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Revitalizing self-help spirit in the communities: Are there roles for adult educators to play?

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ABSTRACT

Self-help spirit which culminates into selfless services, voluntarism, and free labor by people in communities appears to be waning in Ghana. This free labor services provided by community members require revitalization. Adult educators have roles to play in revitalizing self-help spirit to build resilient communities., Questions to be addressed are: What is self-help in community development? Who are adult educators and what roles they play in reviving self-help spirit in the communities? This theoretical approach to literature review paper used a library research and adapted a critical literature review approach. It reviewed 30 out of the 60 documents on self-help, adult educators, and community development. It was observed that self-help, a strategy to improve communities, makes people learn. Through continuous learning and training, people adapt to changes and address problems in their communities. Adult educators are to build inclusiveness, networks, attitudinal change, partnership and mobilization of self-help groups to restore vitality and make communities more vibrant and sustainable.

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Introduction

Self-help is a key concept in community development, and the central idea is that by working together, people can improve their quality of life (Christenson & Robinson, 1989 cited in Green, 2011). Through self-help, community members become empowered, initiate, and strengthen capacities to address problems facing their communities. Brown and Baker (2019) assert that place where people live have profound effects on their health and economic and social outcomes, and individuals and communities are mutually supportive (Buikstra et al., 2010 cited in Cavaye & Ross, 2019). Community development is facilitated as a dialogical, collective decision-making process in which communities identify their problems and initiate workable experiences to supply their needs (Nel, 2018;

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Saliu, 2014). Ghana adapts self-help as a strategy for development because, as people work together, they learn from one another for improvement in their communities. However, the commitment of people to self-help seems waning in Ghana, and this theoretical approach to literature review paper sought to address the issues of self-help by employing adult educators' roles in community development.

Self-help is an informal support system and constitutes informal arrangements between friends and neighbors. In the "natural economy," it is based on "logic of affinity expressed through *informality, mutuality*, and *voluntarism*" (Paton, 1989, p. 8). Similarly, voluntarism and self-help cannot exist independently of the world around them (A.W. Rogers, 1987); after all, community resilience is viewed as one level of social resilience (Cavaye & Ross, 2019). Ghana is noted for strong self-help spirit in the 1950s to 1990s when voluntarism was a norm (Badu-Nyarko, 1997). Free labor and selfless services were common in the rural communities. Togetherness or *ubuntu* is the culture of Ghanaians; hence Adeyemo (2002) argues that self-help promotion among the rural populace can be most successful if *self-help groups* establish links with local associations and traditional forms of organizations. Savings clubs, called "Susu" (revolving fund) and "Nnboa" (working together), defined as community savings banks or community foundations (Lachapelle, 2020), are examples of self-help groups in Ghana. Self-help groups (SHGs) in Kenya, including K-Rep Development Agency (KDA), designed the *"Juhudi Model,"* an adaptation of the Grameen Bank group-leading model. "Tap and Reposition Youth" (TRY) – a group-lending scheme to support poor adolescent girls in Kenya with financial support to acquire skills and trades to lead useful lives – is an SHG (Erulkar et al., 2006). The Ethiopian SHGs include indigenous savings groups like "Accumulated Savings and Credit Associations" (ASCRAs) and "Consortium of Self-help Group Approach Promoters" (GoSAP) that combine social, economic, and political aspects of community development to engender empowerment (Lawson-mcdowall et al., 2016). Such SHGs advocate for people to improve their conditions using local initiatives and resources in their own hands. This can be deepened because rural development, according to Rahe and Hause (2020), continues to evolve and the rural wealth creation, for instance, "Susu" has become a relevant way of approaching complex challenges, including waning self-help spirit in Ghana.

Additionally, for local leadership groups to be successful in self-help initiatives, a number of practitioners' services are required; among them are adult educators. As service providers, adult educators are first facilitators of learning (Bowl, 2014). They help in the provision of educational services in ensuring the community members and leadership groups acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes to succeed in self-help development programs. Kimble and Kimble (1954) argue that a mass literacy program may open people's eyes to the possibilities of advance and may act as a bait to attract people into community projects that are going on simultaneously. Thus, community development projects require local leadership to galvanize citizenry participation, and this is where adult educators become important.

Community development, in this context, is the process by which community members come together in tackling problems that influence their lives. However, success of development projects depends on willing participation of community members in such projects. Flo and Smith (1999) observed that community members in a small rural community in Canada were disturbed when they realized the young people were going

to larger centers to find work. After much work, a number of business people sponsored a small local sawmill. The mill became a success, and other business opportunities were considered to create additional jobs in the community. Thus, when community members see one venture succeed, it is easier for them to plan others. Success in initiating community development projects requires combined efforts of leadership groups, community members, media houses, organizations, and expertise. Self-help, then, becomes crucial to community members in the quest of improving communities. However, the local people in Ghana seem poor, and some leadership groups hardly plan toward self-help projects. Industries have collapsed, and some communities are near ghost towns. These difficulties have pushed the youth from the rural communities to urban centers for non-existent jobs.

Yet self-reliance', a key concept in community development is related to self-help. It constitutes a process for promoting well-being with attention to appreciation for one's culture (Lowe, 2018). Lowe emphasizes that people remain responsible, disciplined, and confident while staying connected to their cultural roots; meaning, we have to trust our *capabilities* and avoid conformity and false consistency, and follow our instincts and ideas. Fonchingong and Fonjong (2003) see "self-reliance" as a state of mind that regards one's own mental and material resources as the primary stock to draw on in the pursuit of one's objectives and finds emotional fulfillment in achieving the objectives and achieved them primarily by using own resources. They argue that "self-reliance" is connected to self-help, mutual-help, and indigenous participation, serving as the bases of effective community development in most Sub-Saharan African countries. In Tanzania, Julius Nyerere's vision of socialism embraced *adult education* as a means of mobilizing people for self-reliant community development and societal transformation. Hence, "self-reliance" is fast accepted as a formula for community development (Fonchingong & Fonjong, 2003). In Ghana, the people work in cooperation, applying requisite knowledge and skills to the resources at their disposal to achieve self-initiated projects. Anyanwu (1992) contends that in most African countries, community development has depended on voluntary cooperative efforts. The difficulty, however, is that resources, including funds to undertake "self-reliance" projects, are scarce in developing countries. Projects, including construction of health centers, require huge capital outlay, which is beyond the means of the local people. Therefore, successful execution of development projects is sometimes achieved not only through active participation of the local people but also through effective partnership with organizations in the communities, governments' agencies, and media. Thus fostering self-help spirit is a step to consider in revitalizing our communities. This paper seeks to ascertain the essence of self-help to community development. It establishes roles of adult educators and identifies steps to revitalize self-help spirit in communities.

Background

Four areas related to self-help, adult education, and community development were reviewed. This comprises self-help approach to community development; self-help projects in Ghana; roles of adult educators in self-help programs; and steps in revitalizing self-help in communities.

Self-help approach to community development

The self-help approach to community development focuses on empowering communities to address issues themselves (Gallardo et al., 2018). It is one of several distinguishing features of community development theory, practice, and ideology based on the premise that people *can, will*, and *should* collaborate to solve community problems (Christenson & Robinson, 1989). The researcher concur because communities' problems are many and interrelated and cannot be addressed single-handedly. When community members come together with a common goal, they can pull resources to address their needs. Thus no community development program can succeed without active *support* and *participation* of the people themselves (Kumar, 1979); yet programs should be organized to provide opportunities for maximum *self-help*. The citizenry are encouraged to plan and work on a solution of their problems and develop self-initiative, self-reliance, and leadership. Thus self-help embodies two interrelated features: one, to produce improvements of people's living conditions, facilities, and/or services, and two, it emphasizes that the process by which these improvements are achieved is essential to the development of the community (Christenson & Robinson, 1989). Self-help methods are customary among rural people (Kumar, 979), but in Ghana, self-help is not limited to rural communities, but the neighborhoods in urban centers apply it methods in their development. Stimulating self-help in the people is one valued cultural tradition in Ghana that believes in cooperation. It serves as a way of getting communities mobilizing resources for improvement in their communities. Christenson and Robinson (1989) opine that without a commitment to self-help, a community may exist as a place but be lacking the capacity building strategy. To them, self-help, which is one of the elements of community development, is a style of planning, decision-making, and problem solving, which is endemic to the idea of community and is inherent in the cultural practices of Ghanaians.

Hence, strong self-help spirit is realized when citizens' *participation* in community development programs is promoted based on the needs of the community members. In Ghanaian situation, the provision of free labor, money, time, and energies of the citizenry are united and released during communal labor activities. The essential feature is the participation of people from its very start. Self-help approach to community development led to the implementation of a number of constructional projects, including school buildings, health centers, and agricultural programs. Education becomes critical in empowering the citizenry; hence Kimble and Kimble (1954) note that "closely related to adult education at all levels is the need for community development" (p. 11). Green (2011) admits that it is a problem for communities to [always] look to outside resources because technical assistance may not match the needs in the local settings. Technical assistance frequently has a generic response to community issues and has little local knowledge of the local context, and providers lack the time and resources to study how the local context may influence the intervention process (Green, 2011). Self-help has always been an important way for individuals to cope with immediate needs with poverty and with social exclusion.

Burkhart-Kriesel (2005) avers that self-help is a great way to get local buy-in on a project because it uses the *talents* and *experiences* of local citizens as assets to further a cause. This informs Ife's (2002) definition of community development as "an ongoing and complex process of *dialogue, exchange, consciousness raising, education,* and *action*

aimed at helping the people concerned to construct their own version of community" (p. 84). This line of thinking is important to adult educators fostering self-help spirit for the betterment of communities. To succeed in community development programs, methods adopted should include *adult education*, because its provision to community members' helps in creating awareness to work for improvements in communities (Biney, 2009). Thus sustainable development in communities comes through self-help, yet, self-help is not a package of benefits given to community members but a process by which community progressively acquire greater mastery over their destiny (Green, 2011).

Contributions of self-help to community development

The major contribution of self-help to community development is that it provides residents with capacities necessary to take over the direction of change in their locality (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012; Richards & Dalbey, 2006). True development means the development of human beings (human capital); the unfolding and realization of creative potential, enabling the people to improve their material conditions of living through the use of resources available to them (Biney, 2009). Self-help exudes a sense of pride and commitment in the people, where community projects are seen as their projects rather than government's projects. This explains William et al.'s (2004) assertion that community self-help is the basis upon which communities *survive, thrive,* and *evolve*. Thus interdependence is brought about by a web of reciprocal exchanges (William et al., 2004), meaning self-help can serve as a *strategy* and a *model* a society can use to foster development. Bhattacharyya (2004) proposes that the purpose of community development is the pursuit of solidarity and agency by adhering to the principles of *self-help, felt needs,* and *participation*. These components of community development, especially self-help, are critical if citizenry and SHGs are to succeed in the development drive to improve the lives of people.

Self-help projects in Ghana

From 1950s to 1990s, there were massive development of social amenities, infrastructure facilities, and agriculture and cottage industries in the communities. The "Asafo companies," youth groups, religious groups, local leadership groups, and professional groups supported the effort of governments in improving communities. The self-help programs were supported by experts, including adult educators, to undertake development programs in the communities. The main areas of community development in the 1950s focused on adult literacy, women's home economics, and extension services to address illiteracy, disease, and poverty among women, and general extension services with organizations like non-governmental organizations, self-help village, and construction projects (Campfens, 1997). According to Government statistics, 386 village projects were constructed in 1953, 1,499 in 1954, 844 in 1955, 1,016 in 1956, and 1,210 in 1957. Self-help village and constructional projects included schools and clinics. Money, volunteers' labor, technical expertise, and commitment of citizens were available for project implementation. Self-help projects implemented varied from region to region. The Northern Region of Ghana saw deep wells (irrigation systems), tree planting, and construction of markets, schools, and kraals (Cattle pens). Popular projects in the Ashanti

Region included town halls, feeder roads, clinics, and schools. Farmer's Co-operatives established in the 1929 and 1932 were employed in the farming and agricultural sectors. The Co-operatives were engaged in procurement of grains, buffer stock, and storage operations. In the 1960s, the "Peoples Bridge" approach to community development was mounted. Individuals were encouraged to go into farming as a profession and business.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed "Operation feed yourself" campaign by the late Gen. Acheampong's Supreme Military Council (SMC) government. Ghana became a bread basket of grains with export carried to some neighboring West African countries. In the 1980s, the Rawlings Government relied on self-help to introduce "People's Farm" to make people become self-sufficient in food crops. The Government in 2017 introduced programs, including "Planting for food and jobs," "Planting for export and rural development," "One district, One factory," and "One Village, One dam" relying on self-help spirit of the citizenry. These programs meant to modernize agriculture in Ghana have made some people take to agriculture.

Roles of adult educators in self-help programs

Bowl (2014) asserts that a [major] role for an adult educator is to *facilitate* the process of learning. In the informal group like community, it is adult educators' responsibility to encourage existing SHGs to learn and succeed in self-help development drive. Adult educators are trained professionals, and know the bodies of knowledge which can help people perform their roles better. Hence, they are not seen as teachers, but as companions (Kidwai, 1973) aiding people to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes to address their needs, including the construction of schools and recreational centers for children to learn, play and enjoy leisure time. Adult educators' works are contextualized (English & Mayo, 2012), and the needs of people in the global North are different from that of the global South. However, apart from few adult educators whose works cut across the regions, many are culturally dominated. There are certain roles of adult educators which are universal in practice (Knowles, 1980), including developing new knowledge, preparing materials, inventing new techniques, providing leadership for coordinative organizations, training adult workers, and promoting adult education. They are concerned with adult learners and address both individual and community needs. As Knowles (1980, p. 29 cited in Oduro-Mensah & Biney, 2013) indicates, the mission of an adult educator

> "Is to help individuals learn what is required for gratification of their needs at whatever level they are struggling. If they are hungry, we must help them learn what will get them food; if they are well-fed, safe, loved, and esteemed, we must help them explore undeveloped capacities and become their full selves".

Adult educators work with groups (Imel, 1997) and engage in free dialogue to plan on community members' needs, helping them to become conscious and gain self-worth in executing self-help projects (Freire, cited in Lowe, 2018). Community education, then, must be placed high on the self-help project (Biney, 2009). Adult educators must consult local leadership groups in planning projects and draw upon technical knowledge, skills, and resources in SHGs to complement governments' supports to implement self-help projects. As *change agents*, adult educators diagnose obstacles confronting learners in achieving their goals in communities. They are concerned with helping adults to be

competent in the endeavors they engage themselves in and work with the learning population as *process agents*, assisting in problem solution. They play multiple roles including consultants, program planners, organizers, community developers, change agents, resource persons, leaders, researchers, and professors depending on the situation. To Merriam and Brockett (2007), adult educators are everywhere- in the community, workplace, farms, hospitals, prisons, libraries, colleges, and universities. Similarly, Toomey (2009) avers that in community development practice, practitioners in organizations play different roles in the planning, implementation, and diffusion of ideas and projects that they seek to promote. The adult educator as a *resource person* in the learning process works in a wide variety of social settings from governments, corporate organizations, and community-based programs.

Adult education is an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field, encompassing diverse areas, including community development, agricultural extension, in-service training, distance education, and others. Hence, specializing in one or two areas is not strange because adult educators work with adults in learning activities in varied organizations and do not identify themselves as adult educators. They identify themselves as health promoters, community development workers, business advisers, and environmental educators. Meanwhile, the development of their expertise includes a body of knowledge and principles that are centered on adult education as a field of study and practice (Young, 2005). Adult educators help adult learners learn *how* to learn to gain insights into how to solve problems, develop self-reliance spirit, and gain self-confidence in their endeavors. Brookfield (1995) opines that the analyses of roles of community adult educators have been done by Jackson (cited in Brookfield, 1995), Davie (1980) and those who advanced the concept of adult educators as *animateurs* (Kidd, 1971, Blondin, 1971, cited in Brookfield, 1995). Jackson asserts that the most substantial challenge facing adult education is that of "helping community groups whose members have received little formal education and have restricted opportunities to develop social, organizational and intellectual skills in their working lives" (p. 176). This explains the reason why an adult educator does not assume the position of being a repository of all knowledge but rather learn from community members even as they learn from him/her. They foster discussions with group members to get project off the ground.

Davie (1980) identifies four roles adult educators play in a development context in communities such as *analyst, investigator, organizer*, and *agent* as they strive to help community groups develop their communities. Considering roles development practitioners play in empowering and sometimes disempowering communities, Toomey (2009) categorized them into eight historical and alternative roles. Historically, development practitioners play the roles as rescuers, providers, modernizers, and liberators. Alternatively, they play roles as a catalyst, facilitator, ally, and advocate. Whatever the categorization of roles adult educators or community developers play in development programs does not matter much. What matters is that adult educators play significant roles in engendering betterment of communities. The deep insight adult educators dialogically infuse into leadership groups help in galvanizing and mobilizing resources in advancing developments in communities. The analytical role of adult educators in self-help development programs is on studying the community structures and problems in impartial, unbiased manner (Davie, 1980). This means that the individual involved undertakes a research to ascertain the needs, assets, opportunities, and threats before the commencement of development work in the community. Studies undertaken by adult educators give them fair idea about the nature of work they are to undertake.

This might have been the basis Davie (1980) asserts that individuals involved in development are typically university professors and consultants. The investigator role of the adult educator concerns collaborative studies in the communities of operation with the people. Although adult educators come along with certain skills, knowledge, and techniques to help people address their problems and interest, they are outsiders and community members are insiders. They know their community better than adult educators' do; hence, collaborative work is the way to success in self-help projects.

Playing the role as an organizer, adult educators work with the disadvantaged groups in furthering their interests through the process of consciousness raising. Conscientization in self-help work is critical if adult educators want to make impact because it promotes buy-in of the people, secure their participation, and support to undertake development work. Adult educators work as *agent*, which to Brookfield (1995) is different from the attached term "change agent," because the adult educator's role here is to *communicate* what the corporate organization operating in the community wants the people to know. A study on *Alternative livelihood programs by Corporate Mining Organizations* undertaken by Biney (2009) reveals that the community development officers working with corporate mining organizations in Ghana usually played the role of *agent* for their organizations. Less consultative work is done, such that the people tend not to own the projects implemented in their communities. Adult educators play roles as *animators* and engage the community members in interactive learning process in programs with educational values. The experiences, local knowledge, and wisdom displayed in such interactions help in the implementation of programs in the communities. Smith (cited in Brookfield et al., 2003) sees animation as the breathing of life into a situation and describes it as the function of working with the experience of others. Adult educators recognize the hidden resources in groups they work with and help them to *liberate* those experiences. This is one way of succeeding as adult educators working with SHGs in development programs.

Steps in revitalizing self-help in communities

Research shows that there are three main approaches to implement change, and one is *self-help*. Considering community development practice globally, the key to success is the change of *attitudes* among the citizenry who want to see improvements in their communities (Eiden et al., 2014). They indicate that self-help focuses on poor communities and succeeds where other approaches have had difficulties in changing lives of the poorest of the poor, adding that "the key to success in this endeavor is an *attitude change* among poor people themselves towards believing in their potential" (p. 7). Galadima (2012) asserts that members of a community need to strategize so that development will reach them; hence, Ghanaians must demonstrate hard work to change their communities for better. They can do this through participation in programs and projects.

Every adult educator performs multiple roles in fostering self-help spirit in the communities, including serving as catalysts, facilitators, links, teachers, resource persons, and consultants. These roles are played when they reach the communities through the *immersion* process and work with the community members and their SHGs. A recent study suggests the following as tasks of adult educators in self-help development work:

- Defining the problem(s) to be addressed and the nature of the community, SHGs and associations operating within the community.
- Aiding the formulation of the community group goals.
- Building an organizational structure that is suitable for tackling the problem(s).
- Aiding the community group's selection of strategies and use of the resources in implementing them.
- Monitoring and helping the community group to evaluate the impact of the activities, and revising plans for future action.

From this model, adult educators handle multiplicity of roles, which form part of a good community development practice. Establishing rapport with community members in the first meeting is important in self-help development work. It informs creation of partnership and networking among organizations dedicated to community development programs. The adult educator must see the community of operation as a *holistic* one and work on building relationships between people and their environmentand on the values of the community, ensuring that there is cooperation among the citizenry. The practitioner must understand that problems are interrelated and not compartmentalized into the traditional boundaries of health, housing, education, and employment. Thus, any effort to bring about a positive change in the community is based on the *culture* and the *beliefs* of the community; hence the adult educator works within that context. Thus success comes through the use of the *community education* strategy in fostering self-help approach to community development. Community education plays a role in creating a more democratic society; hence, adult educators should be committed to the principle of self-emancipation through education (Tett, 2012). Adult educators should use community education as a service to the community by providing *educational needs* to the community members and groups. The use of local schools as the catalyst for engaging community members is critical in addressing community problems and motivating the dormant human resource (Kaul, 1985). Forming new SHGs to engage in the self-help process where there is none could satisfy community life in the foreseeable future. The use of *dialogue* and honest discussion is critical in reaching out to the community members – the disadvantaged groups, the poor, and voiceless groups to participate in self-help programs. As Freire (1972) avers that "dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world in order to name the world" (p. 61).

Reflection and dialogue are key ways of engaging community participants in generating knowledge (Bananuka & John, 2015); hence, open dialogue should prevail in SHG activities for inequalities between adult educators and citizenry to be transcended. It means that adult educators create favorable climate, such that SHGs would continue to engage and learn. Dialogue, in Freire's view, is what takes place in a relationship which is imbued with *love, humility, faith, hope,* and *critical thinking*. As adult educators work in facilitating SHGs, these ideals would influence work in groups' activities. The word "love," to Freire (1972), means recognizing the humanness underneath the cultural differences between us and community members, and "humility" which can be equated with general respect for the experience of each individual are displayed. "Faith" "hope," and "critical thinking" meaning being prepared to let go of opinions which the adult educator might

previously have defended to the death are demonstrated. These qualities represent a belief that when adult educators and SHGs work together, no obstacle is insurmountable in implementing self-help projects in communities.

The application of the planning process is a critical factor to the improvements of communities. A one-way self-help approach utilized in revitalizing communities is through *visioning* and the *goal-setting* process (Mathie & Cunningham, 2008). Adult educators and local leadership groups must have visions for their communities and have a strategic planning process to enable them achieve goals devised for communities. Thus, *assets* in the communities of Ghana are least tapped into and utilized to benefit the people. Communities must start focusing on the assets within their communities – institutions in the communities, the individual capacities, knowledge, and skills they bring on board, which McKnight and Kretzmann (1996) refer to as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). This approach to development is important because the understanding of good community development practice is becoming visible in all sectors of development (Chigbu, 2014). The commitment of the people to invest their time and investible resources in self-help programs is critical in improving communities.

Unfortunately, the over-concentration of the people in the *need-based* approach to development leading to the neglect of the *self-help* approach, which looks at development from within is rendering people powerless. Such an approach to development deserves support from adult educators and the citizenry because the former renders the citizenry helpless and hopeless, while the latter seeks to inculcate in the citizenry the *"can-do"* spirit. Communities are made up of webs of experts and social capital that can be tapped into and utilized for their improvements, making training essential in development drive. Training the local leadership within the communities should constitute the core responsibility of adult educators because they would not remain in the community forever. The Unit Committee members and local Traditional Leaders are to be empowered to improve lives. As they get trained, they step into the shoes of the adult educators and facilitate work in communities. This transition, when successfully carried, could aid self-help development practice in communities with improvements realized.

Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in adult education and asset-based community development theory, a work of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) culminating into their book, *"Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets."* This was a two years' work of seeking, discovery, and analyzing similar kinds of stories of *endogenous community development* in low-income urban neighborhoods in the United States (Mathie & Cunningham, 2008). Similarly, Youngman (2000) argues that whatever the area of activity, the work of adult educators is dominated by theories and practices of development. Merriam and Brockett (2007) define adult education as "activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or perception define them as adults" (p. 8). From the definition, one thing stands out clear, and that is *learning*. In today's globalized economy filled with knowledge explosion and fast-paced changes in all spheres of life, the ability of people to learn and engender change in their communities is critical. This is because, through learning of the adult population,

sustainable development could be experienced in the communities. As community members engage in facilitated dialogue and learn in groups, they are able to acquire relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes that communities can draw upon for their development (Imel, 1997). After all, communities are made up of webs of experts in diverse fields, usually referred to as *social capital*. The collective wisdom of people could be tapped into to bring about the development and prosperity of the larger community. Adult education, then, could constitute a powerful force for promoting people-centered development. Brookfield (1995) perceives adult education as a problem-oriented education process and a group activity directed at some community improvement. Adult education is key in fostering community development, especially in the developing countries, noting that development is an interactive process. As a group-based process of learning, adult education is for development (A. Rogers, 1993).

Similarly, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) theory of asset-based community development (ABCD), an alternative to "needs-based" community development, sought to build communities through enhancing and leveraging local resources (Green, 2011; Haines, 2015). It shed light on the paralysis of other community development efforts (Mathie & Cunningham, 2008). The central premise of ABCD is that most communities have individual, organizational, and institutional resources that are often overlooked and can be used to enhance the quality of life (Haines, 2015). The idea that all individuals have the capacity to contribute to their community is fundamental to ABCD (Green & Haines, 2016), yet Wilke (cited in Burke et al., 2009) sees ABCD as possessing the potential of demoralizing the community and making them feel powerless. Mathie and Cunningham (2008) assert that ABCD rest on the principle that recognizing people's strengths, gifts, talents, and assets inspire positive action for change, increasing people's power and control. Thus, when communities focus on their needs, they tend to look to outside for assistance to address them; yet, success in community development requires regular building of community members capacity to make astute use of community assets to undertake programs in their communities. ABCD is an exemplary approach to self-help community development; after all, the strength of ABCD is that it emphasizes processes that enhance community *control* and problem-solving capacity. Thus, solutions to problems exist within the community (Green, 2011); yet, individual resources in the community including education and training, experiences, skills, youth groups, elderly people, and the disabled people with special gifts are often overlooked as potential contributors to community development (Green, 2011). Research found that ABCD is a useful community development approach, which could motivate community members to network with institutions, associations, and individuals (Burke et al., 2009). Community development, then, has long been used as an anti-poverty tool enabling those who are marginalized to be involved in developing policies for change (Lynam, 2006). This engenders improved organization and mobilization of resources for development, for it is the capacities of the local people, their associations, and SHGs that build powerful communities. Hence, when SHGs *learning* is fostered as adult education advocates, communities can be built to become sustainable.

Purpose and objectives of the study

This study seeks to ascertain adult educators' roles in revitalizing self-help spirit among people in community development in Ghana. On the basis of the major issue raised, the objectives of the study are to (1) establish importance of self-help approach to community development; (2) isolate roles adult educators can play in revitalizing self-help spirit in the communities; and (3) identify steps adult educators can adapt in fostering self-help.

Methods

This section provides information on the methods employed to conduct the study. It begins with the research design, sampling, data collection techniques, and the data analysis procedure followed.

Research design

The paper adapts a theoretical approach to literature review using *critical literature review* library research that involves studies conducted on three main themes – community development, adult educators, and self-help identified in the study. This procedure was adapted in order to remain reflective on the purpose of the study and research questions. I used coding in the literature search, and conducted search on key themes- "self-help" (20), "adult educators" (20), and "community development" (20), which had obvious link between questions and contents.

Sample and sampling techniques

I selected (10) data from each of the three themes, i.e. "self-help" (10), "adult educators" (10), and "community development" (10). The researcher sampled the 30 data from the secondary sources discussed subsequently based on the *availability of data, year of publication, richness of content,* and *relevance to the study*. The geographical location of the data and the time of publication, from 1970 to 2020, were considered in the sample of the data selected for the study. Both qualitative and mixed method data based on the need were sampled for the study.

Data collection techniques

The researcher began with a collection of initial codes derived from the keywords used in the literature search and the knowledge gained in conducting the literature review for the study. On the extracted information, the researcher focused attention on the purpose of the literature. The researcher also showed interest on the contents of the literature. After establishing the codebook with codes organized by categories and subcategories, I tested it against the subsample again to assure its appropriateness and completeness. Additional data were sought from university library collections periodical databases, newspapers, books, book chapters, websites, and clearinghouses. Data on self-help projects in Ghana, roles of adult educators in self-help programs, and steps in revitalizing self-help in communities were solicited. As a researcher, I used the critical review approach through a search of publicly

available literature on various themes identified. Electronic search was conducted via databases such as EBSCO, ERIC, Scopus, Emerald, Routledge (Taylor and Francis), and Sage. Web searches were performed with the Google and Edusearch. Searches were conducted from community development and adult education journals, locally and internationally. A broad representation of documents by different authors and written for different audiences but appropriate to the research questions was retrieved.

Data analysis

For the initial analyses of the study, a keyword search performed and data garnered from 1970s to 2020s on self-help, adult educators and community development were read thoroughly and thematically analyzed. Thus, in analyzing the data, the researcher first read the retrieved studies and key issues relevant to this study were referenced. The researcher next engaged in the interpretation of the data to concisely code and categorize. As a researcher, I analyzed the documents by conducting open coding line-by-line to determine the most appropriate code with which to code the whole sample of documents. The key findings of the study following *critical literature review* undertaken are presented next.

Findings

This aspect of the study is divided into three sections. The first section establishes the importance of self-help to community development. The second section examines roles that adult educators can play in revitalizing self-help spirit in the communities, and the third section identifies steps that adult educators can adapt in fostering self-help in communities. Thematic analyses were undertaken, taking into consideration 30 sampled data, the elaborate background of the study, and ensuring that the theoretical framework guided the study. Table 1 presents the percentages (%) of themes – self-help, adult educators, and community development by decades. Although some self-help programs and projects were carried out in the 1950s, the researcher could not access data on self-help programs in the 1970s, as compared to adult education (1) and community development (1) rich and relevant data accessed.

Importance of self-help to community development

Considering the fact that the study was conducted in Ghana, to be specific, half (15 of 30 [50%]) of the data garnered from the global south captured self-help, adult educators, and community development were analyzed for the study. The remaining half (15 of 30 [50%])

Table 1. Themes broken down by decades (10-year intervals).

Years in Decades												
Themes Reviewed	1970		1980		1990		2000		2010		2020	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Self-help	-	-	1	10	3	30	3	30	3	30	-	-
Adult Educators	1	10	1	10	2	20	1	10	2	20	3	30
Community Development	1	10	1	10	1	10	2	20	2	20	3	30

Source: # of Literature Documents Reviewed, 2021

of the data analyzed were accessed from the global north to illuminate the importance of self-help, adult educators, and community development. The data studied spanned 1970s to 2020s. The researcher focused on the purpose of the data and the utilization and importance of self-help, voluntarism, or self-reliance (Anyanwu, 1992; Badu-Nyarko, 1997;, Fonchingong & Fonjong, 2003) in revitalizing communities. Yet, securing the importance of self-help to engender successful community development programs requires the formation of SHGs attested to by Adeyemo (2002), and Lachapelle (2020).

Adult educators' roles in revitalizing self-help

All (10 of 10 [100%]) data on adult educators stressed on multiplicities of roles with community members to develop communities. Adult educators work with community members to foster self-help spirit because community members possess assets to develop their communities. This ultimately leads to empowering community members and building capacities. It also makes *learning* a lifelong venture and part of the people. Julius Nyerere's in Tanzania, for example, vision of socialism embraced adult education as a means of mobilizing people for self-reliant community development and societal transformation. It involves *training* the people and is important because adult educators' facilitative roles with community members lead to commitment to self-help, which ensures the sustainability of communities. Data on adult educators accessed for the study spanned 1970s to 2020s. Brookfield (1995) and Imel (1997) stressed on group learning constituting the foundational method of aiding community members to learn, using dialogical, conversational, and storytelling approaches to create critical awareness in planning and implementing community development programs. Both Brookfield (1995) and Davie (1980) emphasize on adult educators roles as *analyst, investigator, organizer, change agent,* and *animators* in community development work.

Steps in fostering self-help in community development

The researcher accessed data spanning 1970s to 2020s on community development. In this, one key characteristic of community members which Galadima (2012) and Eiden et al. (2014) emphasized as key to revitalizing self-help is *attitudinal change* among community members. The point is that there is a lack of ownership of projects in our communities. Nearly all (9 of 10 [90%]} data analyzed indicate the crucial importance of adult educators encouraging community members to *learn* and work incredibly hard to foster self-help spirit and develop positive attitude toward self-help programs in communities. Indeed, when adult educators play multiple roles effectively and establish rapport with the people imbued with *love, humility, faith, hope,* and *critical thinking*, the community members would learn to develop their communities as a holistic one. However, adult educators could only foster self-help spirit in people when they adapt *inclusiveness* in mobilizing community members toward self-help programs.

Discussions of findings on community development

The "findings" of the study on three main themes –self-help, adult educators, and community development are discussed. The results in Table 1 show that while no literature was reviewed on self-help in the 1970s, three literature studies each were reviewed in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. The General Acheampong's (SMC) government in Ghana in the 1970s did a lot of work in self-help programs through the introduction of *"Operation Feed Yourself."* Ghana became self-sufficient in grain production and exported grains to the neighboring West African States. However, it was in the 1990s that this self-help spirits infused in Ghanaians got captured by Abloh and Ameyaw (cited in Campfens, 1997) book: *"Community Development around the World: Practice, Theory, Research, Training."* Other works on self-help accessed in 2000s and 2010s were reviewed; however, the availability of data, the year of data, richness of content, and relevance to the study stated in the methods informed selection and review of the literature.

On Adult Educators and Community Development in Table 1, the researcher accessed the literature for review in each decade spanning between 60 years. The researcher reviewed three relevant literature documents each in the 2020s. Although some of the literature studies were dated, yet information gathered, especially works by Kidwai (cited in Kidwai, 1973) on *"Adult Educator: The Friend"* and Brookfield (1995) work on *"Adult Learners, Adult Education and the Community"* were relevant to the study. Both works state that adult educators should play the roles as helpers, friends, animators, catalysts, and change agents to community members in self-help programs. Relevant literature in community development was accessed from the journal: *Community Development*, especially articles by Cavaye and Ross (2019) and Rahe and Hause (2020), among others. They talked about *learning* and *capacity building* of community members to engender development. However, success in community development also requires building the culture of inclusiveness, use of local associations (SHGs), and networks. The use of informal support systems has also been the major source of social care for people.

Since the 1970s, development practitioners have focused their interventions on communities (Gertze, 2015), ensuring that strong self-help spirit is achieved through [purposeful] community education (Hanachor & Olumati, 2012). This means that community development receives attention, especially in the developing countries, to foster strong self-help spirit in the citizenry. This will, ultimately, make community members more self-reliant in initiating development projects in their communities. Lowe (1982) adds that one premise in community development programs reflect this special principle: "do not ask what others can do for you but see what you can do for yourselves by yourselves with the minimum of external assistance" (p. 96). This reflects the McKnight and Kretzmann (1996) thinking of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), which partly framed the study. Needs-based community development should be lessened; after all, there are experts in communities and their expertise could be drawn upon to improve lives in communities. Haines (2015) observes that when we concentrate on community assets we create a snowball effect to influence other areas within a community such as needs and problems. This means that we emphasize on "grassroots participatory democracy," and ensure greater involvement of the people (inclusiveness), and draw on their collective wisdom in decision-making

processes. Genuine self-respect, then, would be garnered among the people to engender improvement in our communities; hence, self-help approach to community development should be conceived broadly. Bhattacharyya (2004) argues that "place" as a proxy for community has become conceptually and practically inadequate, and that effective community development calls for micro–macro coordination. I support Bhattacharyya's assertion that when self-help approach to community development is broadly conceived, there is no way community members would not participate in self-help projects and programs.

As the local community members contribute labor and finance, their brothers and sisters residing in the cities, and diaspora could contribute financially and put their rich and diverse expertise at the disposal for the development of their communities. This approach to community development is what Crowther (2015) calls "a popular participatory adult education rooted in the communities" (p. vii). It is one solid way of realizing macro-level improvement in communities. Self-help is a strategy to improve lives in communities because community development is a means of group decision- making in a variety of settings – traditional, transitional, or urban-industrial (Cary, 1976). Hence, fostering self-help among community members should not be limited to the improvement of rural communities only but encouraged in towns using SHGs to address poverty in the neighborhoods. Policies formulated toward community development should be *holistic*, based on decision-making, thus, "bottom-up," "top-down," and participatory approaches employed in decision-making and implementation. Key government agencies, adult educators, district assemblies, organizations, SHGs, and leadership groups should be involved in policy decision- making on community development and self-help. Thus, increased organization, mobilization, leadership, partnership, and positive attitudinal change should be fostered by adult educators with SHGs to engender increased citizenry participation in self-help programs for the realization of improvement in the communities.

Conclusion

The paper examined self-help approach to community development by assessing roles adult educators play in revitalizing self-help spirit in people in making communities sustainable. It traced self-help approach to community development programs implementation in Ghana in the 1950s up to the 21st century. This approach to development led to the construction of development projects, including social facilities and amenities, and promotion of agricultural projects in the 1990s, than is being witnessed today. Adult educators play diverse roles in revitalizing self-help spirit in communities, providing mental stimulation, skills, and attitudes to community members to improve their communities. The paper made a case for the utilization of adult educators' services including educating and sustaining development drives in communities. Succeeding in this direction, adult educators must play *multiple roles* by serving as facilitators, catalysts, animators, and consultants in self-help work. Steps adult educators can take to aid SHGs revitalize self-help development programs were considered. The place of planning and partnership with the media organizations, attitudinal change and training, and learning and dialoguing using *community education* in motivating the citizenry, local leadership, and SHGs were discussed. This requires that we place self-help and adult education at the center of community development. As a theoretical paper contextualized in Ghana, the

observations garnered cannot be generalized. Further exploration in a new context is required, and when this is done, then, this paper would have achieved its goal.

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