

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURATION PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an exploration of the challenges faced by NGOs in mobilizing communities to participate for empowerment. The paper has established that the challenges emanate from the complex relationship between the NGOs, government and people in communities. This deliberation was executed within the broader context of the People Centered Development Approach as a conceptual framework, and Giddens' Structuration theory as theoretical framework. The paper alluded to the theoretical grounding from which the concept of community development emerged, which is the failure of traditional models of development to pragmatically inform positive social transformation. This was followed by an overview of the People Centered Development Approach which was synonymously analyzed alongside the Participatory Development Approach; and the Structuration theory by Giddens (1984). The paper proceeded with the juxtaposition of the literature pertaining to the challenges faced by NGOs with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks in order to ascertain the degree of correlation between this area of study and the theoretical foundations in which it is situated in this paper. This was done through exhibiting how the principal ideas of the theory and the conceptual framework best explain the intricacies in which the relationship between the state, NGOs and the community, and the inherent dynamics, influence mobilization and in turn participation for community empowerment.

Key Words: Community Development; Empowerment; Mobilisation; Structuration Theory; People Centered Development

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The exclusion of the grassroots from participation in all community development efforts has been found to be the major setback in attaining sustainability of community development projects and ultimately community empowerment (Wangoola, 1993). This has been found to owe a lot to the erroneous notions embedded in traditional models of development which glorified the superiority of the knowledge of the development agents, and undermined indigenous knowledge of the poor people in the communities, a deliberation which provided a porous basis for their relegation from participation (So, 1990). This was found to be a misconception of reality in that it is a negation of the fact that, these ‘agents’, the so called poor people, are not mere recipients of external stimuli, but, are also active participants who, given the opportunity, can influence their outcome positively since they have ‘agency’ as Giddens’ Structuration theory purports (Giddens, 1984). The phenomenon can also be articulated and understood within the postmodernist question for objectivity and subjectivity in perceptions of development practitioners as enshrined in reflexivity. Wangoola (1993) submits that, upon realization of this unjustified and detrimental fallacy, numerous development facilitators and agents such as Non Governmental Organizations have attempted to provide a remedy to this unwarranted marginalization by adopting the participatory approaches in their execution of community development work, particularly community mobilization. Conversely, the materialization of this deliberation has been constrained by a multiplicity of challenges which range from, institutional barriers such as legislation and government policy, culture, religion, to other factors such as limited funds, domineering development agent, illiteracy, lack of trust among community or with outsiders, limited time, intra and inter-group conflicts, selective participation, embellishment of successes, demographic composition and poor planning and management. Therefore it has become paramount to analyze the possible influence of these barriers against NGO’s efforts to mobilize communities for participation in development projects, within the theoretical ambits of the interplay between structures and actions as Giddens’ Structuration theory articulates. This was complemented by the People Centered Development Approach as a conceptual framework for analysis.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EMERGENCE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

The roots of community mobilization and participation for empowerment lies in the progressive decomposition of the two prevalent development paradigms of the twentieth century, which are, centrally planned socialism and market driven capitalism (Kaufman and Alfonso, 1997). The futility of the capitalist market model as enshrined in the modernization theory, all too evident in the massive underdevelopment of a multiplicity of Third World countries, has provoked an interest in finding forms of development approaches whose positive attributes visibly and practically stream down to the majority of the population (Cordillo, 2001). This endeavor, perhaps, is a product of the realization of the facts that, the positive attributes of the so called orthodox models of development were strategically skewed towards industrialized countries to the detriment of developing countries, and the meager benefits that these developing countries got, did not trickle down to the intended beneficiaries, the community. Kaufman and Alfonso (1997:2) contend that, the primary reason for this disenfranchisement of the community was not only the economic inclination that characterized this market based development model, but, “the gross exclusion of the intended beneficiaries from partaking in development initiatives that would affect their lives in the long run”. From this, historical narrative, one can safely contend that, the negative ramifications of this unwarranted exclusion of grassroots participation, were not only detrimental to efforts for positive social transformation on community level, but, perhaps enlightened on the need for a more specific development methodology which had direct implications for the community, relative to its mobilization and participation for empowerment. The writer’s justification for this line of argument rationally stems from the recognition that, community mobilization and participation are essential tools through which the primary objective of all community development endeavors, which is empowerment, is attainable. It follows logically therefore that, if community participation is inhibited, empowerment is suffocated and the sustainability of the community development initiatives is compromised, hence the adoption of the participatory approaches by NGOs was a strategic remedy for the anomaly.

Grillo and Rew (1995) surmise that, participatory development approaches emerged as a demystification of the myth that, the modernization perspective provided an invincible development model which was of universal applicability. It was deficient particularly because

it glorified the superiority of the knowledge of governments and agencies at the peril of the usefulness of the knowledge of the local people as evidenced in its clamor for the repudiation of traditional cultures insofar as they were misconstrued to be antithetical to development. Gardner and Lewis (1996:12) acknowledge that, “these alien models of development were not only prescriptive, but, assumed a top-down approach in their attempt to become inevitably accepted as rigidly applicable universally.” The writer notes that such an orientation was not only catastrophic on its unwarranted disregard of the indigenous population, but, it suffocated efforts to capitalize on the invaluable indigenous knowledge acquired through long interaction of the local people with their local environment. This implies that there was absence of feelings of ownership on any imposed development initiatives, hence participation was minimal and this would ultimately culminate into perpetual disempowerment and gross absence of self-reliance on the part of the community. This negative consequence perhaps offers a justification for the genesis of the ‘People-Centered Development’ paradigm which Chambers (1992:2) alternatively refers to as “putting the last first”. Oakley (1991) observes that, the participatory development approach stresses that ordinary people have the capacity to contribute positively in development initiatives that affect them and therefore should be involved.

Roodts (2001) notes that the participatory development approach stresses the participation of the majority of the population particularly the previously marginalized members of the community, for instance, women, youths, old people, illiterate and the physically challenged in development projects. The approach emphasizes concepts such as capacity building, sustainability, self-reliance and empowerment (Conyers and Hill, 1990). It is the writer’s comment that, the facts that these concepts revolve around the issue of creating an enabling environment for the community to be self-sufficient; and that this is only brought about through the inclusion and participation of the marginalized members of the community through mobilization is a candid qualification of the positive correlation between participation and empowerment. It follows therefore that, if participation is unimpeded, empowerment is likely to be the outcome, and the reverse seems to be true. It is in this context where the need to find out the challenges faced by NGOs in their mobilization of communities to participate in community based development projects for their empowerment is justified.

CONCEPTUALIZING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Selective participation

O'Donnell (1992: 12) argues that, “discriminatory selection of participants is a recipe for the demise of efforts to mobilize communities for empowerment through community development projects”. This could be a product of different aspirations among the community members. It is the writer's opinion that, sustainability of the projects and empowerment of the community in this context suffers from the consequent apathy due to negative attitudes developed by the relegated groups. Mason (2003:19) who annotates that, “the disgruntlement does not only manifest in droopiness or reluctance to participate, it sometimes degenerates into physical protestations that are not only detrimental to the community project, but even to the development agents” complements this. He illustrates this by the case of an NGO PLAN INTERNATIONAL, which in the Philippines tried to select a group of women from the rural communities to educate them to be self-reliant through their funded projects. Unfortunately, their efforts failed to materialize because, after some time the husbands banned their wives from partaking in these so called community development projects on unfounded allegations that they were being taught to be disrespectful. The women continued to go despite the ban and this aggravated the situation since these men responded by apprehending employees of this NGO and beating them. This culminated in the stifling of the efforts to empower women through these community projects since the mobilization process by the NGO was not comprehensive insofar as it disregarded the role of culture of the community, in which men wielded autonomy. It follows that the NGO's mobilization drive was supposed to target even men since a prior assessment of the community would point to that as a probable barrier. Apart from the noticeable fact that there was no consideration of the participatory principle of inclusion, the writer therefore notes that, these consequences could have provoked the departure from Women in Development Approach and to Gender and Development Approach, because the first approach was characteristically based on selectivity and connoted a positive discrimination against men in favor of women. The fact that the efforts to empower the perceived disenfranchised group in this case was strangled by selective participation, hints on the need to adopt the People Centered Development, which observes the participatory principle of inclusion, if sustainability of community development projects and empowerment is to be feasible through effective mobilization.

Domineering development agent

People Centered Development rebuts the domination of the development agent, NGOs, over the communities as it has a demobilizing effect on the participation of the community. This is when the development facilitator or agent is dictatorial and does not celebrate the variability of ideas from the other stakeholders, particularly the grassroots. Chiome and Gambahaya (2000) argue that, the disregard of contributions by the local people has resulted in the failure of many community development initiatives. Their argument rests on the positive ramifications of culture, particularly the relevance of indigenous knowledge from the local people. They allude to how USAID in Bangladesh tried to avert what it assumed to be a probable outbreak of diseases by constructing pit toilets for the villagers who defecated in the rice fields. The organization just proceeded to build the toilets without consulting the local community, but the results were dialectically opposed to the objective of the imposed initiative. The villagers objected, proceeded to organize, and destroyed the toilets because they argued that, defecating in the rice fields was a customary practice by the community to enhance soil fertility and ultimately the yields. Therefore, the USAID efforts were futile because even scientifically, the argument by the community is justifiable, but the failure by the NGO to observe the participatory principle of equal partnership rendered their objective unachievable. This probably accounts for the repudiation of the modernization paradigm as a model of development since it was also authoritarian in orientation just like neoliberalism, which thrived on a one size-fit-all policy. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programs in Africa (ESAP) paralyzed economic development into stagnation as Kanyenze (2004:124) remarks that, “there was no broad based consultation on ESAP: it was largely imposed from the above so there was no national ownership of the program”. The writer notes that, likewise, development initiatives imposed without consulting the grassroots are unsustainable and would not empower the community since it does not participate because it was coercion to act rather than mobilization to participate out of interest. Therefore, effective mobilization would culminate into effective participation of the grassroots and this is the only mainstay for sustainability and empowerment. This ultimately violates the participatory principle of equal partnership as shall be alluded below.

Unequal partnership

The People Centered Development paradigm also advocates the need to recognize equal partnership as an elementary ingredient for the fruition of any development efforts. Dennis (1997) alludes that, this is the recognition of the importance of every person's skill, ability and initiative and that everyone has an equal right to participate in any processes irrespective of their status. The writer notes that, this depicts a departure from imposition of development projects by those supposed to facilitate, to a two way process where the grassroots' contributions matters since they should as well inform the subsequent processes. Apart from seemingly crediting Structuration theory's recognition of the human 'agency', which relates to their ability to influence structures, this is also perhaps, a justification for the need to factor in indigenous knowledge in community development processes, a deliberation which discards the modernization theory's lament for the revocation and replacement of traditional cultures with modern culture and models of knowledge. Development processes should be sensitive to variability in knowledge as Coetzee (2001) exclaims that, lack of such sensitivity accounted for the problems and failures of many projects. This observation rests on the positive attributes of involving the local people's knowledge in tackling community problems. For instance, Chiome and Gambahaya (2000:65) acknowledge that, "the manifestation of an empowered community entails the visible use of their indigenous knowledge in resolving their own problems". This was substantiated by alluding to the case of Food for Work Program in Nepal, which reveals that, the contribution of the local people has brought positive results than solely relying on the knowledge of the government or the donors. A donor assisting a food distribution program was incurring major losses of food along the distribution line. The projects manager turned to the local community for solutions. It was jointly determined that, using local equipment such as bullock carts, distributors and community based supervision would be the most appropriate way of distributing food in the local context. Hiring bullock carts in place of the covered trucks operated by city based companies provided additional income for the community and improved transparency of the distribution process. This deliberation complements Farm Africa's (1996) observation that, effective community mobilization would not only precipitate into effective participation, but yields such advantages as reduced costs and efficiency, higher productivity and ultimately sustainability and self-reliance. The writer observes that, this is a classical illustration of facilitation of participation for empowerment. In this context, the donor organization

observed the principle of equal partnership with the grass roots in terms of contribution in the decision making process. It also demonstrates the indispensable fact that, if communities are mobilized or accorded the chance to provide their skills in community development endeavors through effective participation they would eventually become empowered to efficiently progress with future development initiatives even in the absence of donors, thus self-reliance. It logically stands therefore to argue that, community mobilization is essential for effective participation, which is the root for community empowerment since it gives the community exposure to be responsible and this aid in eliminating the barrier of lack of transparency or trust. The fact that the operation of these variables were conceptualized within the ambits of the People Centered Development perspective, credits this paradigm as a pragmatic conceptual framework in understanding the interplay between community mobilization, participation and empowerment.

Inter and intra group conflicts

Again, Shaw (2003) submits that, community mobilization for participation has suffered mostly in the context of internal and external conflicts. The case of CONCERN in Gokwe district of Zimbabwe complements this observation. Mashlabala (2001) notes that, this organization was assisting the villagers with financial and material implements such they would boost cotton production. The aim was to improve household agricultural output and income, but the respective families were to achieve this through participation. Men, women and children toiled in the cotton fields and indeed the yields were evidently favorable. Unfortunately, men who went on to marry second and third wives misused the money earned from this. The immediate reaction by these disgruntled women left to suffer with the children, was suicide. Consequently, it negatively affected subsequent agricultural seasons through apathy on the part of women who were now afraid of assisting their husbands to get money for them to marry second wives. Therefore, it was more of lack of trust than it was lack of interest because, had it been that, men were not going to abandon their families after the harvests, women would be interested. As a result, cotton production was minimal and household income was low. On the other hand, Meagher (2000) alludes to the case of Humana People to People, an organization that intended to improve sanitation by constructing a Jinglie water canal in the Sudan. This sparked outrage with the pastoralists who protested that this project would transverse their traditional pastoral land. So, as result,

the effort did not yield positive results. The writer therefore opines that, apart from the fact that these cases demonstrates how inter and intra group conflicts can inhibit cooperation for effective community participation, it is imperative to recognize the significance of the social context in which development projects are intended particularly the belief systems. For instance it would be vital to put into account the structural factors that spell out inequalities and social organization that eventually stifle cooperation of the other group, for the system theory reiterates that, the dynamics of interaction between community members is essential for decision making and effective planning. This depended on the notable fact that, mobilization for community cooperation is fundamental for effective participation, which ultimately ensures the progression of the development endeavors that, will culminate in empowerment of the community.

Applying Giddens' Structuration theory to Community Development

The genesis of Giddens' 1984 Structuration theory seems to owe a lot to the perceived unwarranted dichotomy, symptomatic of the classical explanations of social life, evidenced in the visible divide between the macro and micro based analysis of social phenomenon (Sewell, 1992). Whereas the macro paradigm glorified society as a unity of analysis, the micro theorists submitted to the notion of an individual as a unit of analysis in the comprehension of social reality as enshrined in structuralism and functionalist theories. Central to structuration is the notion of the duality of structure, which is a conveyance of the idea that structure is both the medium and outcome of the practices that constitute social systems. Burnham (1998: 17) who posits that, "...social action consists of practices, located in time and space, which are the skillful and knowledgeable accomplishments of human agents", complements this. Some of the assumptions of the theory entail the following; social life is not the total sum of all micro-level activity and that, the micro perspective can also explain social life; the repetition of the acts of individual agents reproduces structures; social structures are neither inviolable nor permanent. It further states that, the social structures constrain the actions of individual agents and thus structure and action constrain each other in an evolving way (Popenoe, 1995: 118). The major concepts that Giddens articulates include the following; rules and resources; social systems; agency and reproduction; agency and transformation; and determinism and voluntarism (Haralambos and Holborn, 2003: 1066). Aside the acknowledgement of the fact that structuration theory is the latest in a long line of attempts to

grapple with one of the central problems in social analysis, which is the agency structure dilemma. The writer intends to argue that, the theory's assumptions and principal ideas are relevant in any attempt to comprehend and articulate the complexities characterizing the tripartite relationship between the community, NGOs and the State, from which the challenges faced by NGOs in undertaking community development work seem to evolve. This conviction seems to justifiably precipitate from the evident fact that, the challenges faced by these development agents in mobilizing communities for participation are a product of the interplay between 'structures' and 'actions' of all the parties in one way or the other to this cause, which are; the community, the State and the NGOs.

THE MACRO-MICRO ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Structuration theory departs from the assumption that social life is not a summation of all micro-level activity and that the macro perspective is inadequate (Giddens, 1984). The writer opines that, this observation perhaps derives from the recognition of the deficiencies that characterize a one dimensional analysis of social life as exhibited for instance in the Modernization theory's erroneous refutation of Third World traditional cultures as inimical to development, on the basis of its micro orientation. Rhetorically, numerous ethno development studies have revealed instances where culture and indigenous knowledge has positively contributed to social, political and economic development. This analysis is valid in light of the following illustrations; Burma and Sri Lanka have adopted the Buddhist economics stressing cultural traits of cooperation and self-sufficiency; in most African countries, emphasis has been on rural development strategies based on the traditional egalitarian values of African communalistic societies (Brohman, 1995: 118). The writer reasons that, the fact that this paradigmatic shift rested on the demerits of the Modernization theory's top-down orientation is a candid justification of the need for adoption of the People Centered Approach to development. This is so because, these local development strategies carries connotations of local initiations by the local people in Third World countries, thus depicting the fundamentality of their involvement and participation in formulating decisions that affect their wellbeing in the long run. As such, the realization of the constraining effects of the capitalist system as a 'structure' that inhibits efforts, 'actions' of people or communities in Third World countries to have an equal stake in the global economic system, does not only query the Modernization theory's prescriptions at national level. It hints on the need to

identify the remnants of these constraining ‘structures’ both at national and community levels, that would act as barriers for NGOs in developing communities through inhibiting mobilization for local participation. This therefore qualifies the credibility of the Structuration theory as a framework within which the challenges faced by NGOs in mobilization for community participation are vivid. This is in particular with regards to the recognition that perhaps pilot surveys, baseline surveys or the preliminary assessment of communities by community workers in order to formulate comprehensively informed project planning, cannot only be undertaken on the basis of either the internal or external organization of the communities, but from both. Besides the fact that this precaution would avoid a one-sided account of the community, as was the error with the Modernization theory’s account of social organization in Third World countries, it also aids in the elimination of the poor planning by NGOs that would culminate in community demobilization.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES ARE NEITHER INVOLABLE NOR PERMANENT (THEY CAN BE CHANGED)

On this pretext, Structuration theory assumed that structures are not sacrosanct, that is, they can be changed and replaced through human agency (Giddens, 1984). In the context of this paper, this would refer to the possibility of deconstructing any form of structures that would act as barriers to the execution of NGO work in mobilizing communities. In other words it would imply that the community has the ‘agency’ to embark on ‘actions’ that would transform the existing structures that may act as obstacles to the stimulation of the community to collaboratively work towards attainment of one goal of development, a deliberation which denotes positive attributes or outcomes of effective mobilization. This can be exemplified by the following case study as alluded by Gorjestani (2000) who narrates that, in Senegal, external partners had for years engaged the country authorities to abolish female genital mutilation (FGM), though with little success. Community mobilization and participation through recognizing the significance of indigenous knowledge, the community groups eventually gained power made a national impact. After attending an adult literacy course conducted by TOSTAN, a local NGO, a group of women from a village called Malicounda decided to address the issue in their communities. They convinced the traditional

spiritual leaders to join their campaign against the practice. Within two years, these empowered women had convinced sixteen neighboring communities to abolish the practice. The practice became illegal in Senegal because of the growing impact of the Malicounda initiative, by the end of 1999. The Malicounda initiative has spread to other groups in the neighboring countries where already more than 200 communities have abolished FGM. Apart from this case's demonstration of the utility of the People Centered Development paradigm that emphasizes recognition of indigenous knowledge of the local people as an essential ingredient for community empowerment, it validly qualifies the Structuration theory's proposition that structures are changeable. In this case, the community women gained strength from the mobilization by the NGO and they managed to change the cultural structure, which was 'inviolable'. Therefore, one is reasonably justified to surmise that, insofar as structures in numerous instances act as obstacles to the empowerment of communities as has been the scenario in the afore stated case, NGOs can rejuvenate or otherwise cultivate 'agency' amongst community members through mobilization, and in turn transform those very structures to alleviate their plight. Therefore, Structuration theory does not only invoke optimism concerning the possibility of deconstructing the once perceived invincible 'structures' that constrained people from acquisition of freedom and empowerment. It qualifies the suitability of Giddens' Structuration theory as a framework for the examination of the implications of 'structural' hindrances to community empowerment through mobilization and participation through NGOs.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES CONSTRAIN ACTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL AGENTS

In this regard, Structuration theory seems to have assumed that, individuals' freedom suffered from the structures in every society. This observation should not be misconstrued as a refutation of the above scrutiny, rather it hints on the need to consider the fact that indeed in some instances, social 'structures' can act barriers to the effective execution of community development work, that is 'action' on the part of either the development agents or the community itself. For instance, legislation as a 'structure' can indeed constrain the 'actions' by communities or NGOs to effectively and efficiently work. This is supported by Harold-Berry (2004:56) who laments that, "... and some forms of draconian laws that are enacted in Zimbabwe are antithetic to social and economic development". This remark was uttered in relation to two pieces of legislation that were passed in Zimbabwe at the heights of political

turmoil, namely, Public Order and Security Act (POSA) of 2000 and the Non-Governmental Act (NGA). POSA prohibited any person in any community in Zimbabwe to gather if they exceed four (4) in number. This was tantamount to a crime that warranted arrest by police. On the other hand, NGA was in temporarily play just to thwart the operations on NGOs in rural areas since they were alleged to be educating people to vote for the opposition party (Kanyenze, 2004). Surely, a summation of the effects of these pieces of legislation alludes to the disheartening reality of how ‘structures’ can choke prospects for development. In this situation, it would be rebellious for both NGOs and people to hold meetings even that pertained to community development because they were constrained by the institutional ‘structure’, legislation. This also endorses the credibility of the Structuration theory’s conceptualization of ‘rules’ and ‘resources’ which Giddens exclaims that, “...are procedures that individuals may follow in their social life. Sometimes interpretations of these rules are written down: for example, in the form of laws or bureaucratic rules themselves” (Haralambos and Holborn, 2005:1066). He further differentiates ‘resources’ where he states that, “authoritative resources are non-material resources that result from some individuals being able to dominate others...they involve the ability to get others to carry out a person’s wishes” (ibid). In this case, law qualifies to be both a ‘rule’ and a ‘resource’ relative to the way it was used to further the wishes of the government. It therefore becomes imperative to applaud Giddens’ Structuration theory for providing a persuasive framework in which the conceptualization of institutional barriers to effective mobilization and participation of communities for empowerment and sustainability can be best comprehended.

AGENCY AND TRANSFORMATION

An important idea alluded to in this concept by Giddens is the notion of “reflexive monitoring of actions”, which refers to the ability of human beings to think about what they are doing and consider whether their objectives are being achieved (Haralambos and Holborn :1067). This, in a way relates to the idea of ‘ontological security’, which is a need by the agents of a degree of predictability that the natural and social world shall be, as they appear to be in terms of survival. If they are not being achieved, Giddens states that, agents may start to behave in new ways, patterns of interaction may change, and with them the social structures. This is illustrated by the case of lack of transparency and accountability by some NGOs in their operations or in the context of disregarding observation of the Participatory principle of

equal partnership particularly in the context of indigenous knowledge, or the inclusion of ideas from the grassroots in the processing of decision-making. Gorjestani (2000:2) highlights that, “*indigenous knowledge (IK) as a significant resource which could contribute to the increased efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the development process ... it is the basis for community-level decision making in areas pertaining to food security, human and animal health, education, natural resource management and other vital economic and social activities*”. It becomes obvious that failure to recognize the significance of this resource, indigenous knowledge, by NGOs would degenerate into latent or manifest protestations by the local people since their livelihoods are compromised and therefore their ‘ontological security’, which is otherwise ensured if Gorjestani’s acknowledgment is taken into consideration. Inasmuch as it is imperative to admit that the operation of this provision rests on the community’s ‘reflexive monitoring of actions’ as Giddens postulates, which perhaps relates to the negation of their local knowledge by NGOs. It is equally paramount to appreciate the degree of correlation between this dilemma as articulated within the framework of the Structuration theory, and the People Centered Development paradigm’s reiteration of the need for development endeavors to put the local people at the center of development in terms of recognizing their contributions regardless of their perceived inferior statuses.

CONCLUSION

The writer maintains that, the comprehension of the ramifications of the interplay between community mobilization, participation and empowerment can be best located within the framework of a People Centered Development approach since it values the need to recognize the importance of observing the principles of the participatory development approach. Surely, the fruition of community development endeavors, which is empowerment or the instigation of self-sustenance on the part of the community, rests on the recognition of the functionality of the principles of participatory approach. The cogency of this observation has been validated by an appreciation of the correlation of these People Centered development principles with the barriers to effective community mobilization and participation for empowerment. The fact that these principles glorify participation of the grassroots in all stages of the community development cycle deductively implies that, exclusion of the grassroots is tantamount to disempowerment, because the community remains incapacitated

to act on any development initiatives. Hence, the rationale for cross-examining the challenges faced by NGOs in their attempt to effect mobilization, cooperation and participation of the community for real empowerment is tenable. The writer therefore recommends that, there should be operationalization of the principles of the participatory approach as is the preoccupation of the People Centered Development paradigm, in order to eliminate the discussed constraints, if tangible community empowerment is to be attainable. On the other hand, Giddens' Structuration theory should be credited in that it complements the People Centered approach in that, it provides the framework within which the intricacies of the nexus between the 'structures' and 'actions' of NGOs, the State and the communities can be best analyzed. This is particularly in relation to their effect in suffocating prospects and efforts for effective mobilization of communities for participation by NGOs. The notion of its glorification of 'human agency', which is the community's ability to influence, is an adequate showcase of the prevalent striking affinity between Structuration theory and the People Centered Development perspective. They equally rally for the need to involve people in planning and decision making on development initiatives that target them, particularly on the basis that their contributions are vital inasmuch as they reflect the realities of the precarious positions in which they find themselves. This also aids in departing from imposition of development due to preconceived perceptions by development agents, as is the obsession of reflexivity.

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