes and the mobilisation of appropriate resources; and the implementation and evaluation of services and programmes.
* Service Extension: This is a strategy that seeks to extend agency operations and services by making them more relevant and accessible. This includes extending services into the community, giving these services and the staff who are responsible for them a physical presence in a neighbourhood. (Thomas 2012).

**Baldock’s (1974) Historical development of Community Development in Britain**

**First Phase (1880-1920):** During this period the community work was mainly seen as a method of social work. It was considered as a process of helping the individuals to enhance their social adjustments. It acted as major player to co-ordinate the work of voluntary agencies.

**Second phase (1920-1950):** This period saw the emergence of new ways of dealing with social issues and problems. The community organization was closely associated with central and state governments program for urban development. The important development in this period was its association with community association movement.

**Third phase (1950 onwards):** it emerged as a reaction to the neighborhood idea, which provided an ideological phase for the second phase. It was period were the professional development of social work took place. Understanding the shortcomings in the existing system, it was a period where the social workers sought for a professional identity.

**Fourth phase:** It is the ongoing period that has marked a significant involvement of the community action. It questioned the very relationship of the community work and social work. It was thus seen as period of radical social movement and we could see the conflicts of community with authority. The association of social workers and the community are deprofessionalized during this period. Thus it was during this period the conflictual strategies that were introduced in the community work.

**Brief History of Nigeria community development**

Community development is a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Community development has come a long way in Nigeria; it dates back to the colonial era (Nseabasi, 2012). Community development processes and practices entails the inclusion and participation of different interest groups, stakeholders and actors including the people whose livelihood projects are geared at improving, government and non-governmental bodies, funding organizations, project experts and executors (Akande, 2010; Nseabasi, 2012).

Community development in Nigeria can be traced as far back as the 1900s when we were ruled by the colonial masters. Lord Lugard who was the colonial governor conquered the area through indirect rule. He had warrant chiefs at the village level that represented the government (Nseabasi, 2012). British colonial interest in rural Nigeria was characterized by two-prong exploitation. In the first place, the rural areas were available only as primary resource areas for export of raw materials. The second level of exploitation saw the rural areas as food productive centers for the few urban centers which eventually were to serve the basic food needs of the colonial inhabitants (Nseabasi, 2012). Furthermore, Nigeria at pre-independence was dominantly rural which depended on agricultural practices for subsistence and exchanges. However, the spread of Christianity tremendously increased the level of development individuals enjoined in the colonial era (Nseabasi, 2012). Church authorities and missionaries set out missionary schools and hospitals to attend to the basic needs of man. The colonial government township ordinance Act promulgated in 1917 dictated the developmental course of the rural areas when it classified settlements into first, second and third class for the purpose of infrastructural provision (Nseabasi, 2012). The first class settlements were mostly foreignized by the whites Europeans and their workers. Consequently, such settlements were the focus of heavy infrastructural concentration, and Lagos represented the classic example of such discriminatory infrastructural concentration. On the other hand, the second and the third class settlements were not given adequate policy attention in infrastructural provision (Olayiwola & Adeleye, 2005). Furthermore, different governments in Nigeria have in the past introduced various community development programmes such as: Directorate of Food, Green Revolution Programme, Operation Feed the Nation, Structural adjustment programme (SAP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Agricultural and Land Development Authority (NALDA) for the benefit of all citizens (Ayuba, 2012). Today, community development displays its self through self-help programmes.

**International bodies and their indices for community development**

In the World Bank’s classification system, 206 economies are ranked by their levels of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. By the 2003 classification, 59 nations or 28.6% (including Nigeria) are low-income countries (LICs) with GNI of $765 or less; 57 nations (27.7%) are low middle-income countries (LMCs) with GNI of between $766 and $3,035; thirty-five nations (17.0%) are upper middle-income countries (UMCs) with GNI of between $3,036 and $9,385; thirty-five nations (17.0) are Other high-income countries with GNI of $9,386 or more and 24 nations (11.7%) constitute the High-income OECD countries. Accordingly, nations are broadly divided into 2 groups: the developing countries formed by LICs, LMCs and UMCs and the other high-income countries and the developed countries (High-income OECD countries) (Todaro and Smith, 2002; African Development Bank, 2007; Onyenekenwa, 2011). Also, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) classifies countries according to their level of human development, including health and education attainments. By 2007/8 UNDP human development rating, Nigeria was the 158th out of 175 United Nations member countries (Todaro and Smith, 2002; UNDP, 2007; Onyenekenwa, 2011).

**Social work and community development in Nigeria**

Social workers are often faced with numerous challenges, yet it is a rewarding career. The importance of social workers cannot be separated from the lives of individuals, families and groups of people most especially the disadvantaged, disabled, the elderly and those who are in need of the services social workers render (Onyekwere, 2016). Social work and social welfare programmes in Nigeria were initiated by missionary groups such as the Salvation Army and the Roman Catholic Churches, Methodist churches etcetera. The spread of social workers in Nigeria started in Lagos and the then social welfare programmes and social work activities were domiciled in the Social Development Division of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, although, the ministry was manned by untrained social workers (Onyekwere, 2016). Social work is at the heart of individuals and community structural strategies to enhance individuals and community sense of belonging in participating in activities that will strengthen individuals and community peace (Onyekwere, 2016).

**Justification for the continuity of community development**

* Man exists and through this existence various interactions leads to problems that yields to community development. If these problems exist, then actions to tackle them must always be considered.
* Governments and those that they govern especially democratic societies would always need community development workers.
* Community development emphasizes empowerment, equality, social justice, participation and representation.
* Social workers exist to ensure that individuals enjoy the life they live, thus, they will always be available to help communities solve their problem

**Conclusion**

Community development is an important tool aimed at improving the lives of people. Since community development aims at getting individuals involved in measures through which they can solve their problems, it is apparent that extensive study on the type of problems they are faced with is carried out by social workers, government and all a sundry to ensure that people enjoy and appreciate the kind of help they receive. Apparently, in the next few years other studies will go a long way in evaluating the state of Nigeria community development practice.

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