

Modeling ‘Participation’ for Effective Community Development in Nigeria

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Abstract:- The study seeks to determine and propose a model of community development that would prove effective in Nigeria. The basis of the study is a critique of extant approaches to development that maintain a top-down approach, where beneficiaries of development look up to a ‘superior’ authority/power to trickle down development. These models of development include modernisation, dependency and global reformism. This critique holds that, while such an approach ensures dependence on local, state or national authorities, it takes away the dignity of the person by neglecting the unique role of the individual person in society. Alternative development, also known as transformational development, offers another model of development, where the nature of community is upheld and the individual’s place respected. Karol Wojtyla’s notion of participation as the foundation for authentic action is used as a theoretical foundation to propose another model of development in Nigeria. The study includes Twelve (12) communities in Nigeria, drawn from diverse locations, engaging them while they participate in a community development project. The aim was to stimulate participation by all, while observing the attitudes, commitments and progress which their common participation engendered. The method employed was participant-observation method infused with survey, where the researchers involved themselves in the communities as development stimulators. Small scale community projects were targeted and monitored to determine the motivations, incentives and benefits of individual participation. Data collected included: type of project, reach of beneficiaries, types of individual participation/contributions, level of accountability and speed/success of completion and attitudes of participants. Research outcomes were analysed using Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient.

Keywords:- Model; Effective Community Development; Participation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Development in Nigeria is generally considered the responsibility of government. This idea is very widespread and is responsible for most of the expectations citizens have towards various level of government in Nigeria. This represents a top-down approach to development, where development is expected to trickle down to the communities from a central and higher authority. However, in Nigeria’s public life, there is a serious crisis of integrity (Ipadeola, 2016; Imhanrenialena, 2017). From the school system to public service, the police, banks, markets, politics and even the churches, there is a broad distribution of acts and general practices that deny individuals and the society as a whole a claim on integrity. In a 2016 study, Ipadeola found that, “corruption has eaten deep in the Nigeria government system in the area of bribe and kickbacks (see also: Fagbemi, 2010; Olalekan, 2014; Adenugba & Omolawal, 2014; Eluu, 2015). This poor status of integrity is seen in the large number of substandard, abandoned or otherwise white-elephant projects that litter Nigerian communities. Many political big-wigs straddle communities offering help in a disdainful and disrespectful manner, while the beneficiaries are consistently belittled by the arrogance of the benefactor’s giving. The integrity of giving and of receiving is therefore compromised by the deceitful manner of development efforts in the country. One can therefore argue that the dignity of persons is dishonoured within the Nigerian model of development. Individuals consequently have a poor sense of responsibility towards developmental projects in the community as they are disconnected from the purpose and execution of the projects.

The importance of the individuals as representative of the values of society is shown by the fact that they are the lens through which society is viewed and ultimately judged (Kohn, 1999; Arslantas, 2015). It is individuals who effectively contribute to the outlook of the society and to that extent, we could say that the norms of a society are those projected by the individuals that make up that society (Savage, 2013; Wojtyla, 2013). The connection between the society and the individual has been made in ethical and political theories (Bevir, 1996; Hinman, 2008; Ryba, 2008; Woelkers, 2016).

Many of these theories claim that socialisation is the link between the individual and society, warranting the individual to be an authentic representative of the society. Bevir (1996, p. 6) identified the importance of socialisation for each society claiming that,

We adopt the beliefs we do during a process of socialisation in which the traditions of our community invariably influence us, and we act in our world where the actions of others already have created patterns of behaviour and institutions we cannot ignore. Few people would deny the empirical claim that as a matter of fact the beliefs and actions of individuals usually are informed by their social contexts.

This study therefore, seeks to project the value/dignity of persons as the foundation for development in the society. It does this by presenting participation as a mark of respect for the ideas, efforts and contributions of each towards the development of the all. It further presents this model as one that would ensure that each member of society feels responsible for the care of the products of development such that waste, misuse and misappropriation are reduced and eventually eliminated.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Community development in Nigeria today is largely a dependency. That is, development often comes to communities in form of political interventions by government and primarily by politicians. This represents a top-down approach to development, where the superiority of the giver is exaggerated and the dependence of the beneficiaries is established. The result of this is that development is divorced from the people; that there is usually a repetition of similar development projects, substandard projects, uncompleted projects or white-elephant projects. Since the beneficiaries feel far from the projects in terms of initiative and involvement, maintenance is usually poor and both the benefactor and beneficiaries look to exploit the system. Alternative development models have therefore become a trend in development studies which questions the prominent models of development in the world including modernisation, dependency and global reformism. With current efforts, the role of individual citizens in building the society has become increasingly prominent. Yet, beyond the desire to create a better image for the Nigerian society in general, this work questions the authenticity of the actions of individual Nigerians as that can be the only guarantee that any development is authentic. Therefore, this study asks the value of Karol Wojtyła's (Pope John Paul II) theory of participation as a philosophical foundation for development in Nigeria. The specific problematic of this study is: can Nigeria develop better if modelled on participation?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Braggs (1987) can be considered as one of the trail-blazers of transformational development thought. Particularly interesting is his critique of traditional conceptions of development. Braggs offers an option from development to transformation where he finds models of development like

modernisation, dependency, global reformism and another development to be inadequate since each of them does little in terms of promoting the dignity of the person in community with others. He therefore proposes that we move beyond development models to transformation, focusing on a theological perspective to explain development. For him, development must take into consideration, not only the perspective of the benefactor or beneficiary, but ultimately, the bigger perspective of the whole community (Bowers du Toit, 2012).

Similarly, Myers (2011) presented the process of development as a convergence of stories. Since this convergence usually involves an interaction between worldviews, he noted that there is mutual enrichment when it is a sincere encounter. For Myers, underdevelopment arises as a result of broken relationships and the aim of development should therefore be to restore the broken relationships. He traced all stories of development to the beginning of creation and noted the various stages it has and is still passing through culminating in the end of time. Yet from the beginning of creation to the end of time is a period which is just a little part of God's story. This provided a basis for his belief that the real story-teller is God. Following this, Offutt (2012) explains four relationships which development should be interested in restoring if humanity should participate fully in the story of God. They are: relationship with God, relationship with the self, relationships with other people and the interaction of humans with creation. In the end, he presented shalom as the end goal of transformational development.

Pope Benedict XVI, called African Theologians, in his Post-synodal exhortation, *Africae Munus*, to "come up with 'transforming theology' which can bring about 'concrete pastoral ministry' (*Africae Munus*, n. 10) to meet the challenges facing faith and life in Africa" (Ilo, 2014). At the centre of this call is the realisation that man is the image of God, which becomes the strong connection between theology and praxis (Bowers du Toit, 2012). Ilo (2014), considering *Africae Munus* and the challenges of transformative missional theological praxis in Africa's social context, saw the African situation as providing a difficult social context and held that,

It is necessary as a foundation for transformative theology that African theologians engage in social analysis and critique of the power-play and the social context which often creates unjust structures, and leads to poverty and human suffering. Indeed, the authenticity and relevance of any theology depends on the interpretation and judgment it brings to bear on the social context and its impact on Christian faith, history, mission, human and cosmic flourishing (Ilo, 2014 p. 119).

With a social context which he described as suffering and smiling, suffering and struggling and suffering and believing, he proposed that an authentic transformative theology must be able to both give an account of the present situation and articulate an alternative situation where transformation leads to a changed people.

A. Wojtyla's notion of Participation: Relevance for Authentic Development

Karol Wojtyla's philosophical anthropology emphasises how action reveals and expresses the person at the same time, and explains that action is the basis for interpersonal understanding. His description of person as characterised by action provides a basis for seeing a person's actions as authentic self-giving and the basis for regard, value and dignity in community with others. Action then becomes the basis for relating within the society in a manner that drives inclusion and promotes mutual growth temporally as well as spiritually. Wojtyla (1979) holds that human experience of anything outside the self also includes and is associated with the experience of self.

However, he notes that common patterns of relationship in the society reveal that human actions are plagued with alienation, where the act is divorced from the agent as the efficient cause (Aguas, 2013); he uses the notion of I-Thou relationship to describe the community of beings whose authentic self-giving in action, inasmuch as they act together, is a participation in the life of each other in community (Mejos, 2007; Aguas, 2013). Wojtyla sees each person's activity as intertwined with and as part of the human activity which is also bound up with God's activity on earth as an extension of the divine plan (Mejos, 2007; Myers, 2011). He asserted,

Actions, which man performs in all his different social involvements and as a member of different social groups or communities, are essentially the actions of the person. Their social or communal nature is rooted in the nature of the person and not vice versa. And yet, to grasp the personal nature of human actions it is absolutely necessary to consider the consequences of the fact that they may be performed "together with others" (Wojtyla, 1979, p. 176).

Wojtyla describes acting together with others in terms of the notion of participation. Participation denotes that the person, while acting 'together with others', remains transcendent; meaning that the person is not absorbed and conditioned by social interdependence, but retains his freedom of choice and direction. This transcendent autonomy, Wojtyla holds, is 'the basis as well as the condition of participation.' To act with others while not being subsumed in the collective means that the person retains the value of his action while sharing in the realisation and results of communal acting. Hence, the good of the person is not overtly separate from the good of the community because the good of the community is the sum of the value of the persons, who's acting together guarantees the future for all. Simpson (2001, p. 84) sums it well saying, participation is understood as the sharing of each in the making of decisions, in determining common life together. It is, in short, what participation is in *The Acting Person*, namely the joint exercise and realization of the structure of self – determination. It is tied to the further principle of subsidiarity.

In order to have authentic development therefore, the value of each person in community needs to be appreciated and upheld. The dichotomy between those in need and the

highly placed in society or government needs to be broken down such that the value of the needy is not eroded and their dignity and participation dismissed in an effort towards development. The needy must not be isolated from the community in which they live. Authentic development for Wojtyla consists not in aiding the needy or empowering the poor. Rather, it consists in aiding the needy community to develop the necessary network of appreciating the value of all in order to build a reliable socio-interdependent commonwealth. Here, aiding development can only mean facilitating strategies and institutions that place the value of each person-in-community in all decisions and development efforts. Aiding development requires building the social capital of interdependentness.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objective of this study is to present participation as a basis for authentic development. It therefore seeks to:

- Identify the motivations of individuals for supporting development efforts.
- Understand individual basis for valuing/appreciating the goods of society. And
- Propose participation as an effective model of community development in Nigerian societies.

V. METHODOLOGY

This study is in part a survey research and a part-participant observation research. The justification for taking this two-pronged approach is found in the nature of the topic. Since participation is a key element of the title, it seems that the most authentic data would be accessed through direct engagements with the communities under study and interacting with individuals on a knowing basis. The researchers stimulated participation by sharing ideas on participation through workshops to communities being observed in order to improve their understanding of how each person can be allowed to participate and feel a part of development efforts. Two workshops were designed to stimulate ideas on participation and share ways members could participate in community development. One stimulus workshop each came at the beginning and leading to a project, and at a mid-project period. Participant observation is a qualitative research tool in which the researcher not only observes the research participants, but also engages in the activities of the research participants (McGrath and Rudman, 2019). This seems to be an adequate strategy especially since the subject of study is participation.

However, since the researchers were also interested in the attitudes and motivations of individuals within the communities, the survey provided an opportunity where researchers repeatedly received atmospheric readings of these variables from the subjects of research. A simple understanding of survey research design was given by Check and Schutt (2012) as, "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions". A structured and close-ended four-point Likert scale questionnaire, containing 10 items, designed to measure the

perception of respondents on the purpose of development and the need to participate in it, was administered three times. Once each at the beginning, midway and at the end of stimulated community development projects. The results are as analysed below.

VI. SAMPLE

The study area comprised of Twelve (12) communities across Nigeria. In order to maintain a balance of diversity, Six (6) rural and Six (6) semi-urban communities were chosen in each of the geo-political zones of Nigeria. The study avoided highly urbanised communities because of the concentration of Government efforts and the general lack of a need for such communities to initiate and undertake basic development efforts. States and communities selected are presented in the table below:

TABLE I. DISTRIBUTION OF STUDIED COMMUNITIES

State	Geo-political Region	No. of Semi-Urban Communities	No. of Rural Communities	Total
Gombe	North East	1	1	2
Kebbi	North West	1	1	2
Benue	North Central	1	1	2
Osun	South West	1	1	2
Anambra	South East	1	1	2
Rivers	South South	1	1	2
TOTAL		6	6	12

Table I shows the distribution of participants across various communities in Nigeria. The research participants comprised of community leaders and the population of selected communities. A sample of 50 were chosen at random to respond to structured questionnaires, these questionnaires were prepared in the form of atmospheric reports where the participants express their view and the perceived views of others they may have interacted with. These questionnaires were administered three times; at the beginning of the project, once during the project and at the end of the project. This enabled the researchers to monitor any change in perception that may be attributed to appreciation of the stimulus to participate.

However, because the research was designed to measure the perception of the same group of sampled respondents over a period of time, it required that the same respondents should be available three times to respond to the surveyed items of the questionnaire. This was achieved with minimal loss in the overall sample size as the three intervals where questionnaires

were returned by respondents recorded 597, 582 and 551 questionnaires in that order out of a total sample size of 600.

VII. DATA PRESENTATION

Data gathered included the opinions expressed by respondents to questionnaire items as well as during interaction (unstructured interviews). The tables below show three sets of data that reflect the change in perception on community development interest which the researchers attribute to introduction of a scaled down understanding of Karol Wojtyła's notion of participation as it is relevant to community development during stimulus workshops. While the number of respondents for the first, second and third sets of data is not consistent (597, 582 and 551 respectively) the same group of respondents were specifically targeted for questionnaire responses, stimulus workshops and post stimulus responses.

TABLE II. PRE-WORKSHOP RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE "PERCEPTION ON THE PURPOSE OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEED TO PARTICIPATE 1"

s/n	STATEMENT	SD (1)	D (2)	U (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Mean	Decision
1	I am aware of efforts to make my community better by providing basic amenities	112	22	179	141	143	3.58	Accepted
2	I am aware of efforts to make my community better by making everyone feel included	104	193	182	39	79	2.88	Rejected
3	I feel needed when efforts are made to provide amenities in my community	299	204	6	59	29	2.01	Rejected
4	I have little to contribute towards the development of my community	162	206	15	131	83	2.83	Rejected
5	Development in my community requires people to give money	62	123	46	111	255	3.93	Accepted
6	My community only recognizes financial contributions towards development	105	149	194	104	45	2.95	Rejected

7	My community needs government intervention to provide basic amenities	126	151	49	96	175	3.33	Accepted
8	I feel that my community needs the government more than it needs me	116	195	121	149	16	2.8	Rejected
9	I have something to give my community that money cannot give	121	199	82	114	81	2.95	Rejected
10	Our community can develop without the aid of government	201	241	19	29	107	2.52	Rejected
Overall Mean							2.98	
Number of respondents: 597								

Table II presents the pre-workshop responses of perception of participants on the purpose of development and the need to participate by the community. Ten question items were presented to the respondents in the study. Three (3) items were accepted based on 3.00 decision point set in the study, while seven (7) items were rejected. The accepted items include, there is an awareness and effort in making community better, development in the community requires people to give money among others. The rejected items reflect

poor awareness of inclusive efforts, participants not feeling needed, the community only recognising financial contributions towards development among others. The overall mean was 2.98, this implies that the participants’ perception on the purpose of development and the need to participate fell slightly lower than the acceptable mean of the study, set at 3.00.

TABLE III. MID-PROJECT RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE “PERCEPTION ON THE PURPOSE OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEED TO PARTICIPATE 2”

s/n	Items	SD (1)	D (2)	U (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Mean	Decision
1	I am aware of efforts to make my community better by providing basic amenities	92	108	111	192	79	3.27	Accepted
2	I am aware of efforts to make my community better by making everyone feel included	165	220	14	131	52	2.60	Rejected
3	I feel needed when efforts are made to provide amenities in my community	198	123	109	92	60	2.61	Rejected
4	I have little to contribute towards the development of my community	41	102	84	232	123	3.70	Accepted
5	Development in my community requires people to give money	50	90	102	201	139	3.69	Accepted
6	My community only recognizes financial contributions towards development	76	51	112	159	184	3.76	Accepted
7	My community needs government intervention to provide basic amenities	45	58	146	177	156	3.79	Accepted
8	I feel that my community needs the government more than it needs me	161	77	104	103	137	3.13	Accepted
9	I have something to give my community that money cannot give	94	156	121	148	63	3.04	Accepted
10	Our community can develop without the aid of government	18	184	160	195	25	3.21	Accepted
Overall Mean							3.28	
Number of respondents: 582								

Table III presents the mid-project responses of perception of participants on the purpose of development and the need to participate by the community. Participants were required to respond to the same questions they had answered at the beginning, ten question items were presented to the respondents in the study. Eight (8) items were accepted based on 3.00 decision point set in the study, while two (2) items were rejected. Significantly, participants now showed awareness that the community can develop without the help of mean of the study, set at 3.00.

government and felt they had something to contribute to development efforts that money cannot give among other accepted items. However, they still didn’t feel needed when community development efforts are on and that the community needed government more than themselves.

The overall mean was 3.28, this implies that the participants’ perception on the purpose of development and the need to participate was slightly higher than the acceptable

TABLE IV. POST-PROJECT RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE “PERCEPTION ON THE PURPOSE OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEED TO PARTICIPATE 3”

s/n	Items	SD (1)	D (2)	U (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Mean	Decision
1	I am aware of efforts to make my community better by providing basic amenities	1	12	30	264	244	4.34	Accepted
2	I am aware of efforts to make my community better by making everyone feel included	41	43	123	201	143	3.66	Accepted
3	I feel needed when efforts are made to provide amenities in my community	74	40	94	234	109	3.48	Accepted
4	I have little to contribute towards the development of my community	32	96	40	366	17	3.44	Accepted
5	Development in my community requires people to give money	62	132	51	233	73	3.22	Accepted
6	My community only recognizes financial contributions towards development	75	67	72	210	117	3.36	Accepted
7	My community needs government intervention to provide basic amenities	30	74	115	241	91	3.52	Accepted
8	I feel that my community needs the government more than it needs me	163	147	168	50	23	2.32	Rejected
9	I have something to give my community that money cannot give	40	89	68	246	108	3.53	Accepted
10	Our community can develop without the aid of government	21	64	99	194	173	3.79	Accepted
	Overall Mean						3.47	

Number of respondents: 551

Table IV presents the post-project responses of perception of participants on the purpose of development and the need to participate by the community. Participants were required to respond to the same questions they had answered at the beginning, ten items were presented to the respondents in the study. Nine (9) items were accepted based on 3.00 decision point set in the study, while one (1) item was rejected. The rejected item showed that respondents no longer felt that the community needed the government more than participants. This coincided with the feeling of being needed for community development effort in the community which was finally accepted among others.

The overall mean was 3.47, this implies that the participants' perception on the purpose of development and

the need to participate was had further increased as the mean recorded is higher than the acceptable mean of the study, set at 3.00.

VIII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Using the data gathered during the three stages presented above, the researchers conducted a T-Test to determine the level of significance of change in perception between the pre-workshop responses to questionnaire items and the post-project responses. Researchers found a significant difference between the pre and post-project perception response on the purpose of development and the need to participate by the members of the communities.

TABLE V. T-TEST RESULT ON THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRE- AND POST-WORKSHOP/PROJECT PERCEPTION RESPONSES

	Mean	N	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-workshop responses	2.98	10	.510	2.09	9	.025
Post workshop responses	3.47	10	.457			

Table V presents the t-test result on the significant difference between the Pre and Post workshop perception response on the purpose of development and the need to participate by the members of the community. The result of the pre-workshop responses (M= 2.98, SD= 0.51) and post-workshop responses (M=3.47, SD= 0.457) indicate that there is a significant difference in perception of participants after participating in workshops geared towards improving participation in community development efforts, t=2.09 and

p= 0.025 which is less than the 0.05 level of significance means that a significant difference is observable. The change in perception is therefore attributable to participation in the project by respondents who not only attended workshops but found different other ways of participation. The researchers, while interacting with project participants found that with new ideas on how to participate introduced during workshops, participants reacted more enthusiastically to the project initiatives of the community and found more ingenious ways

to participate in the projects that did not require only monetary contributions. Some of the ways participants contributed to initiated projects include turning out for manual labour as required by the community, volunteering for supervision of sections of the project, guarding installations and equipment and other similar ways of giving themselves to the project.

IX. CONCLUSION

This research set out to suggest participation as a model for community development in Nigeria. In its explicit aim to propose the concept as an alternative to the much, criticised models that have been hitherto practiced in Nigeria, it is promising. The result showed a change in perception from a perception of the need to participate that was low to one that was high. This suggests that with more widespread appreciation of the ideas that drive participation, development in Nigeria could become more inclusive of communities in need, ownership of initiative would become more localised and meaningful development could be proposed and championed by communities in need. It stands clear to the researchers that communities would develop better when they feel more involved in the development process. Hence, this research appreciates the need to standardise the ideas shared during stimulus workshops into a model presentable to Nigeria as a path towards authentic community development.

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