Adult Education Programmes: A Panacea for Productive Community Development in Rural Communities of Rivers State

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Abstract

The study explored adult education programmes as a panacea for productive community development in rural communities of Rivers State. It discussed the concepts of adult education and adult education programmes.The study identified various types of adult education programmes, community development as a movement, process of social action, as an educational process, and as a programme. The study looked at productive, participatory community development, adult education programmes for productive community development and impact of adult education programmes in rural communities. However, the study summarized that involving government support, community engagement, and innovative solutions will bring about positive productive community development in the rural communities in Rivers State.

Keywords: *Adult Education Programmes, Panacea, Productive, Community Development, Rural Communities.*

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Introduction

In the scheme of things in human existance, there is need for the development of the human mind and understanding what adult education means gives an insight to the nature of education for adults. The term education looks simple and very common but in real sense, it is very complex and ambiguous as it involves lots of tasks, goals and processes and it is the true educational activities for adults. Understanding what education is all about will probably give one an insight to the nature of education for adults. This is true of any educational activities for adults as education defies all definitions because there is no consensus as to what definition is considered best (Nzeneri 2008).

Dokubo (2012) asserted the following as acceptable definitions of education:

1.   A process of transmitting knowledge or experience to people.

2.   Any planned series of incidents, having humanistic basis and directed towards the

participants' learning and understanding.

3. Nwaogwu in Dokubo (2012) is of the view that education as a process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitudes in its cultural setting and heritage in order to foster continuously the well-being of mankind and guarantee its survival.

4. Oxford Advanced Learners English Dictionary defined it as training and learning especially in schools or colleges to improve knowledge and develop skills designed for impact.

5. Wikipedia (the free encyclopedia) stated that education in its broadest general sense is the means through which the aims and habits of a group of people lives on from one generation to the next.

Generally, education occurs through nay experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts. In its narrow, technical sense, education is the formal process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another, e. g., instruction in schools in form adult education.

From the foregoing, the concept of "adult education" in Orobor (2008) is a microcosm of the macro concept "education", for the former merely refers to the kind of learning which takes place among adults and in its ramification, it accommodates all of the forms of education- formal, non-formal and informal aspects of education. It is in adult education the greatest emphases are placed on lifelong education, environmental education, education as a process and agent of liberation, a tool for adjustment, for conscientization and group dynamism. Paulo Freire in Nezeneri (2008), a Brazilian educationist stated that conscientization is a process that enables individuals develops themselves, their consciousness and critical awareness of their problems and their environment. Like general education, adult education is very complex involving series of activities, goals, and processes of meeting goals.

Also, there have always been the tendencies for the definitions to be influenced by the cultural, socio-economic and political experience of the person making an attempt to define adult education. Thus, for some scholars in the developed nations where the communities are largely literates, adult education according to Okedara (2001) is:

the kind of education that is expected to be undertaken by those who need to catch up on their formal education or who need to use their leisure purposefully or who needs to upgrade

their skills and knowledge in the face of changing technology (pp.56).

Knowles as cited in Orobor (2008) opined that adult education is the "bringing together into a definable social system in individuals, institution ann associations concerned with the education of adult and portraying them as working towards such common goals as the improvement of the methods and materials of adult learning and advancing the general level of culture.

UNESCO's (1976) perspective on adult education as cited in Nzeneri (2008) is an improvement or advancement of Houle's definition:

As UNESCO put it that adult education is the entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and methods, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in the schools, colleges or universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as an 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 their attitude or behavior in the twofold perspective of full-personal development and participation in baalanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

In many ways, adult education is regarded as the relevant education of persons perceived as adults by the communities to which they belong. Such education is relevant as it enables adult learner to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes which should make him/her a truly functional individual in his/her own community. The more recent UNESCO attempt at defining adult education has since been influencing the way nations and individuals conceive of the discipline.

Falling in line with the new approach, Tugbiyele in Sinyangwe (2003) advised that by adult education, we do not mean literacy alone that adult education is more than literacy or remedial education to fill in the gap. Adult education is something people need and want as long as they are alive regardless of the amount of their previous education. It must therefore be an integral part of any modern country's educational system. (pp.72).

The National Institute of Adult Education. (NIAE) in Azunwo 2021, was of the view that 514 million people in rural communities over the world are illiterate, many are incapable of accessing efficient training schedule. Low degree of learning forms its rigor for most of them to effectively expect in community (local) and national development programmes, even in political activities. Adult education programmes for sure is the exact and integral

portion of the right of each individual and it is also a means to attaining other human rights as adult education falls under the Department of Elderly and Disability within the ministry and Commissioners are appointed to manage the various Departments. The Ministry introduced the National Adult Education Strategic Investment Plan 2002/3 to 2006/7 (NALSIP) in which support a number of arguments for advocating the FAL programme (Azunwo, 2021).

Adult education works as a strong institute for removing gender inequalities in adult learners, boosting common peoples' entrepreneurship, enabling poor communities to act more effectively in tracking of their experimental goals, enhancing agricultural exercises, reinforcing quality and access to primary education, improving family health and hygiene, raising civic participation and altogether raising of living measures,(MGLSD, in Azunwo 2021). Therefore, adult education develops strategies for improving adult learners' access to adult education programmes and numeracy, through financial and technical support and policy development. They encourage governments in the global South to:

1) Devote at least 3 per cent of their civil education sector funds to adult education programmes.

2) Supply specialized and expedient support to developing countries especially those in rural communities in order to construct upon the expansion in their family and intergenerational education, taking delicate account of their relation with early years and primary literacy.

3) Extend special aid to boosting and enlarge the efficient of social and gainful evolution policies and programmes, through blueprint which absorb learning in vocational and establish skills training; and

4) Secure that the teacher-training curricula, both the earliest initial and in-service, donate acceptable attention and time to teachers' own learning progress. This will enhance the efficient teaching and learning across all topics and help in the progress of positive role models.

Adult education programme equally contributes to the self-fulfillment of an individual, increased self-trust and self-esteem, and it makes him/her take control of their health as an educated man/woman is better equipped to access monitory services through boosting the imperative, associated learning practices of reading and accord, signing documents, keeping records and report (NIAE, in Azunwo 2021). Adult education programmes have brilliant bubble course inside the entire community as they invest new crafts, wisdom

and resources for the advantage of their families.

In the view of Offorma in Obi and Nweke (2010), adult education programmes has the capacity to assign knowledge gathered from education to resolve ones or societal troubles. Asiedu and Oyedeji in Dokubo (2012) stated that adult education programme is an egghead material for the human for him/her to become not only educated but undertake other tasks that are of advantage to him/her to the board in which he/she dwells. Active adult education programmes are work-oriented, career, or profession-oriented education. Consequently, adult education programme in the rural areas should not be narrowed to just of reading, writing and calculating, but should be optional, allowing those in the rural areas to partake in batch terrain within a surrounding or profession with an outlook to quench their combined and personal necessarily needs in order to make them active and liberate themselves from mental slavery.

Furthermore, the term "community development" was adopted at the Cambridge Summer Conference on African Administration in 1984. According to Rout ledge in Onyeozu (2007), community development has since been recognized worldwide as an effective method that could be consciously applied to promote change in developing countries. Therefore,

Onyeozu sees community development as follows:

1) Community Development as a Movement

The Cambridge Summer Conference 1948 cited in Dokubo (2012) defined community development as a movement design to promote better living for the whole community, with active participation and if possible, on the initiative of the whole community, but if this initiative is not forth-coming spontaneously the use of the technique for arousing and stimulating it in other to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement, the people must come together to achieve common purpose.

This definition implies that community development always involves groups of people who share the same plight and beliefs and work together to achieve a particular aim that brings progress or development as crusade driven by emotional issues and charismatic leadership. The movement reflects a philosophy which serves as a source of stimulations and not as a source of domination.

2) Community Development as a Process of Social Action

The United Nations Organization as cited in Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) defined community development as a process by which efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve

the economic, social and cultural condition of communities, to integrate those communities in to the life of the nation and enable them contribute fully to national progress. In this approach, community development begins at a micro level in the form of discussion between two or more people and then gradually metamorphoses in to a large forum for decision making. Resources from the local environment are used in impending projects in addition to assistance from governmental and non-governmental bodies.

3) Community Development as an Educational Process

Human as cited in Dokubo (2015) defined community development as a method of helping community become aware of their needs, to assess their resources more realistically, to organize themselves and their resources in such a way as to satisfy some of their needs and in so doing acquire the attitude experience and co-operative skills for repeating this process organize on their initiative. The perspective directs attention to the achievement of some specific objectives using community development as a technique. It involves a set of procedures which will lead to the attainment of set goals. It emphasizes the education of they participate (i.e community members) so as to expose them to know procedures required for performing the task involved. Basically, certain elements provide a general acceptable

description of the term community development. Such elements as noted by Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) include:

    a. Community as a unit of action

    b. Community initiative and leadership as resources

    c. Use of both internal and external resources

    d. Inclusive participation

    e. An organized and comprehensive approach that attempt to involve the entire community and

    f. Democratic and national task accomplishment.

4) Community Development as a Programme

According to Obi in Dokubo (2015), community development is defined as socio-economic changes involving the transformation of agrarian society in order to reach a common set of development goals based on the capabilities and needs of the people. World Bank in Dokubo (2015) contends that community development is a process through which rural poverty is alleviated by sustained increase in the productivity and incomes of low rural workers and households. Njoku in Dokubo (2015) argues that community development is the process whereby cultural, political and educational motivation of rural dwellers enables them to rationally exploit and harness the resources of their environment for the social

and economic well-being of the society. Batten in Kobani and Alozie (2015), in his book, "communities and their development as a process" stressed that community development is possible only when the people in the community first thoroughly discuss and define their wants and then plan together to satisfy them. UNESCO defines community development as the process by which the efforts of the people are united with the government to improve the economic, social, and cultural conditions of communities. Community development in simple terms is the process of improving the quality of human lives. It involves the sustained elevation of the entire community and social system towards a better human life. Kobani and Alozie (2015) identified three important aspect of community development as:

a. Raising people's living standard - income and consumption levels, access to medical services, education, safe drinking water etc. through relevant economic growth process.

b. Creating condition conducive for the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social institutions that promote human dignity and respect.

c. Increasing people's freedom by enlarging the range of the choices as by increasing varieties of consumer goods and services.

Dundley in Kobani and Alozie (2015) posed three questions about the meaning of development as follows:

a. What has been happening to poverty?

d. What has been happening to unemployment?

e. What has been happening to inequality?

He asserts that if all three of these have declined from higher level, then beyond doubt, there has been a period of development for the community concerned. Author Dunham quoted publication made as far back as 1915 stating community development as making the small town a better place to live in and a better place in which to do business. Duncan spotlights that the problems of community development lies on the ability to identify, document, and use the available resources for the development of the community. Hence, lack of mobilization and local participation in community development may turn ruling class, thus making people to be reluctant.

Community development is a process by which the effort of the people themselves are unified with those of government and non-governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities to integrate those communities into the life of the nation and enable them contribute fully to national progress. It is a process of social action in which people of the community organize themselves for the

identification of their needs with maximum reliance on their own initiative and resources, supplemented with assistance in any form from government and non-governmental organization. Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with the skills they need to affect change in their own community. It involves changing the relationship between ordinary people and people in position of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It seeks to empower individuals and groups in their own community. It is a process of helping a community strengthen itself and develop towards its full potential.

Productive and Participatory Community Development

Calm and Camper in Dokubo (2015) are of the view that when members of a community irrespective of sex or age are given opportunity to participate actively in the development of their community, it becomes a productive community development.

Productive community development according to him basically motivates community members to take on the challenge of solving their own local issues through participation rather than through centralization of leadership. Participation in community development encourages all members of the community to be productive regardless of their age or sex as they

participate in a process which allow them to express their needs and to decide their own future with a view to their empowerment and sustainability. Through engaging the local members of a community in development projects, it would be easier to understand what the actual issues are on the ground and what the real local priorities really are.

Philips as cited in Dokubo (2015) maintains that participatory approach to community development aims at providing the local communities with the skills and knowledge that would allow them to help themselves instead of relying on help coming from the "top". Development expert within a local community are the actual members of that community because they know best what they need and what would work best for their own development.

When the members of the community are involved in the decision making process they develop a sense of ownership towards the project at hand. The sense of local ownership that develop from the participatory process generate legitimacy which when combined with credibility create a strong social capital that allows any development project to be carried through. Legitimacy goes hand in hand with participatory approach because it aims to create a sense of ownership within the community towards the project. Credibility comes with the level of sustainability of the project. When a

project is designed and implemented with the locals, there is always a better chance that it will be sustained and cared for by these same people, thus it gains more credibility. Involvement in community development begets commitment of both men and women.

Adult Education Programmes for Productive Community Development

Adult education programmes for productive community development can be classified as:

1. **Vocational, Technical, and Professional Competence**: Such education programmes aims at preparing adults especially those in the rural areas for a first job or for a new job, it also aims at keeping him/her up to date on new developments in his/her occupation or profession.

2. **Health, Welfare, and Family Living:** Such adult education programmes includes all kinds of education in health, family relations, consumer buying, Planned Parenthood, hygiene, child care, and the like.

3. **Civic, Political, and Community Competence:** Such education includes all kinds of education relating to government, community development, public and international affairs, voting and political participation, and so forth keeping adults in the rural areas up to date.

4. **"Self-Fulfillment.":** Such adult education programmes embraces all kinds of liberal education programmes:

education in music, the arts, dance, theatre, literature, arts and crafts, whether brief or long-term. These programmes aim primarily at learning for the sake of learning rather than at achieving the aims included in the other categories.

5. **Remedial Education, Fundamental and Literacy Education:** Such adult education programmes are obviously a prerequisite for all other kinds of adult education and thus, as a category, stands somewhat apart from the other types of adult education programmes. However it may oriented towards the world of work or socio-cultural existence. When it is work-oriented, functional literacy is provided in the context of equipping the individual with vocational and technical knowledge and skills so that the learner can improve his efficiency in work and increase productivity (Okedara, Omolewa, Anyanwu, as cited in Orobor 2008). According to Okedara, the socio-cultural functional literacy is oriented towards sociocultural mailers like family life, sanitation, nutrition, religion and civics. Adult education programmes are important matters for the nations harbouring the estimated 889 million adult's illiterates in the world in 1985, (Orobor 2008). The concept of adult education programmes also introduces such other ones like literacy,

semi-literacy, literate, non-literate, preliterate societies, neo-literate persons and post- literacy as seen later from the diagram below:
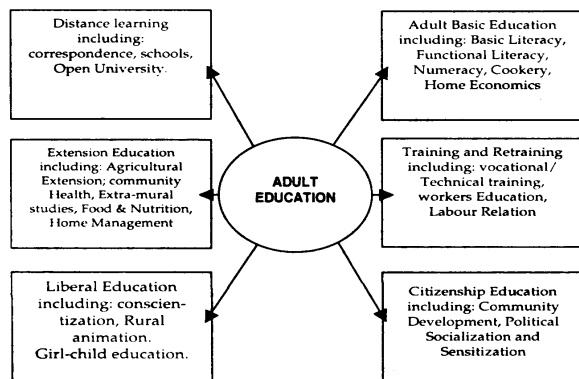

Fig. 1: Typologks of Adult Education

Adapted From: "Fundamental of Adult Education' by Ehiametator & Oduaran, in Orobor, 2008.

Impact of Adult Education Programmes in Rural Communities

The impact of adult education programmes in rural communities in Rivers State cannot be over emphasized as it will be of great help the adult learners, enabling gain confidence in themselves, improve their communication skills, and expand their horizons.

Adult education programmes in rural communities will as increase literacy and skills training as these will lead to economic empowerment of rural dwellers. One of the key and benefits of adult education programmes in rural communities is the potential for economic empowerment as adult learners acquire new

skills and knowledge, they become better equipped to join the workforce or start their own businesses. This can lead to increased income, improved job opportunities, and overall economic growth in rural communities. Additionally, adult learners who participate in adult education programmes will most likely contribute to the development of themselves, homes, communities and society at large by sharing their knowledge and skills with others.

Summary

Conclusively, adult education in the rural communities of Rivers State will serve as a panacea for productive community development will yield significant benefit to both individuals and communities, it will equally serve in addressing the unique needs of rural communities. Adult education programmes in rural communities will be of great help as it will bridge educational gap, promote economic development, and enhance the overall well-being of the people in the rural communities of Rivers State. Therefore, involving government support, community engagement, and innovative solutions will bring about positive productive community development in the rural communities in Rivers State.

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