Education Re-Engineering in the New Normal World

Festschrift for Professor Rashid Adewumi Aderinoye

Edited by
Kester Osegha Ojokheta
Kehinde O. Kester

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EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING IN THE NEW NORMAL WORLD

A FESTSCHRIFT FOR

PROFESSOR RASHID ADEWUMI ADERINOYE

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Edited by

Kester Osegha Ojokheta, *DIP, Ph.D, FUIL, FSOU, MNAE, MNNCAE*
Professor of Literacy, Open-Distance and Lifelong Learning
Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan

Kehinde Oluwaseun Kester, *Ph.D, MNAE*
Professor of Industrial Education and Training
Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan

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Chapter 40

Adapting Virtual Resource Materials in Community Development Delivery in the New Normal World

U. C. Osu

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Introduction

There had been a paradigm shift in every line of economy especially during condition of sudden change in the environment occasioned by the pandemic. This paper explores adapting virtual resource materials in community development delivery in addressing issues in the community and also prepares individuals for times of uncertainty in the world at large in the new normal. Since the beginning of 2020, it has been observed that the world has seen a series of incredible paradigm shifts in almost every line of business due to huge increases in demand in some industries and total loss of demand in others.

The world and the different generations are getting used to working from home or managing to deliver products or businesses remotely. This huge radical shift shows that the future will be different, and we need to prepare to be relevant in a different era which needs a new paradigm. The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has generated a fundamental change in the context as societies are increasingly recognising the critical importance of digital infrastructure and services. Therefore, this necessitates the need for incorporating virtual resource materials for community development component delivery in the new normal.

The New Normal and Community Development

According to Buheji (2020), the new normal as an event which previously was unfamiliar, or a typical situation that has become standard, or usual, or expected. COVID-19 pandemic is a sudden event, but this new normal can also be a consequence of broader changes in the modern world like climate change, migration, wars, poverty and hunger; besides the development of technology. As the world would strive to resume its activity towards the better productivity and progressive growth, it would need to go through fuzziness and would need to reshape itself to fit the prerequisites of the next new normal (Levenson, 2020; Helyer and Lee, 2014).

The new normal comes to ensure the community and organisations rapid response and the efficient adaptation to change. This would ensure that the world would be more ready for its re-emergence with a stronger position after each shock, or crisis or global challenge. Magazine (2020) according to Meister in the new normal, we would witness changes in the speed and quality of training for remote workers.

Community development remains an object or tool for purposive change. It is the tool for involving people in their communities to help their own economic and social conditions, and thereby to become effective working groups in programmes of their national development Anyanwu (2009). Nwankwo (2011) emphasised that community development means better living both materially and socially. It can be said that community development is a process whereby people are taught to improve themselves not only by doing things together but also by planning together with a view to providing the actual techniques for doing the job or finding suitable solution to their problems.

Ugochukwu (2010) explained that community development is "restructuring mechanism focused at the economic and social bases in order to satisfy the needs and aspiration of the rural masses and to promote individual and collective energy to participate in the process of development. This further involves a host of multi -sectorial activities including improvement of agriculture, the promotion of industries, creation of required infrastructure and social overhead as well as establishing a decentralised structure to allow mass participation.

The issues this definition highlighted clearly illustrate community development as deliberated, by people, need and aspiration driven, anticipatory improvement and sustainability over time. This accentuates Arnold opinion that, community development is not a haphazard venture but rather systematic initiatives well thought out (Adejumobi 2010). The concept of community development has been used in different contexts and for different purposes by different scholars. A more comprehensive definition of community development has been expressed in the community development guidelines of the International Co-operative Administration of the United States cited in Ndukwe. According to that agency, Community Development is "a process of social action which the people of a community organise themselves for planning an action, define their common and individual needs and problem; execute these plans with a maximum reliance upon community resources and materials from governmental and non-governmental agencies outside the community". From all these definitions, Community Development is not concerned with one aspect of life, but involves total community life and needs. Ideally, it involves all the members of the community; it requires their fullest participation in decision making and then decision implementation. People work together with or without extra support to shape their future and that of the community. Community development has to do with the elimination of such limiting circumstances of life as poverty, hunger, ignorance, sickness and fear, in a bid to bring about improvement in the standard of living of a people.

Obodoechi (2009) highlights the objectives of community development thus:

(a) to improve of life at the community level as much as our human and material resources can carry us;
(b) to develop all aspects of community living equitably so as to avoid imbalance or neglect of any area of living;
(c) to achieve a self-generating breakthrough of producing the human and physical process of change;
(d) to minimise poverty and unemployment in the community as well as provide governmental services, explore and use technical assistance available outside the community;
(e) it aims at agricultural extension and development, rural industrial develop-

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ment, rural sanitation, diseases control and health programmes, rural education planning, planning for rural finance, cooperation, development of communication, and other recreational facilities.

The primary purpose of community development is to bring about change for better living within the community. The integration and involvement of communities in COVID-19 prevention and control is a potential and viable strategy in addressing the pandemic and has been suggested by the World Health Organisation, UNICEF and IFRC, among others. Indeed, the recommended measures to prevent and control COVID-19 such as physical-social distancing, case identification and contact tracing require understanding of the different social dynamics in communities and how these can better be leveraged to minimise the impact of the epidemic and the need to embrace virtual learning in the new normal (WHO, 2020).

Hence, for community development practitioners and experts to achieve the objectives of community development, it is very germane to explore the relevant virtual materials which would be more relevant in delivering the objectives of community development in the new normal.

Concept of Community Development

Community Development has evolved into a recognised discipline drawing from a wide variety of academic fields including sociology, economics, political science, planning, geography, and many others. Today there are many academic and professional journals focusing on community development. The interest of researchers and practitioners from many different disciplines has contributed greatly to the growth and development of the field. However, community development's growth and interdisciplinary nature have led to the current situation where it is defined and approached in many different ways, and, all too often, "never the twain shall meet". The beginning step in defining community development is to the define community.

A review of literature (Ugboh, 2007; Zaharah and Abu, 2008; Ozor and Nwankwo, 2008) have found many definitions of the community as such people who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live. Mattessich and Monsey (2004) see the community as a group of people who live close to one another and are united by common interests and mutual aid. (National Research Council cited in Mattessich and Monsey (2004): define community as a combination of social units and systems which perform the major social functions and the organisation of social activities. These definitions refer, first, to people and the ties that bind them and second to geographic locations. They remind us that without people and the connections among them, a community is just a collection of buildings and streets.

In this context, community development takes on the mantle of developing stronger "communities" of people and the social and psychological ties they share. Indeed this is how community development is defined in much of the literature. Discussions that reflect this aspect focus on Community development as an educational process which enable citizens to address problems by group decision making (Long, cited in Mattessich and Monsey (2004). Community development may be described as involvement in a process to achieve improvement in some aspects of community life where normally such action leads to the strengthening of the community's pattern of human and

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institutional relationships Ploch (1976) cited in Mattessich and Monsey (2004). According to Anyanwu (1992 and 2002), the concept of community development lacks a precise definition that caters to its ever-expanding field.

According to Onyeozu (2007), community development is not only multi-disciplinary; it is a multi-dimensional process involving the organisation and re-orientation of the economic and social system. Community development focuses on the process of teaching people how to work together to solve common problems.

As opined by Bede (2011) community development embodies two major ideas which are the conscious acceleration of economic, technological and social change (development) and a planned social change as a village, town or city. This is in relation to projects that are significant which can be initiated and carried out by local people.

Abiodun (2015) maintain that community development is concerned with the development of human elements within a community. This implies the realisation of human potentials and its ability to control his environment as a measure of real development and an increase in material progress and a corresponding increase in the development of human capacities and social institutions.

Overview of COVID-19 Pandemic

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus, namely severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), first detected in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan in Hubei province, China (Brüssow, 2020; Fauci, Lane and Redfield, 2020; Gentile and Abenavoli, 2020; Shang, Yang, Rao and Rao, 2020). Symptoms range from fever, flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue, and shortness of breath.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020), The spread of COVID-19 affected economic activities in China, the Chinese economy came to a halt. The infection which has no immediate treatment and vaccine, has become a worldwide pandemic causing significant morbidity and mortality across the globe. There are 33,627,402 confirmed cases, 24,943,295 recoveries from the illness and 1,007,865 deaths worldwide as of September 29, 20 (Worldometers, 2020).

Nigeria recorded her index case on February 27, 2020 through an Italian citizen and as at September 29, 2020, there were 58,460 laboratory confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Nigeria with 49,895 recoveries and 1,111 deaths (Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, NCDC, 2020).

The global economy has hit a recession, leading to a financial crisis. In efforts to curb the pandemic, numerous scientific clinical trials and medical research have been undertaken, aiming to develop vaccines to treat the disease, as well as government interventions such as social distancing policies, self-isolation/quarantines, movement control orders, travel restrictions, and lockdowns and reliefs (financial incentives and supports) are in place to 'flatten the curve' and ameliorate the economic situation.

According to (WHO, 2020) coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in Wuhan, China and spread around the world. Genomic analysis revealed that SARS-CoV-2 is phylogenetic ally related to severe acute respiratory syndrome like (SARS-like) bat viruses, therefore bats could be the possible primary reservoir. The intermediate source of origin and transfer to humans is not known, however, the rapid human to human transfer has been confirmed widely.

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Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the healthcare infrastructure in African countries had deteriorated. Currently, in Africa, 65 percent of health care expenses are made from out-of-pocket expenditure compared to Europe where the national and regional authorities are responsible for the health policies and expenditure. During the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the quarantine and other measures adopted to stop/prevent the spread of COVID-19 in African countries, the number of infected cases continued to increase significantly. This situation mounted unprecedented pressure on the public health systems in many African countries. Some private hospitals refused to admit infected patients while public hospitals exceeded their capacity. This pressured the government to build isolation centres in large open fields around the country; notably, football stadiums were converted to isolation centres in countries like Cameroun and Nigeria.

World Health Organization (WHO) announced on 11 March 2020, that COVID-19 has become a global emergency, given its impact on the entire world population and the economy. According to scenario simulations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), global growth could fall by 0.5 for the year 2020. Several other sources are also predicting a fall in global growth due to the direct effects of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Concept of Virtual Community

Virtual Community is a network which work within a social network of individual by any specific media and which have no limit about geographical area as well as political restriction. The vital aim of virtual community is to achieve socialisation, i.e. a person may share his feelings, his opinion and his knowledge without any boundaries. It a known fact that the most popular communities of exchanging view, ideas and achieving socialisation is virtual community which consist of various online communities (Howard 2007).

Virtual Community is not only for sharing the ideas, facts or information but it is useful for extending a work, for developing a business or a better relationship. Today's world have become practically virtual and this virtual world interactive of all virtual community forms. This type of community persons are connected by living as an adventure in a computer based world. Virtual communities are groups whose members communicate and interact in an online environment. These communities, also called On line communities or Electronic communities, are places where social interaction takes place over the Internet.

According to Sidiras and Krcmar (2004), a virtual community is as an online community consists of people who interact together socially on a technical platform. The community is built on a common interest, a common problem or a common task of its members that is pursued on the basis of implicit and explicit codes of behaviour. The technical platform enables and supports the community's interaction and helps to build trust and a common feeling among the members. This definition was chosen for its combination of both social and technical aspects. The definition includes the people who visit an online community, and the reasons for which they may do so. It also includes a technical aspect, and the goal for which the technology is utilised within online communities. The combination of message boards (also known as forums or bulletin boards) and member profiles are widely used as a technical platform for online communities. The message boards allow people to reply to, or start new topics of discussion (also known as threads). The profile section allows people to disclose personal

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information and pictures with other people in the community.

By incorporating interactive features into a website like message boards and member profiles, community members are able to have an equal say in the content on information displayed on the website. With static websites, all content is supplied by the webmaster. However, by adding interactive features, visitors are able to influence the content of a website and use this influence to fulfill their informative needs (Arguello, Butler, Joyce, Kraut, Ling, Ros´e and Wang, 2006).

Today, millions of people participate in the computer mediated social groups, exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, find friends among others. (White, 2007). Usually, the members of such a virtual community have responsibilities inside the community, working together to achieve a common goal. Their accounts possess different levels of interaction and participation.

Virtual resource materials typology applicable in the new normal

Zoom is the leader in modern enterprise video communications, with an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, chat. Zoom is a collaborative, cloud-based video conferencing service offering features including online meetings, group messaging services, and secure recording of sessions (Zoom Video Communications Inc., 2016). Zoom offers the ability to communicate in real time with geographically dispersed individuals via computer, tablet, or mobile device. In the new normal, there is greater urgency than ever before to address issues relating to development in the communities. Utilising the virtual resource materials would be useful in connecting community dwellers to participate in development process. However it is very useful in urban areas where there is availability of internet facilities unlike the rural communities where the traditional method is being utilised.

Mixlr describes itself as a live broadcasting tool that allows users to: follow the people you like, interact with your listeners and see the crowd's reactions live. The Mixlr could

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be adopted in this new normal for information dissemination in communities. Similarly, it could also be used to teach skills and to generate participation among audience in the community.

Google Meet

Google Meet is a video-communication service developed by Google

Webinars and Virtual Classrooms [100% Free Platform] – The Most Interactive Platform

Video Forum

The video forum could be utilised for information sharing in community development. It could be employed for teaching of skills. Field operations and activities can be recorded on video tapes for use at different communication settings.

Adapting Virtual Resource Material Tools for Community Development delivery in the New Normal world

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted a new found sense of urgency to the digital inclusion agenda. While the crisis has enabled hundreds of millions to work, learn and connect digitally, it is easy to see how it has also exacerbated the situation for far too many people in vulnerable situations around the world. Post-COVID-19, the "new normal" will likely see an acceleration of digital activities across various aspects of daily life. While not all jobs can be done remotely, and some level of in-person work is likely to resume, there is likely to be increasing use of advanced virtual conferencing in day to day meetings, Zoom, webinar, workshops, up skilling trainings, or even team building

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for colleagues in different locations. This new normal presents an unprecedented opportunity for cross-sector collaboration to bridge the digital divide and enable unforeseen growth opportunities for the economy and society.

The integration and involvement of communities in COVID-19 prevention and control is a potential and viable strategy in addressing the pandemic and has been suggested by The World Health Organization, UNICEF and IFRC, among others. Indeed, the recommended measures to prevent and control COVID-19 such as physical-social distancing, case identification and contact tracing require understanding of the different social dynamics in communities and how these can better be leveraged to minimise the impact of the pandemic.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 crisis has thrown into sharp focus the importance of adopting virtual resource tools of digital delivery of community development programmes. Many countries underwent lockdown periods, digital infrastructure was critical to mitigate the impact of stay-at-home restrictions. The economic and behavioural trends brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic will challenge public and private sectors to rethink and prioritise digital in the future. In the new normal, there is greater urgency than ever before to address the digital divide and to explore a combination of new and existing technologies that can reach and connect new areas. At this juncture, a heighten emphasis on virtual materials applicable to both rural and urban communities should be considered owing to their merits and demerits in usage.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made owing to the need for incorporating virtual materials resource in community development component delivery.

(1) There is need for government to promote virtual friendly environment for experts in community development in the new normal.
(2) There is need for training of community development officers on virtual material usage for competence in community development component delivery.
(3) There is need to adopt virtual resources materials which will promote the recommendations of World Health Organisation on COVID-19.

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