

Chapter 11

Can Community Education Promote Community Participation in the Local Economic Development (LED) Activities in this Era of 2019–nCoV

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ABSTRACT

The 2019-nCoV has come as an unexpected wicked challenge especially to the vulnerable ones as it has significantly affected the local economic development (LED) activities of many local people in communities of South Africa. In this chapter, the role of community education as a problem-solving measure in promoting community participation in LED will be explored as limited participation in those activities prevail especially in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. The study provides the challenges posed by the limited participation in the communities and the economy and explains how the local participation is important through community education (CE) programmes in LED activities. Since community education indeed plays a huge role in enhancing community participation in LED activities, the government officials, policymakers and others need to work closely with local people so that they can understand the essence of socio-economic issues that communities daily encounter in the wake of the pandemic.

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INTRODUCTION

In this ever challenging time of the history, the whole world has experienced an unprecedented assault resulting from the upsurge and fast spread of the wicked pandemic known as 2019-nCoV. In May 2020, approximately 31, 9 million of infected cases have been reported and over 976 million of deaths cases have struck the world (Worldometers, 2020). Undoubtedly, the Coronavirus pandemic has impinged on economies especially on emerging and developing ones across the world because of the local, national and international lockdown and other preventive related measures resulting from the spread of the coronavirus pandemic with a fright of it being generated into a turmoil. South Africa has not been spared from the pandemic, the cases have been spreading like hell fire with many deaths cases recorded. In September 659,656 cases and 15,940 deaths cases have been recorded in South Africa (Wordometers, 2020). One of the highly affected activities in South Africa has been the local economic development ones which remain at the main forefront of the pandemic (Sibanda, 2020). Working closely with the community people in their respective areas and localities, the local government is in a better position to continuously address the pandemic consequences such as socioeconomic and financial related ones (Sibanda, 2020). As the number of coronavirus related cases kept on increasing, it is a fact that several jobs have been lost along the line as less community participation in the local communities have been witnessed. According to the National Treasury (2020), job losses have reached approximately 7.1 million as a result of the pandemic, taking the unemployment rate as high as 50%. Most of the informal sector are related to small businesses and are mainly found in the LED areas, thus being the most affected. There is also a possibility that the increasing level of unemployment and other deprivation will continue to rise that could lead to people falling deep down in the cluster of poverty. This is premised that the pandemic is not only a health related issue but it has also affected the welfare of people through losses of their local businesses and unemployment in the local areas has soared. The government spending has increased by 12.2% on employees costs due to high unemployment in the LED areas. Further, South Africa has spent R96.8 billion in 2020 compared to R86.3 billion on operations costs related to the LED activities recently. As supported by Mthembu (2015), the internal economic activities are so limited that it is difficult to generate sufficient employment in those LED areas. Currently, the LED areas have limited capacity for self-initiated change due to poor education levels and poor skills development for instance, there are limited community education programmes that could develop the community people business and trade skills in those LED areas in the midst of the pandemic. Therefore, the chapter focuses on the community education programmes as a solution to the challenge of a lack of community participation in LED activities.

The study addresses issues that need special attention without community participation and it is difficult for LED activities to succeed in terms of providing employment opportunities and alleviating poverty. This is supported by Patterson (2008:8) who argued that leaders of LED projects find it effective to work with committed people who assist in enhancing economic activities and growth. Hence, CE programmes play a huge role in providing local people with skills and knowledge about the economic development of their area. This study is significant because it explores the effectiveness of community education programmes in enhancing community-led development which allow people to participate in and feel the sense of ownership of their respective community in the wake of this pandemic. Therefore, the main aim of the chapter is to investigate the role of community education in promoting community participation in LED activities.

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