

Adult Education and Community Development Programmes as Vital Tool for Transformation of Rural Communities in Nigeria

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Abstract

Adult Education and Community Development compliments each other in the bid to ameliorate and alleviate the living conditions of people. In developing countries where many people are living in rural communities, they are veritable instruments par excellence for tackling illiteracy, ignorance and diseases. To this end, the collaboration of government agencies, non-government organizations, communities and community-based organizations toward development programmes is therefore inevitable. This paper examined the concept of adult education, community development their objectives and programmes highlighting their complimentary roles. It also looked at some programmes capable of stimulating and sustaining rural transformation. It concludes with recommendations that, community members should be mobilized for active participation especially in programme selection, planning and implementation, proper funding of community development programmes is required, publicity of programmes, monitoring and proper implementation strategy such as the bottom top approach.

Keywords: Adult, Community, Development, Rural, Education.

Introduction

Nigeria is one of the developing countries of the world located within the tropical region. It has few urban sprang which most of them come as a result of colonial administration whereas others were created by indigenous administrations. These urban communities are privileged to modern infrastructural facilities such as pipe-borne water, good road network, electricity, information and communication networks, and modern health-care services among others. It is worthy to note that majority of Nigerians are dwelling in rural communities where there is dearth of facilities that give minimum comfort for living. This is the true picture of most African communities, which Nigeria is not an exception. The rural communities are characterized with peasant agricultural activities, high level illiteracy, poverty, ignorance and superstitious belief system that retard and rejects modern development. There is the need to articulate programmes that will give them a lease of life. This will enhance their socio-economic well-being and reduce the tendency of rural-urban drift. Hence, adult education and community development programmes need to be organized in an integrated manner to change rural life for better.

Concept of Adult Education and Community Development

Adult Education

The concept of adult education has been faced with hydra-headed definition. It becomes difficult to hinge it on a singular universal definition. Irrespective of the seeming diverse view on what is adult education, attempt will be made to considered a few. Akinpelu (2002) in describing adult education notes that: Adult education as a social institution is a common feature of every society, even of the gerontocratic variety as the African traditional society is supposed to be loosely and imprecisely define as the education of the adult, is an affirmation that nobody, however, old, is immune to new knowledge, new ideas and new skills, in whatever setting that may be thus the saying that old dogs can learn new tricks. This explains that education as an instrument of development gives opportunity for acquisition of new skills and knowledge which are indispensable for socio-economic transformation of human society. In the view of Houle (1972), adult education is a process by which men and women (alone, in groups of institutional settings) seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skill, their knowledge or their sensitiveness; any process by which individuals, groups or institutions try to help men and women improve in these ways. The above definition is very particular about men and women. Nzeneri (2012) states that the weakness of this definition is very clear by our definition of an adult as one considered as adult by the society one belongs irrespective of age, sex, or marital status. He further states that the definition is only interested in men and women, it abandoned youths and adolescents-considered as adults by their society. Merriam (1982) in Olori (2012) defines adult education as concerned with preparing people for life, but more specialty, with helping people to live more successfully. The above is very particular on the role of adult education in seeking to assist people improve their capacity to ameliorate their living conditions. This is in line with the opinion of Courtney (1989), that adult education is an intervention into the ordinary business of life an intervention whose immediate goal is change, in knowledge and improved competence. It will be necessary at

this juncture to point out that the more definitions are given, the more people may be confused. However, the most comprehensive and embracing is UNESCO's definition which sees adult education as:

“ the entire body of organized educational process, whatever they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in the two fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

A cursory look into the above definition reveals that the following attributes of adult education are deducible:

- There is flexibility of content
- It is a continuous process.
- It considers both individual and groups.
- Adult education also is remedial in nature.
- Its methodology recognizes human dignity and.
- It is change oriented.

Adult education is therefore, an educational activity which individuals undertake in order to improve their social and economic conditions for the overall benefits of society. The gain of the process has a ripple effect. It benefits the individual(s) and transcends to the entire society.

Objectives of Adult Education

There exists variance in the objectives of adult education in different countries. This stems from apparent peculiar nature of problems facing each country and what they want adult education to achieve. The objectives of adult education in each country are localized on the root objectives of adult education as conceived by UNESCO.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) articulates the objectives of adult and non-formal education in the National Policy on Education to include:

- Provision of functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education.
- Provision of functional and remedial education for young people who prematurely dropped out of formal school system.
- Provision of further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- Provision of in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills and competence.
- Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment (FRN, 2004, 19).

Community Development

The concept, “community development” consist of two significant words, community and development that are key to the understanding of the concept community development, as such, Community as an scholarly word also have several definitions as a concept. Eleberi (2012) remarked that, most scholars define community in terms of specific geographic locality while others define it as a psychological construct. Giving its definition from geographical point of view, Anyanwu (1981) sees it as social group occupying a more or less defined geographical area and based on the feeling that people have for one another. Similarly, Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) describe it as a localized population which is interdependent and which develops and nature's specialized institution that provide on a day-to-day basis a full range of goods and services necessary to meet the common goals and perpetuate its existence on the surface of the earth. Based on the above definitions, community could be seen as a geographical area occupied by group of people who share common socio-cultural ties and possess a common means of ensuring their continued existence.

On the contrary, there is another view of community as psychological constraint. According to the Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus (1995) community is an organized political or social body. It further explains that it is any group having work, interest etc in common. Inferably, the two divergent schools of thought notwithstanding, be it community as geographical construct, there is an element which is central, the human beings who are the custodians of all the characteristics of a community irrespective of its definition.

While development as a concept is like an octopus with its tentacles spread widely to all spheres of life, be it economic, social, political and cultural.

Adeyemo (2003) describes development as:

“The process of economic and social transformation within countries. He further states that the concept of development was conceived as almost exclusively in terms of growth targets, with little regard to the beneficiaries of growth or to the composition of output. Development at the level of individual implies increase skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. At the level of group, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship” (p.9).

In the foregoing, there is emphasis on the role of human beings in engendering development. Through increased skills and capacity, man produces goods and services which serve the basic needs of life.

Oni and Bello (1987) sees development as qualitative and quantitative change in factors of production by a society, and increase in the quality of goods and services that every individual is opportune to possess. Development therefore, could be seen as an impressive positive change in the capacity of individuals and groups to enhance their socio-economic well-being through increased production of goods and services to satisfy their daily needs.

. It is therefore justifiable to look at “community development” not just as the combination of community and development, but also as an integrated concept. Different scholars have defined community development in several ways. It is viewed as an educational method, a process of social action and a movement. UNESCO cited in Onyeozu (2007) defines community development as an educational method by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of government authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural condition of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (p21). In this definition, there is emphasis on what the people can do. It recognizes that government requires alleviating the suffering of the people rather, but there should be concerted effort on the part of the people to identify their felt-need, mobilize necessary human and material resources to satisfy it. Similarly, Mezirow in Oduaran (1994) defines: Community development as planned and organized effort to assist individuals to acquire attitudes skills and concept required for their democratic participation in the effective solution as wide as possible. A range of community problems in an order of priority determined by their increasing level of competence. Considering the two given above, certain variable are common in both. Consequently, community development is a process which culminates from people’s effort to change their living conditions through organized and planed programmes within the limits of their resources or external assistance.

Objectives of Community Development.

Community development aims at enhancing a sustainable socio-economic development with effort of the people as a fulcrum. Anyanwa (1981) summed up its objectives as follows:

- To educate and motivate the people for self-help
- To develop responsible local leadership
- To inculcate among the members of a community a sense of citizenship and spirit of civic consciousness.
- To introduce and strengthen democracy at the grassroots level, through the creation and revitalizations of institutions designed to serve as instrument for local participation.
- To initiate a self-generative, self-sustaining, and enduring process of growth.
- To enable people to establish and maintain co-operative and harmonious relationship.
- To bring about gradual and self-chosen changes in the life of a community with a minimum stress and disruption (p.165).

Rural Transformation.

Scholars have used the concept of rural transformation as a process, which engenders improved socio-economic wellbeing of people living in rural communities. According to Coker and Obo (2012), rural transformation is design to improve the economic and socio conditions of rural inhabitants, which must involve strategies for extending the benefits of the development of the rural majority. They further state that the objectives of rural transformation efforts include the elimination of poverty, creation of rural employment, opportunities, elimination of major inequalities and ensuring adequate participation of the rural populace in the transformation process.

Describing transformation at the national level, World Bank in Enwo-Irem (2013), notes that, it is a holistic overhaul of segment of the national life. That is political, economic and social life. It emphasizes attitudinal change along the path of patriotic zeal and commitment. It involves determination of government citizens to systematically upgrade their national development index. In the view of Enwo-Irem (2013)

transformation is the participation of all in the process that enhances the general wellbeing of all by improving the economic, political, and social environment. Deducing foregoing, the foregoing, rural transformation connotes a change in total life of the rural dwellers, which result from participation in change-oriented programmes.

Complementary Nature of Adult Education and Community Development

The duo of adult education and community development are akin to the two sides of a coin, they appear opposite but give the complete form of a coin. A critical examination of both shows that their prime objective or purpose is to bring about change. On this, Odokara (1974) in Ezima (2004) remarks that:

The theme of social commitment is prominent in concepts, adult education and community development, with emphasis on the development of personal abilities and the encouragement of social, moral and intellectual responsibility in relation to local, national and world citizenship. He stressed the complementary roles of adult education and community development in effecting social change by bringing together process of adult education and community development to bear on social issues (P. 289).

More so, issue of leadership is so cardinal to the two disciple for a given community or a group of people to achieve any fit in development process, there should be purposeful leadership endowed with requisite qualities and readily disposed to acquire useful knowledge remarking on the mobilization role of adult education and community development. Ezima (2004) posits that: The complementarity of adult education and community development make their multivalent tools for development. Their common objective is the mobilization of people for change. Therefore, people and change are the recurrent themes in their activities (p. 288) In our rural communities, the need to mobilize the people for change is not to over-emphasize. It is not enough to acknowledge the fact that there should be change, there has to be element of action on the side of the people. In self-help projects where the success of a project redounds on the utilization of available human and material resources, except when there is active mobilization of the people, the project may be hampered.

Adult education and community development are also concerned with integrated approach in development programmes. There are multifaceted issues that need to be attended to in rural areas and includes education, health-care, roads and markets. Through integrated development approach, different programmes meant to solve different problems are planned simultaneously to achieve a far reaching impact on the lives of the people.

Adult Education and Community Development Programmes for Rural Transformation

Several programmes are organized by change agents in adult education and community development which are useful for the socio-economic transformation of our rural communities. These programmes includes: Agricultural extension education, Community education, Literacy education, Co-operatives, Rural industries and Health programmes

- **Agricultural Extension Education.**

Nigeria, though an oil and gas driven economy, has the potential for agriculture. The rural dwellers are subsistence farmers who hardly produce enough for family consumption. The need to provide agricultural extension services which will help to increase their production capacity is necessary. According to Ezimah (2004), agricultural extension provides a sound base for rural development. He furthered that extension is conceived as the development of the individual, village leaders and the rural society as whole and as a continuous education process. The programme is meant to bring attitudinal change in the rural dwellers towards agriculture. When there is innovation in farming techniques for instance, introduction of improved seedling. The farmer will be able to produce for domestic consumption as well as surplus for sales at the market. This leads to better socio-economic well-being.

- **Community Education.**

This programme is hinged on the premises that the consciousness of the people themselves plays a vital role in effecting change. Change in attitude skills in line with contemporary demand and knowledge. Community education to Ezimah (2004) is an educational process that encourages the utilization of all learning resources within the community for the purposes of mobilizing the community for its own developments. It is evident that every human society has potentials to evolve social economic transformation which will enhance their standard of living. Education takes a centre stage in this process. Community education is usually planned for and utilized by adult citizens. People are mobilized through campaigns and enlightenment programmes.

- **Co-operative societies.**

Cooperatives are important tool for real transformation. They assist members to pull their resources together hence ensures sustenance of business co-operators through this medium. Embark on self- help projects which are of direct bearing on the lives of these rural communities. Omolewa (1991) in Dokubo (2012) posits that, it is

very essential that co-operators work with other like-minded people in groups to make a meaningful achievement not only satisfying the basic human needs but also raise the condition of living of the rural people to acceptable standards.

Similarly, Dokubo (2012) remarks that, the main thrust of cooperative society is that co-operators should help themselves by providing for member's needs through group work or combined efforts and resources. This is the approach with which co-operators in Nigeria embark on self-help development projects, such as construction of roads, markets, health centers, maternity homes, schools, bridges, town halls, civic centers, rural electricity and water supply. The impression that government should provide all that is needed for the development of rural communities is no longer feasible, though it is its responsibility, but has to be corroborated by co-operative societies for sustainability. Co-operators identify socio-economic needs and consequently plan and mobilized available resources to satisfy them.

- *Literacy Education.*

Literacy has been identified as an essential tool for development. It is therefore logical to say that the low standard of living prevailing in the rural communities has illiteracy as one of the causative factors. The ability to acquire the skills of reading, writing and computation is transformation of an individual from illiteracy to literacy, especially basic literacy. Ihejirika (2012), adult basic literacy to rudimentary or fundamental for it enables its recipient to understand higher concepts in education. It involves the skills of reading, writing and computing figures (i.e numeracy). A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enables him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group or community.

The rural dwellers do not need only basic literacy skills, they also need functional literacy. According to Imhabekhai (2009), the desire and ability to read, write and compute materials in vocation will motivate the learners for better participation, and that, the utility of the skills bring about functionality and progress in the vocation or occupation and thereby fosters permanent literacy. Literacy, all over the world is a pivot on which multiple human activities revolves. Be it political, social, economic or cultural activities, skills of literacy are required for it to be done to acceptable standards. With it, our rural communities will assume some urban characteristics.

- *Rural Industries.*

Rural communities can be transformed through rural industries. These include small and medium-scale enterprises (SME) like potter, metal work, tailoring, soap making and weaving among others. Barikor (1983) commenting on the role of industries in rural transformation notes that, this could help to promote self-employment, rural based job opportunities and investment, intensify community development and dent the rural-urban migration syndrome. The economy of the rural dwellers is very poor. It in-turn affect their investment capacity in their various business. Some of them are illiterates hence, ignorant of strategies available for them to change require programmes that will give the rural industrialists enlightenment and soft loans will play significant role in changing their business and by extension their standard of living.

- *Health Programmes.*

The issue of health is also very vital. The success of all other programmes meant for rural transformation hinge on good health of the people. A healthy labour force and entrepreneurs are needed to propel or implement change programmes. The scourge of HIV/AIDS is ravaging African countries which Nigeria is not an exception. There is still the practice of female genital mutilation going on in some rural communities of Nigeria.

Conclusion

Rural communities in Nigeria are associated with dearth of necessary infrastructural facilities and low human capacity building co-ordination. The global efforts towards eradication of poverty, ignorance and illiteracy among other things as reflected in the millennium development goals cannot be achieved when relevant programmes centred on the adult population that are the pivot of dynamic and sustainable development are not organized. It is on these bases that adult education and community development programmes are indispensable tools for the transformation of rural communities in Nigeria. The provision of high rise buildings and other infrastructures alone in communities without human capacity building will not kick start the needed transformation. Therefore as the slogan 'train a man, build the community' can only be achieved through adult education and community development programmes and activities that will bring about change and transformation in the people, their self-perception to enable them stimulate their potentials to face the reality of their developmental needs. This will erase the "lazy man" attitude of "there is God" for them to subdue and conquer the environment for their advantage. Inferably, communities, government agencies, non-governmental agencies, well spirited individuals, and community-based organizations are all stakeholders in this march to change the rural communities.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that:

- Active participation of community members in planning and implementation of development programmes should be encouraged.
- Government should regularly organize orientation and sensitization workshops and seminars for adult education practitioners for effective service delivery.
- Adult education agencies should be properly funding and their programmes.
- The bottom – top approach to programme planning and implementation should be encouraged.
- Adult education and community development programmes should be regulated based on standardized quality assurance control.

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