Adult and Non-Formal Education Programmes of Non-Governmental Organizations for Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: What can be learnt from the Practice?

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Abstract

Non-governmental Organisations over the years have been complementing the effort of the government in solving the problem of poverty and illiteracy through education intervention programmes. Some of these programmes seem to be more successful than the government led programmes and if that is true, what can be learnt from the experiences of the NGOs to improve the provision of adult and non-formal education programmes for poverty alleviation and community development?. This paper therefore examines two NGOs programmes for poverty alleviation and community development. The study is a case study and the methodology adopted is the descriptive survey method. Focus Group Discussion (FDG), questionnaire, and observation were used to collect data and the information obtained was triangulated. From the findings, what can be learnt from the NGOs experiences were the use of participatory poverty assessment to identify the training needs of the poor adult learners, the combination of vocational skill training with entrepreneurship skill and personality development. It is therefore recommended that skill acquisition training programme for poverty alleviation and community development must be community based and well embedded to accommodate the divers training needs of individual and communities.

Keywords: Poverty, Non-Formal Education, Andragogy, Training, Livelihood**.**

Introduction

Poverty and its related issues have been at the centre of national and international discourse. This is because poverty is a global scourge, a threat to humanity and community capacity for sustained development. According to Gaolathe (2004) one in five of the world's population- two third of them women – live in abject poverty and more than 24 percent of the population of the developing and emerging industrialized nations live in less than US \$1 a day. This situation has not changed even with the declaration of the United Nation Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which has the "eradication of extreme poverty and hunger" as its first goal; with the target of "halving those living on less than a dollar   a day in 2015". In Nigeria poverty is pervasive, 65 million people which is about half the population is said to live below one dollar a day, with 8 million children having no access to education (This Day Tuesday, October 24, 2006). The 2010 Human Development Index report released by United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), Nigeria was classified as a country with low human development index and as one of the 'E 9' countries that is countries among the 9 countries in the world with the highest number of illiterates. These not only affirm the level of poverty but the poverty of human capital development in Nigeria. What had sustained and accentuated the poverty level in Nigeria among others is the lack of basic skills and capacity for productive venture. The educational system tends to emphasize the three 'Rs': reading, writing and arithmetic without any appreciable scientific and technological skill. Apart from this pitfall of the educational system, greater number of children drops out of school before their ninth year of continued formal education due to poverty.

Since the declaration of the MDGs government and Non-governmental Organizations have embarked on various forms of adult and non-formal education for the eradication of poverty. This is in recognition of the fact that poverty and illiteracy tangle and are intertwine. Duke (1988) had observed that there is a compelling cumulative evidence of the importance of adult and non-formal education for the reduction of poverty and removing its causes – provided certain conditions are met. Adult and non-formal education with its andragogical principle emphasizes learning to do base on livelihood skills rather than learning to remember as in pedagogy. Strassburg (2008) observed that educational intervention including adult education enable people to improve their chances, realize their full potential and to improve their well-being. Such educational intervention programmes have helped communities to become empowered, fostered community level participation, and the creation of social capital. However not all such programmes can produce such positive outcome as Abazi (2005) puts it: 'unsuccessful experiences abounded'. Adult education practitioners have been concerned with developing and implementing adult and non-formal education programmes as well as replicating such programmes in developing countries to address social vices and developmental needs.

Patrick (2010) observed that most NGOs claimed to be successful in their adult non-formal education programmes for poverty reduction in both rural and urban communities. Several reports and newsletters of NGOs

tend to suggest that (Community Development Foundation, 2003 and Growing Business Foundation, 2004). NGOs such as Accord for Community Development (ACCORD), Community Development Foundation (CDF), and Centre for Development Support Initiative (CEDSI) in Nigeria have over the years embarked on non-formal education programmes for alleviation of poverty. The issue is how successful are these programmes and what lesson can adult education practitioners learn to improve practice and theory of adult learning for livelihood skill training in rural and urban communities for poverty alleviation and community development. This paper therefore examines the adult non-formal education programmes of two NGOs in Nigeria and how these programmes were used to address the problem of poverty and community development.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study was a multi-facet approach involving case study and descriptive survey research design. The case study approach was adopted in order to have an in-depth examination of the training programmes of the respective NGOs. The techniques adopted for data collection were questionnaire, focus group discussion (FGD), documentary analysis, and direct observation. Both the questionnaire and the focus group discussion centre on two thematic areas, appropriateness of the design of the programme and the impact of the programme on the beneficiaries and their community. The questionnaire was used to collect more specific information about the participants, particularly their demographic data which also help to provide the baseline status of the beneficiaries and in general the poverty situation in the operational areas of the NGOs. It was not possible to administer the questionnaire to all the participants of the programmes; hence in each of the programme selected for the respective NGOs, 20 percent of the beneficiaries were sampled. In respect of the FGD a total of two sessions was conducted one for each NGO. Furthermore, data were collected through participatory observation. This ensures greater understanding of the cases and to find out what happens, when and where, and to get a holistic picture of the intervention programmes.

Case Studies

Case study 1: Accord for Community Development's Adult Non-formal Education Programme:

Accord is a frontline non-governmental organization in Nigeria. It was registered in 1988 as a grass root non-profit organization and later evolved to a rural development union in 1993. It initially focused on provision of soft loan to cooperatives but the increasing challenges of community development, economic empowerment, and entrepreneurial development led to the repositioning of the NGO to an organization that seeks to educate and increase the awareness of poor people on various socio-economic issues that affect them so that they can become active and informed human resource and participate in their community development. The goal of the NGO is to stimulate economic development by initiating programmes that promote participatory self-help initiatives and spread the ideals of democratic governance as well as resource allocation and mobilization in rural and urban communities.

In achieving its objectives, ACCORD has embarked on a number of adult non-formal education programmes. These includes entrepreneurial development programme, capacity building training programme for rural women, skill acquisition training, reproductive health education programme, agricultural development and extension services, and community and civic education. In the skill acquisition programme soap making, welding, electrical installation, pipe fitting and plumbing are taught. The training programmes last for between 6 months to two years. The NGO through need assessment and Participatory Rural Appraisal identify the needs of the adult members of the communities, engage the adults and assigned them to a trainer under whom they undergo an apprenticeship. While the trainees undergo practical training from an experienced trainer in the workshop, the NGO towards the end of the programme expose the trainees to some sort of management and entrepreneurial development skill including accounting skill. The trainees, after the completion of the programme are usually mentored through the support services of the NGO to enable them develop their vocation and enterprise.

Through fund from Department for International Development (DFID) of the British Government managed by British Council, ACCORD facilitated micro enterprises such as agro-allied and cottage industries in various communities. Those trained under the skill acquisition programme are usually given credit facility under the DFID fund. The NGO has undertaken the training and development of the following enterprises: cottage industries in welding and fabrication, soap making, carpentry, automobile mechanic, chalk factory, bakery; and in agro-allied industries like snail breeding, cassava mills, oil palm mills, kernel cracking and oil extraction. The pattern of ACCORD adult non-formal education programme is that in any community which it has a development intervention programme adult members who are willing to acquire certain basic livelihood skills needed in their community are trained on a particular skill for a period of time. Within the period of the training the trainees are paid to cover their launch, transport and other minor exigencies. The payment of such allowance is in recognition

of the fact that the adult learners have some financial obligation either as a home maker or a responsible and independent adult.

Case Study 2: Community Development Partners' (CODEP) Adult and non-formal education programme
CODEP is a non-governmental organization established in 1989. It works predominantly in collaboration with Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Multi-national Corporations, international agencies, government, women groups and cooperative societies to improve the socio-economic well being and overall quality of life in rural and urban communities. CODEP seeks to promote sustainable development, self-reliance, community empowerment and eradicate poverty through education and training. The NGO's education and training programme focuses on the adult members of the benefiting communities and it is non-formal in nature. The programme is technical and vocational oriented. The organization organizes programmes leading to the acquisition of adaptive technical/vocational skills and leadership capacity in communities. In its skill acquisition training programme the following skills are taught: fashion design; tailoring; welding and fabrication; computer operation, application and maintenance; boat engine repairs; confectionaries; building and masonry, and bread making. With the support of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) CODEP had trained over 1320 youths and adults in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

CODEP uses primary school buildings in each locality as its training centers and engages the services of experts in each vocational area as facilitators except in areas of entrepreneur development where it has to engage the services of its staff as facilitators. The NGO provides mobile workshops and so could move the facilities from one locality to another. The trainees after certain period of training are sent on industrial attachment to an established entrepreneur in their respective vocation. CODEP at the end of the training programme provides starter packs to the trainees to enable them immediately start their own establishment. The trainees are also taught entrepreneur development skills to develop their capacity to manage small scale enterprise.

CODEP adult and non-formal education programme is based on the philosophy of participatory shared learning methodology (PSLM). Through the PSLM, learners participate in determining the learning objectives and exert sustainable control over the content and methods. The facilitators also use small group discussions, practical demonstrations for sharing experiences and reinforcement of learnt skills. The CODEP skill acquisition training programme is adult and non-formal education in the sense that the participants in the programme are mature and responsible people; secondly the programme is undertaken outside the regular school programme. The programme is aimed at enabling participants to acquire vocational skills, establish income generating activities in rural and urban communities and develop community capacity to become self-reliant. In addition to the livelihood skill training CODEP tries to conscentize its trainees on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Trainees had at least 8 hours class session on these aspects throughout the duration of the programme.

Finding and Recommendations
This section summaries results of the case studies and identify effectiveness indicators and good practice in adult and non-formal education programmes for poverty alleviation and community development. Information from the case studies is triangulated. The effectiveness indicators identified includes accessibility and participatory level, approach, training offered, strategies and poverty issues addressed, financial sustainability, institutional and human capacity development, appropriateness of the design and outcome/impact. These indicators are necessary criterion for evaluating an adult and non-formal education programmes for poverty alleviation and community development.

Programme Structure and Organisation
...if the training centre was accessible and there was high level of Participation: The study shows that the two NGOs skill acquisition programmes were community based, with skills taught at the centers based on individual and community felt needs. The location of the training centre was not too distant to the participants and the programme was flexible enough for the participants to still attend their regular social and economic engagements in their communities. The respondents agreed that the level of participation and the enthusiasm for participation increased because the programme is located within the domain of the target beneficiaries.
...if the approach is relevant to and intended to address the problems of the poor:
The two NGOs studied followed a direct approach to addressing the problem of the poor mainly unemployment, lack of vocational skills, poor leadership capacity, financing business enterprises, financial discipline and accounting in small scale enterprises. The study shows that skill acquisition training programme will be successful if the organization adopts an embedded training approach where vocational skill training is combine with other skills so that trainees will be an all-round and well developed person with high self-esteem, management capacity and entrepreneurial ability. All the NGOs studied offered more than one training programme, resulting in a variety of interventions and topics addressed to meet the immediate needs of the participants. It seem that attendance by

the poor people in adult and non-formal education programmes of NGOs is more likely if there is the possibility of acquiring livelihood skills and establishing an income generating venture at the end of the programme. None of the NGOs investigated included basic literacy programme, however computer literacy was common in all the intervention programmes because of the increasing trend in computer technology. Some of the beneficiaries were illiterate but they were able to undergo the vocational training because it is more practical than theoretical. For those with basic literacy, the training programme provided a literacy environment for them to consolidate on their literacy skill; while for the illiterates the programme further challenged them to acquire literacy skill. But some of the beneficiaries in course of the practice of the new vocational skill began to develop literacy skill. For instance, for the tailors through taking measurement of their client they learnt writing and numeracy skills.

Training

An adult and non-formal education intervention programme for poverty alleviation and community development is most likely to be effective:

… *if pedagogical method used promote active participation of the learners:* All the interventions programmes used activating and arousing methods that promotes enthusiastic participation and learning by doing. The NGOs encouraged practical training and demonstration; used small group discussion, experiential method, and participatory tools like flow chart, matrices, diagrams, oral histories, and mapping exercises. These help to reinforce learning and make the learning real and practical.

...if the training increased leadership capacity: Developing local leadership means working, with and building on the existing strength and community capacities.   The programmes of the NGOs help to increase local leadership capacity as the existing local expertise was engaged to facilitate in the training. The poor lacks the capacity for local leadership because the poor lacks self-esteem and the capacity to led and exact influence in their community. So for the NGOs to include leadership training in the programme is to enable the trainees to regain their self-ego, imbibe the capacity to participate in their community and take the lead in what concern them.

Targeting

Need assessment is required in any intervention to identify the target beneficiaries and their problems. A number of studies confirm that poverty is pervasive in Nigeria among urban and rural dwellers, women and men and even the educated and the uneducated (Ajakaiye & Adeyeye, 2001, Idada, 2003, and Agbaegbu, 2009). However, the nature of poverty differ among the various categories of people so to adopt the right strategy a need assessment is required to prioritize the needs and design the programme according to most pressing needs of the people. Target groups need to be precisely defined and the projects need to be specific to the needs of the target group in terms of expectations and prior knowledge of the participants in order to avoid high drop-out rate. The lack of effective targeting mechanisms enables people who are not the preferred targets to participate and hijack the programme. Local elites as community leaders often take greater advantage of intervention programmes in rural areas and further insubordinate the poor. When programme is able to get its target beneficiaries' sustainability will be assured. Harrison, Worrall & Wiseman (2006) observed that effective selection of individuals or groups, and assessment of the beneficiaries have positive impacts on the project sustainability and fund can be used efficiently if they are channeled to individuals or groups with the greatest needs and with the greatest ability to benefit. Similarly, Narayan, Patel, Schafft, Rademacher & Koch-Schulte (2000) pointed out that when there is no effective mechanism for selecting the target beneficiaries of an educational intervention programme it may be subverted by the local elites and the avowed objectives will not be realized. The finding of this study tends to corroborate the assertion of Narayan et al that an intervention programme for poverty alleviation will be effective if participatory poverty assessment is done before the commencement of the programme. This is because the success of the two NGOs can be attributed to the robust need assessment and the designing of the programmes according to the needs of the beneficiaries.

...if prior assessment was conducted to identify the target group, their problems and needs: The study revealed that the NGOs adopted rural development approach particularly participatory rural appraisal methodology in identifying the needs and prioritizing the needs of individuals and communities. Through the needs assessment the target beneficiaries were able to make inputs in the programme design and in the formative analysis. Furthermore, the study revealed that through the need assessment the poor express their voice and to interact with the programme planners in designing the programme.

… *if the beneficiaries share some common characteristics in the community:* the study revealed that the beneficiaries share certain common characteristics such as being unemployed or underemployed, having low income or no major source of income, being dependent on others either ones' husband, parent, uncle, aunt and so on. These characteristics are the hallmarks of the poor people. The beneficiaries speak of their indebtedness, exploitation and vulnerability before their involvement in the NGOs intervention programme. According to

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Narayan et al poverty is an interlocking and multidimensional phenomenon with many characteristics such as being exploited and vulnerable to humiliation and inhuman treatment. If the beneficiaries share these characteristics then it implies that the NGOs were able to reach their target beneficiaries.

Appropriateness

The appropriateness of the adult non-formal education is described here in terms of the design, facilities used, content of the training programme, and the duration.

…if the design of the programme is appropriate: The respondents agreed that the design of the programme of the NGOs were appropriate in terms of the design. The training was conducted both on weekends and week days with morning and afternoon sessions. This allow for some degree of flexibility. The adult learner is a busy learner with divers' activities but limited time. So, adult learners will not like a learning activity that so preoccupy them and interfere with their other life activities. By having these various sessions the NGOs were able to accommodate all categories of learners: those who prefer morning, afternoon, week days, or only weekends respectively. In respect of the content and the duration of the programme respondents considered the programmes to be appropriate. On content the participant agreed that they learnt enough of what they hope to know to enable them practice the skill; and on the duration, the period of training ranges from 6 months to 2 years depending on the trade. The respondents affirmed that the duration was appropriate. In all cases the duration was considered adequate.

...if the facilities and instructors were appropriate: Although the NGOs engage the experts of local instructors, the instructors were considered appropriate and having the necessary training capacity to facilitate. In respect of the facilities used, the NGOs provided adequate facilities but the major problem was the source of power. There was irregular supple of power and in most cases the centre depended on small generating plant.

Conclusion

All the interventions had strong ripples effects in the communities they operated. The programmes had a positive impact on their family/household as well as their community. Through the skill training people acquired skills which are either absent or in limited supply in their community, beneficiaries became empowered to take care of themselves, their family, and contribute to their community development process. What can be learnt from the NGOs sector is the use of participatory process in the design, implementation and evaluation of adult non-formal education intervention programme for poverty alleviation and community development, as well as training for embedded vocational learning. This calls for practitioners and experts in adult and non-formal education to develop an innovative and creative process for embedded skill training and to identify various skills that can be embedded.

It would seem best to combine the two elements (vocational skills training and literacy learning) rather than keep them in parallel. This entails the embedding of learning the act of literacy within the skills training by using the embedded literacies of the craft or trade as the teaching and learning materials, so that literacy becomes one of the skills being learned rather than something on its own; and to develop from this basis into a wider literacy so that by the end of the programme the trainees develop enormous capacity in literacy, livelihood skills, entrepreneurial skill, and community leadership skill.

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