

Integration of the Disabled into National Development: a Participatory Approach

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Abstract

National development calls for the involvement of all segments of society into an integrative scheme that allows room for participation by all and sundry in society irrespective of the perceived degree of one's ability or disability. This paper seeks to examine the issue of all-inclusiveness in national development, pointing out the need to give special attention to persons with disability to enable them participate in national development in view of the false sense of participation, or non-participation, in national programmes, as depicted by Hart (1992) in his concept of Ladder of Participation.

Introduction

The issue of all-inclusiveness in national development is a matter of great concern to everyone who believes in equity, fairness and unity. The involvement of everyone and, needless to say, all sections of society in national development helps to achieve the common goals of society (Pavey, 2006). In every society, special and peculiar or specific needs pertaining to particular groups may have to be addressed. Addressing the special and peculiar needs of any group of people in society calls for great concern, achievement-oriented commitment and clear-cut readiness to surmount what may be seen as difficult-to-deal-with challenges. The special needs may be seen as a great challenge but society must do its best to address them.

One such challenge is the way to effectively and satisfactorily address the needs of persons with disability whose interests as members of society ought to be met. Overlooking the development needs of people with disabilities or disinvesting from programmes that directly benefit them can be one of the most dramatic forms of exclusion people with disabilities can face. People with disabilities remain largely invisible in their communities and largely overlooked in efforts by the global development community to improve the human welfare and living standards of millions of the world's poor people. It is important that policy makers and development practitioners alike acknowledge that with roughly ten percent of the world's population living with some form of disability (WHO, 1996), disability components must be built into all development projects.

Many a time, relevant or appropriate systems and processes are not put in place for the less privileged such as the disabled to boost their capacities for socio-economic development. Even where some systems are put in place, they may not be very relevant to the special problematic issues at stake. To say the least, this group of people is considered neglected or marginalised because of their vulnerable nature and perceived inability to fight back for their rights and dignity. They are not involved in the process of participation in national development because they are perceived as unproductive or incapable of any meaningful contribution. The group of disabled or physically challenged persons in Ghana, like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, has a wide range of interests and concerns, including the determinants of their participation in national development as well as training in relevant and talent-specific entrepreneurial skills, which must be carefully segregated and systems put in place to address them.

Against this background, the need to research into issues that will encourage full participation in national development and also explore the entrepreneurial needs of the disabled has become more pressing than ever before in view of the rising rate of unemployment in the world. This work, therefore, seeks to research into conditions that contribute to non-participation in national development programmes of the disabled together with meeting their entrepreneurial needs and also find out how best these needs can be addressed. Practical, workable solutions to the problem will make persons with disability self-employable and make them economically independent on society.

Case for entrepreneurial training for the disabled

There is no doubt that disabled people need special attention to explore their talents to become part of the process of national development. Out of the many social problems, the rights of people living with disabilities are always neglected by society. No one wants to hear them, but society needs to give them proper love and care. Now, the time has arrived, to re-think about negative attitudes towards people with disabilities and also create a good chance to bring the needs, concerns and rights of these people into the national limelight (Burchardt, 2003). The re-thinking has begun in certain parts of the world, not without difficulties though, but the pace needs to be quickened up. This makes the current study unique because of its immense contribution to knowledge.

The United States Census Department has stated that twice as many persons with disabilities are starting their own businesses as people who are non-disabled. This is something that does not come as a surprise at all, seeing that the application of entrepreneurial skills does not distinguish between disabled and non-disabled people. Starting one's own business comes with it a number of unique challenges, but it also gives a person more flexibility as well as more control over one's environment (Burchardt, 2003). If a person has his/her own business, it gives that person an opportunity to succeed and accommodate certain specific needs. Despite the many challenges involved, people with disabilities are succeeding in their businesses at an incredible rate. A few years ago, the Accra Rehabilitation Centre in Ghana came out with an entrepreneurial business in form of chalk manufacturing which run successfully for some time before facing some difficulties. Such challenges need to be addressed appropriately for the disabled at the Centre to run a successful business.

People with disability have immense potentials to contribute to different fields of development, so both government and non-government organisations ought to come forward to help them to explore their potentials so that they can lead their lives like normal people. It is vital for willing disabled people to be encouraged to enter the workforce not only to increase their self-esteem but also avoid feelings of depression and isolation. Governments and non-governmental organizations around the world need to develop special programmes for persons with disabilities because such persons do not always have the opportunity to make choices according to their talents and undergo entrepreneurial training in areas they can perform best. Hence, this study is significant. This is because the focus is on entrepreneurial training that will make the disabled not only self-employed but also financially sound.

Some of the disabled may not even have the opportunity to go to school. For others who are able to go to school, they may study for only a few years. For these reasons, many disabled persons can barely read or write, or are totally illiterate. Training programmes must be especially developed to take this into account and use hands-on training techniques to teach new skills to persons with disabilities. Such training programmes have been going on in many countries for years for the disabled. However, what is often overlooked in many instances is the design of special entrepreneurial programmes, with input from the disabled or people with special needs, meant to suit the needs of such people. The involvement of persons with disabilities in the design of such programmes will ensure that the most appropriate training techniques are applied to equip them to be productive in the national development process. Again, such approach will influence the disabled to own such programmes and make them more successful.

Small-scale enterprise development is not for everyone, whether disabled or not, and needs a high level of discipline, enthusiasm, dedication, persistence and creativity as well as hard work and commitment. The micro-entrepreneur must be capable of decision-making and have the ability to manage employees (if any) and accounts. Furthermore, small-scale enterprise development for persons with disabilities involves a multitude of additional challenges which require specific attention and strategies. This calls for a special case for the disabled. Persons with disability are people with special needs who deserve special care and attention if they are to be mainstreamed into national development.

The involvement of people with special needs in the design and implementation of such entrepreneurial programmes is what makes this research work unique and special from others already undertaken in different parts of the world. Thus, from the foregoing, this study is meant to refine, revise and extend the frontiers of knowledge on disability and entrepreneurship with special reference to Ghana. A number of studies on the employment of disabled people have been highlighted in different parts of the world.

However, there has not been a focus on the need for entrepreneurial training in a developing country such as Ghana. Consequently, although it is clear that a number of disabled people are engaged in self-employment, little is known about the linkage between their talents and training in entrepreneurship, the sort of business they are interested in and their possible performance level. What disabled people need is a motivation to succeed. When you get someone who wants to work and is disabled, the motivation level is tremendous. What this means is that getting someone, a disabled, who is motivated and is able to solve problems and has a unique perspective is a great thing that must be encouraged. Society must encourage the creation of opportunities for disabled persons to become self-reliant. This also means that trainers of such disabled persons need to be given the right or appropriate orientation to ensure the success of the programme. Trainers must realise their responsibility towards trainees with disabilities because they are expected to play a major role in the future lives of the trainees. Also, it is the quality and appropriateness of their work that will offer disabled persons a chance for a better and improved quality of life.

The main objective here should be to enable persons with disabilities to become economically self-reliant through income generation as small-scale entrepreneurs. The trainer must keep this in mind at all times during the training. All trainees are also expected to participate in the training by choice and, again, because they believe that the training course will give them the tools necessary for improving their livelihood. It is the responsibility of the trainer to convince trainees that they can do anything and everything they set their minds to. This is a

positive way and result-oriented manner by which society can purposefully address and transform the special needs of the disabled and, thereby, influence society as a whole to advance or move forward for the common good.

Concept of participation

One piece of work undertaken for UNICEF in 1992 is very relevant to this study. According to Roger Hart (1992), as part of its research on street and working children, the urban child programme of the UNICEF Child Development Centre (ICDC) arranged for him to travel to Kenya, India, the Philippines and Brazil to find out about children's participation as an approach to improving children's rights. This is what has resulted in Rogers Hart's work "Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship." Hart uses "participation" to refer generally to the "process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which the one lives. It is the means by which democracy is built it is a standard against which democracies should be measured.

Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship." Hart stresses that children "could need to be involved in meaningful projects with adults." Roger Hart refers to various levels of participation from Manipulation to Decoration to Tokenism to Assigned But Informed and, finally, to Adult Initiated, shared decisions with children. He illustrates this below with what he calls "Ladder of Participation", showing non-participation at very low levels and various degrees of participation at the high levels of the ladder:

Manipulation:

This is the title of the lowest rung of the ladder of participation. Here children are made to participate in an event they do not understand. An example is that of pre-school children carrying out political placards concerning the impact of social policies on children. If the children have no understanding of the issues and hence do not understand their actions, then this is manipulation. Such manipulation under the guise of participation is hardly an appropriate way to introduce children into democratic political processes.

Decoration:

This is the second rung on the ladder. It refers, for example, to those frequent occasions when children are given T-shirts related to a cause and may sing or dance at an event in such dress, but have little idea of what it is all about and have no say in the organization of the event. The young people are there because of the refreshments, or some interesting performance, rather than the cause. The reason why this is described as one rung above manipulation is that adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by children. They simply use the children to bolster their cause in a relatively indirect way.

Tokenism:

Tokenism is the third rung on the ladder. It is used to describe those instances in which children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating and also little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions. Commonly, as far as adults are concerned, the projects are in the best interest of children, but they are manipulative nevertheless.

Assigned But Informed:

This is the fourth rung on the ladder of participation. Though the children may have not initiated the project themselves, they may have been well informed about it, feel real ownership about the issue and even have some critical reflection about the cause.

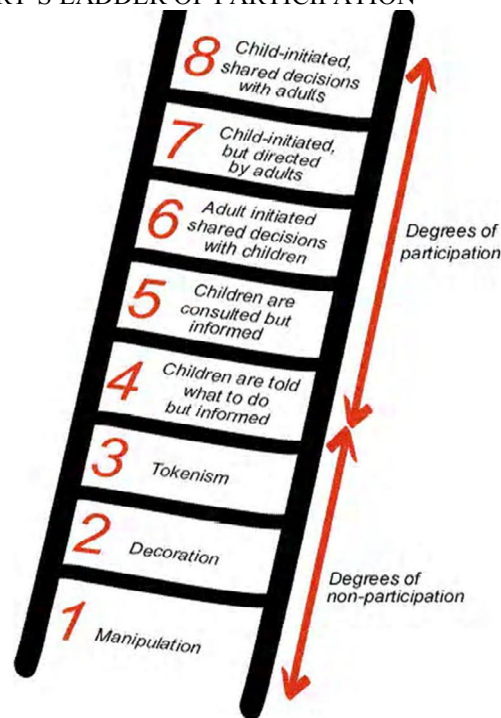
Hart lists a number of important requirements needed to make a project to be labeled fully participatory:

1. The children understand the intentions of the project;
2. They have those who made the decisions concerning their involvement and why;
3. They have a meaningful role, rather than decorative role;
4. They volunteer for the project after the project was made clear to them.

Adult Initiated, Shared Decisions With Children:

This is the highest rung on the ladder. It marks true participation because, though the projects at this level are initiated by adults, the decision is shared with the young people. According to Roger Hart, the goal in all the instances is to call for full participation in project. The goal should be to involve all persons, giving particular concern to the young, the elderly and to those who may be excluded because of some special need or disability.

HART'S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION



Roger Hart, 1992

Figure 1: Ladder of participation

Hart's ladder of participation as illustrated above is a useful model for thinking about children's participation, how they learn and how we intervene in that learning. We often find ourselves moving between "rungs" on this ladder. Experience of the "middle rungs" is often needed by children to develop the skills that will enable them to move further up the ladder. Hart's ladder of participation is very relevant to this study, the focus of which is managing the entrepreneurial needs of disabled persons in Ghana.

Many a time, state institutions and other bodies assume that they know the needs of disabled persons and so can decide for them after which events are organised to showcase what has been done for them. Such a move may be mere manipulative, decorative, or token, but not genuine participation. Disabled persons have special needs which can be appreciated and addressed if they themselves are fully involved to appreciate the intentions of a project or programme which is meant for them; know and agree with the decision makers; made to play meaningful role, but not mere decorative role and also are willing to participate in the project or programme. This means that the development of the entrepreneurial skills of disabled persons should involve their own meaningful participation.

Mullaly (2007) describes the need for recognising that social problems are indeed connected with larger structures in society, causing various forms of oppression amongst individuals resulting in marginalisation (p.262). It is also important for the social worker to recognize the intersecting nature of oppression. A non-judgmental and un-biased attitude is necessary on the part of the social worker. The worker must begin to understand oppression and marginalization as a systematic problem, not the fault of the individual. Working under an Anti-oppression perspective would then allow the social worker to understand the lived, subjective experiences of the individual as well as their culture, historical and social background. The worker should recognise the individual as political in the process of becoming a valuable member of society and the structural factors that contribute to oppression and marginalisation. Hart's "Ladder of Participation" model was borrowed from Arnstein (1969). The concept was originally published as Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation".

Analysis and Discussion

The study of entrepreneurship training involving persons with disability is very new, starting from the 1990s in the UK. Consequently, the viability of such a venture has not been broadly tested in the field of social science and business (Pavey, 2006). The importance of this study is, therefore, to identify the potential entrepreneurial

traits of the disabled and help in their development to make such people financially independent. The development of the latent and explicit entrepreneurial potentials of the disabled is necessary to create business opportunities for them to reach their maximum. It is argued that disabled people are largely invisible, ignored and also excluded from mainstream development (Burchardt, 2003).

In Ghana, there has been no comprehensive study on the linkage between disabled persons and entrepreneurship. Thus, this study was aimed to fill the gap and also identify the potential factors that could possibly influence business growth and performance of persons with disability. The outcome of the research, which is ongoing, would therefore be used to compare results with other previous findings in studies undertaken elsewhere in the world.

TYPES OF PARTICIPATION AND "NON-PARTICIPATION"

A typology of eight levels of participation may help in analysis of this confused issue. For illustrative purposes the eight types are arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product. (See Figure 2 below)

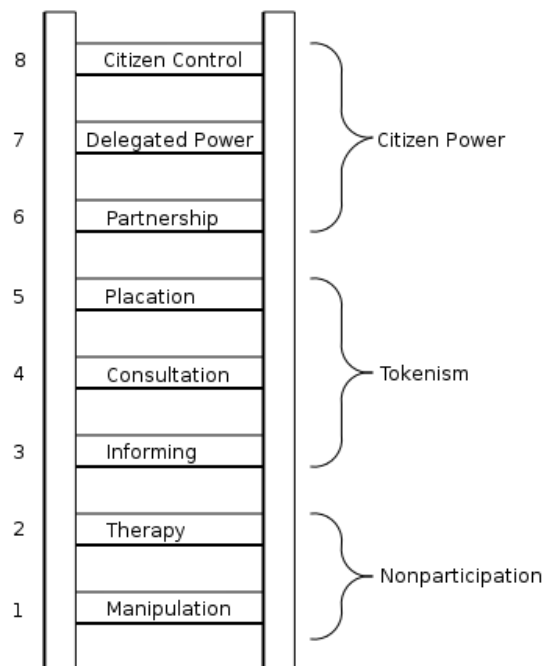


Figure 2: Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation

The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants. Rungs (3) and (4) progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no "muscle," hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide.

Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power. Obviously, the eight-rung ladder is a simplification, but it helps to illustrate the point that so many have missed - that there are significant gradations of citizen participation. Knowing these gradations makes it possible to cut through the hyperbole to understand the increasingly strident demands for participation from the have-nots as well as the gamut of confusing responses from the powerholders. People in Ghana living with either physical or mental disability are faced with severe social stigma that, unfortunately, has created an undesirable entrenched culture of discrimination which has been manifested in

forms of inequalities in access to employment, education, transport, healthcare and also enhanced use of public places. In spite of constitutional and legislative guarantees for the rights of persons with disabilities, it is clear that the enforcement of laws on disability in Ghana is failing and becoming more and more frustrating for PWDs. In fact, discrimination against PWDs continues to undermine the democratic participation of all sections of the Ghanaian population.

Ghana is not an island but part of a global network of countries influenced by the actions of other countries. Today, the world, through the United Nations, has expressed the view that issues relating disability cannot wait any longer but addressed in an acceptable manner through certain programmes and actions. At various times, the UN saw it necessary to deliberate on standard rules on equalisation of opportunities. For example, discussions in the Third Committee of the General Assembly at the forty-fifth session showed that there was wide support for the new initiative to elaborate standard rules on the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Indeed, at the thirty-second session of the Commission for Social Development, the initiative for standard rules received the support of a large number of representatives and discussions led to the adoption of resolution 32/2 of 20 February 1991, in which the Commission decided to establish an ad hoc open-ended working group in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/26.

Against this background, the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for PWDs were developed on the basis of the experience gained during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992). In fact, the International Bill of Human Rights, comprising the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as well as the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, constitute the political and moral foundation for the Rules.

Although the Rules are not compulsory, they serve as international customary rules when they are applied by a great number of States with the intention of respecting a rule in international law. They imply a strong moral and political commitment on behalf of States to take action for the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Important principles for responsibility, action and cooperation are indicated. Areas of decisive importance for the quality of life and for the achievement of full participation and equality are pointed out. The Rules offer an instrument for policy-making and action to persons with disabilities and their organisations. They provide a basis for technical and economic cooperation among States, the United Nations and other international organisations.

The purpose of the Rules is to ensure that girls, boys, women and men with disabilities, as members of their societies, may exercise the same rights and obligations as others. In all societies of the world there are still obstacles preventing persons with disabilities from exercising their rights and freedoms and making it difficult for them to participate fully in the activities of their societies. It is the responsibility of States to take appropriate action to remove such obstacles. Persons with disabilities and their organisations should play an active role as partners in this process. The equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities is an essential contribution in the general and worldwide effort to mobilise human resources. Special attention may need to be directed towards groups such as women, children, the elderly, the poor, migrant workers, persons with dual or multiple disabilities, indigenous people and ethnic minorities. In addition, there are a large number of refugees with disabilities who have special needs requiring attention. This explains why Ghana cannot be left behind in this matter.

Indeed, issues relating to education, employment, accessibility, recognition etc, identified by this research work, are all determinants of participation in national development, but all these are being overlooked to the neglect of persons with disability. Without doubt, the problems facing the disabled in this country are enormous and these are militating against their productivity and performance. These problems call for a massive campaign to sensitise government and also enlighten the populace to create conducive atmosphere for social, economic and political integration of the disabled persons. The problems are carefully highlighted and discussed in this section.

Conclusion

Hart used “Ladder of Participation” to look at the issue of inclusiveness in its entirety, pointing out that it is not everyone or group that may be included in certain processes, particularly when the individuals or groups are vulnerable. Second, he used the concept to demonstrate a process that any vulnerable adult might experience. Here also, he showed how vulnerable groups or individuals might be involved in various degrees of inclusiveness, an indication that some people may be more involved or included than others which goes to show that the perceived inclusiveness of some sections of society in a particular process may not be real or, even if real, may be largely cosmetic.

Participation in national programmes tend to go to go in favour of perceived able-bodied persons while others found to be challenged in various ways are often excluded from active participation. This has both theoretical

and practical implications. In terms of theory, it signifies the non-participation of some members of society who for some reasons may be found in the list of exclusion as far as active participation in national programmes is concerned. Secondly, it has practical implication in form of reconsideration of policies geared towards addressing this issue of non-participation in the process of national development. If relevant authorities in societies pay attention to these theoretical and practical implications it will help to make society more inclusive of the role of everyone.

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