

Community Education: Towards Reduction of Poverty in Nigeria's Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, community education is a subsector of education focused on meeting the educational and public service requirements of marginalized communities. This essay employs a community development approach, which places a strong emphasis on social and personal development, in order to reduce poverty among rural communities. Enhancing native agriculture, health, education, the environment, and participation in all aspects of life are all part of this. The study comes to the conclusion that social change in rural areas is sparked by community education. It also suggests that we need to look outside the organized framework of education in order to address issues like hunger, unemployment, and sickness, among other issues afflicting communities.

Keywords: Community Education, Community Development, Poverty, Poverty Reduction, Rural, Community.

Introduction

Reducing poverty is given significant funding in many developing countries around the world, and is high on their agendas for development. Despite this, emerging countries have not found it easy to reduce poverty. Research shows that poverty is getting worse in the majority of emerging countries, including Nigeria. Evaluation studies conducted in Nigeria reveal that a key obstacle to reducing poverty, especially in rural communities, has been the scarcity of resources. The majority of the world's poorest people reside in rural areas. For survival, the majority of people rely on economic activity based on natural resources. Because of resource extraction practices that are not sustainable, the majority of these natural resources have deteriorated. According to Hinrichsen and Roobey (2012), there is an urgent need to address how population pressure affects the resources of developing countries. Resources, including land, are being used more than they can be used (Todaro and Smith, 2009). Although poverty is not a new issue, our knowledge of how to solve it is still developing. To address this issue, the federal government and state governments are using a variety of strategies, including formal and non-formal education. Education in the community is one of these strategies.

Community education offers opportunities for people living in rural areas to gain knowledge, skills, and acceptable behaviors. It also provides resources to help them use these resources effectively, including irrigation systems, chemicals, machinery, credit facilities, roads and transportation (Wordu, 2018). It also allows for investments in communication, health, sanitation and education. Community education is promoted to achieve sustainable community development through encouraging the achievement of its objectives. Reaching these objectives entail reducing poverty and giving the people more authority. Therefore, community education can be seen as a process that gives people the power to continuously improve their communities and way of life. It increases the capital that already exists in the human and material domains. In summarizing this argument, Wordu (2018) demonstrates that community education has multiple effects on socio-economic development, the primary one being an improvement in people's overall well-being. On the basis of this, one could contend that education is a real strategy for reducing poverty in Nigeria. It is against this background that this study investigates community education towards poverty reduction in rural communities.

Characteristics of Rural Communities

Various people interpret the term "rural" in different ways (Abideen, Adewole & Adeola, 2013). According to Umebau in Abidden, Adewole & Adeola (2013), rural areas are typically characterized by low population density, small sizes, relative isolation, one dominant economic activity—agriculture—and homogeneity in terms of values, attitudes, and behavior. According to Nigeria's censuses from 1963 and 1993, an urban area is one that has 20,000 people or more living in it. Accordingly, a Nigerian rural region is defined as having fewer than 20,000 residents (Ekong, 2003). Based on the 1991 census, 88,992,220 people are living in Nigeria. 63.72 percent of people live in rural areas, compared to 36.25 percent who live in cities. According to the age-sex structure based on the 1991 census, the majority of rural residents (55.8%) were 19 years of age or younger; 35.2% were in the 20–44 age range; 10.3% were in the 45–69 age range; and 2.6% were in the 70+ age range (Ekong, 2003). It consists of women than men.

In rural areas, farming, fishing, hunting, animal husbandry, food processing, and a few cottage businesses are the primary sources of income. Other occupations are milling, poetry, weaving, leather works, carpentry, bicycle repairs, masonry, fashion and designing, dyeing, retail selling, barbing and hairdressing, entertainment, traditional medicine, computer company operations, auto repairs, restaurant business (Deedam,2022) made and so (Deedam,2022) on. However, majority of people engage in agricultural pursuits, over 85% (Ekong, 2003). According to him, most Nigerian farmers chose farming as a seasonal career due to climate. The sole exception is if irrigation is employed thereby enabling the production of crops outside the typical farming seasons. This has given rise to several off-farm jobs taking to boost their incomes. Farming is mostly sponsored by individual family. It is exceedingly difficult to secure loans because to lack of suitable collaterals. Rural co-operatives may support farmers by lending to them, however the proportion is usually limited as a result farmers lack the money for or inputs essential to enhance production. Only few individuals have the capital to embark on intense commercial agriculture.

Superstition is one of the issues affecting rural agriculture and tends to hinder output. Because ambivalence and other regressive attitudes are common among rural residents, farmers' earnings are likewise low. Women make up the majority of agricultural labourers, since young, active males moving from rural to urban areas in pursuit of employment. Despite this, there were more young people in the labour force. Towns are home to 35.2% of the youthful, active population of rural areas, compared to 10.3% of adults. This leads to a significant loss of human capital in rural areas. Women's literacy is lower than men's in rural areas, where there is a low literacy level. In 2006, 45.6% of rural residents were literate. The literacy rate for men was 54.0, compared to 37.3 for women. Basic amenities including potable drinking water, paved roads, hospitals and other medical services, and educational facilities are insufficient in rural areas. The impoverished find it difficult to get essential economic infrastructure such improved seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation (Otite, 1990, Ekong, 2003, Adeshina, et al, 2013.). When compared to workers in metropolitan areas, rural incomes are often lower. This is because agriculture—the backbone of the rural economy—is a subsistence industry. Compared to homes led by men, women's households earn comparatively less money. Additionally, there is a pay disparity that benefits governmental employees over agricultural laborers.

Concept of Rural Poverty

Poverty is conceptualized differently. Some see it in terms of absolute poverty, which is determined by drawing poverty lines. An individual is considered poor if his income is below a certain poverty line and escaped when it is above. Assuming that the poverty line in Nigeria is two US dollars, or two thousand Naira depending on the exchange rate, this implies that everyone whose income is less than two US dollars is impoverished. Rural poverty is not sufficiently described by this idea of poverty (Patrick, 2008). Relative poverty, which is based on what a particular society views as a reasonable and acceptable level of living and manner of life, is another approach to characterize rural poverty. Low income, inadequate food, inadequate clothing, a lack of clean water, insufficient access to health and education facilities, a lack of assets, and a low standard of living are the indicators that are used to determine poverty. The Human Resources Index (HRI) can be used to interpret this poverty (Patrick, 2008). When discussing rural poverty in Nigeria, this definition of poverty is better than the other. This is due to the fact that poverty is a multifaceted issue.

Incidence of Poverty in Rural Areas

In rural places, poverty is more severe. Since 1980, it has been constantly rising. Surveys from 1996 to 2004 indicate, according to Omonoma (n.d.), that although the incidence of poverty declines nationally, it rises in rural areas. For example, from 1996 to 2004, the national incidence of poverty was 65.6%. The percentage of people living in poverty fell to 54.4% by 2004. However, the percentage of people living in poverty in rural areas decreased just marginally, from 65.6% to 63.2%. A comparison of the prevalence of poverty in urban and rural areas reveals a significant disparity in the

incidence of poverty. In urban regions, for example, the incidence of poverty increased from 17.2 percent in 1980 to 43.1 percent in 2004, whilst the incidence of poverty in rural areas reached 63.2 percent by the same year. According to Omonona (n.d.), this indicates that 44.4 percent of households in 2004 were unable to pay for their food bills. Therefore, it may be said that poverty is mostly a rural issue. Omonona (n.d:2) stated as much:

Approximately 70% of rural households and 58% of urban households were impoverished in 1996. Urban poverty reduced more quickly in 2004 than rural poverty did, with white urban poverty falling to 43 percent and rural household poverty falling to 64 percent (a 6 percent decrease).

Poverty Reduction

Improving the lives of the impoverished is the process of reducing poverty. It entails an improvement in the poverty indicators. There are various methods for reducing poverty. Three strategies for reducing poverty are identified by Biao (2006): promoting the private sector, combating corruption, and safeguarding society's most vulnerable members. The final strategy, known as the community development approach, focuses on safeguarding the weaker segments of the community. Its primary focus is on the following, according to Bio (2006), quoting the National Population Commission (NPC):

- i. Rural poor (encouraging agricultural extension services, allowing them access to land and finance).
- ii. Urban impoverished (facilitating credit access, housing, water, sanitary conditions, adult education).
- iii. Women (more representation of women in decision-making bodies, credit availability, adult education programs).
- iv. Youth (offering them a foundational education both inside and outside of the established school system).
- v. Children (helping to create a children's parliament, offering health care and basic education, and enhancing juvenile justice).
- vi. Rural communities (access to energy, water, roads, health care, and communication systems).

What is Community Development?

According to Philips and Pittman (2009), there are two ways to see community development: as a process and as an outcome. As a process it looks the activities carried out to achieve desired outcomes. This has to do with the learning process as an outcome it focuses on both quantitative and qualitative changes in both individuals and society at large.

Community development can be defined as "personal and rural development within a community," which captures the idea of community development in its entirety (Wordu, 2022). Community development involves more than just activities; it connotes change. These are changes that go beyond what people encounter on a daily basis, such

as the successes and failures of local communities that don't impact society as a whole. By contrasting it with social change—which is defined as slow or incremental changes that occur over time—it suggests fundamental transformation in society (De Hass, Fransen, Nather & Schewel, 2020). Wordu (2022) lists the following as the objectives of community development: enhancing native agriculture; enhancing health; enhancing education; enhancing the environment; and enhancing people's participation in everything. The goals of community development have an impact on rural poverty, as measured in relative terms, both directly and indirectly. For example, mutorizing agriculture is one of the goals of community development. Incomes in rural areas and food production will both benefit from this. Farmers who scale up their commercial operations will eventually become entrepreneurs.

In executing such initiatives that will support the accomplishment of community development goals, community education expands on preexisting resources in the human and physical domains. This entails enhancing the community's existing resources to increase their effectiveness and efficiency. As a result, the community's resources are better mobilized. In light of this, this study investigates community education as a means of reducing poverty in Nigerian rural communities.

What is Community Participation?

When we refer to community participation, we mean individuals should be involved in development initiatives that aim to improve their communities and quality of life. It is seen as citizen participation as well. According to German Agency, GTZ, referenced in Mohan (2008), involvement is the sharing of power and cooperation between locals and other agencies during a project. We take into account alternative viewpoints because this one is a reflection of a specific setting. According to Desai (2008), community participation consists of two steps: a decision-making process and an action plan to carry out the chosen course of action. These could be interpreted to suggest that community participation is the act of individuals and groups participating in development responses that are intended to benefit the community or group they belong to as a whole. It might or might not result in favorable consequences for the disadvantaged, because of its complexity.

Community Development and Community Participation

The two ideas are connected. One of the fundamental principles of community development is community participation (Ugwoegbu & Abbey, 2017). Depending on how involved everyone is, a community may prosper or fail (Bede & Ojekheta, Olaeye cited in Ugwoegbu & Abey-Fashae, 2017). Ugwoegbu and Fashae (2017) state that the pursuit of such initiatives, whether based on internal or external sources, must inevitably be one that respects the rights and abilities of community members, their involvement in determining their felt-needs, and the designing and implementation of programs to address problems within their community. This suggests that guaranteeing people's effective participation is necessary to achieve community development goals (Wordu, 2020).

Concept of Community Education

Despite the fact that the literature contains over a dozen definitions, there is no one accepted definition of community education. Community education is defined as a type of education in which individuals learn how to better themselves both individually and collectively (Akande, 2007; Egbedon and Diwe 2017). According to this definition, it is the same as adult education, which includes informal, non-formal, and formal education. The practice in Nigeria is reflected in this term. According to Anyanwu (2002), community education is fundamentally non-formal education that is centered locally but is not founded in educational theory. It is a new basic education for life that helps people adjust to changing circumstances and pick up new values, habits, and attitudes to be socially useful in a world that is changing quickly. According to this perspective, community education places a strong emphasis on learning, which is a lifelong process intended to enable effective adaptation to societal changes.

Community education is defined as an educational process that is based on the needs, particularities, and aspirations of the community and that depends on the environment of community members in the planning and implementation of programs for the community as well as in the educational process. (International Community Education Association Fifth World Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, 1987 referenced in Abioma, 2021). Anontas (2000) and Olori, Ukachukwu, Peterside, Okide, and Koledoyer (2019) define community education as a process that involves empowerment, social justice, transformation, challenge, respect, and collective consciousness.

Adults are the subject of this definition. Given that community education equips people to confront injustice and its perpetrators in order to transform their own reality, it implies that community education serves as a platform for political revolution. Owing to flaws in many definitions, Wordu (2020, 2018) provides a useful definition of community education as outreach programs an organization conducts to reach out to people outside of its physical location. This suggests that older learners as well as younger ones are the emphasis of community education, which is non-formal rather than formal and does not have an age restriction.

Models of Community Education

Multiple community education models exist. Henry Moris created the education in the community model, Paulo Freire is associated with education as a political revolution, Tom Loveth is associated with education for community development/social action/community action, and Fietcher is the brains behind education without walls. Community education was created by Henry Moris as a way to encourage lifelong learning. All ages have access to learning opportunities through community education throughout their lives. Education for community development, social action, and community action entails programs that help individuals address problems and the acquisition of fundamental skills. This philosophy distinguishes between two approaches: education as a tool for community service and education for individual growth. These are activities for non-formal education.

The goal of education as a political revolution is to advance social justice and confront the causes of oppression by enabling individuals to recognize their own oppression and take action to break free from it. The goal of education without walls is to provide equal access to education. The purpose of it is to give underprivileged people the resources they need to achieve their educational needs (Jarvis, 2004). In Nigeria, there are two instances of this kind of instruction. One is part-time study or university continuing education. In Nigeria, this is not community education. The other speaks of open apprenticeship programs designed to assist the less fortunate in learning skills so they can support themselves financially. Nigerian community education is a combination of the previously stated methods, with a partial foundation in Loveth's paradigm of education for social action, community development, and community action.

The term "educating the masses for community development" describes this approach. It blends non-traditional methods such community organization (CO), community capacity building (CCB), and community development quick services education (CDQSE) (Wordu, 2020). The goal of community education is to provide disadvantaged communities with the tools they need to confront their oppressors and finish their historical struggles. This suggests breaking out from the vicious cycle of poverty. The institutionalization of democracy, which necessitates political engagement, is the goal of community education. In order to accomplish the objectives of community development, this approach is encouraged. The people have the power. It is a tool for educating and inspiring individuals to take an active role in the process of development. Local ecosystems are favored in its programs. It makes use of a multitude of programme variations and learning capital. Rather than using the ministry of education, it makes use of civil society structures. Instead of organizing community education, the government's job is to coordinate, support, and encourage it. It brings about change on a personal, social, and cultural level. It functions both inside and outside of the community.

Approaches to Community Education

Different approaches are associated with community education. The three approaches that are most commonly used are:

- i. **Community Capacity Building (CCB):** The goal of this strategy is to support communities in strengthening their existing abilities and experiences, expanding their possibilities, and becoming more involved in decisions that affect them. Its purpose is to make communities more capable of identifying and achieving these goals, as well as participating in community enterprises, managing community initiatives, and consulting and planning. It includes elements of resource building, organizational and personal growth, and training that are thoughtfully scheduled and organized to uphold the values of equality and empowerment.
- ii. **Community Organisation:** The goal of the community organization strategy is to organize community members in order to educate them. Its goal is to assist communities in addressing the tangible requirements of organizing individuals to identify issues that face them in their shared physical surroundings (Anyanwu,

2002). It is a way to provide communities the power to choose the steps—including resource mobilization—that are necessary to carry out their plans and proposals. This is predicated on the idea that communities won't be able to address other issues needing community action until they are sufficiently equipped to organize themselves to carry out such fundamental tasks. This strategy focuses on empowering communities to self-organize. Communities require knowledge and abilities to efficiently organize themselves. It is not a simple task that can be completed in a single day.

iii. Community Development Quick Service Education (CDQSE): The Community Development Quick Service Education (CDQSE) method focuses on short-term courses. It offers a wide range of talents, including decorating, soap making, chalk making, catering, and tailoring. The goal of community development fast service education is to empower underprivileged people. It aims to quickly provide those living on the edge of existence with the advantages of training. Quick service education for community development has the following qualities:

- It occurs within the short intervals
- It involves operations that are easily mastered rather than sophisticated operations.
- It is job oriented, focusing on preparing individuals for self-employment
- Participants require resources to effectively utilize their skills.

What Community Education can do to Achieve Sustainable Community Development

Improve Indigenous Agriculture

Community education offers training through literacy and postliteracy programs, as well as vocational education and training (VET), with the goal of enhancing indigenous agriculture. The former aids in providing community members with the fundamental abilities required to function well in their line of work. VET assists in enabling them to create small companies or alternative revenue streams. Basic economic infrastructure, including credit, seeds, fertilizer, irrigation, machinery, etc., is made available through community education to help people of the community carry out their economic activities successfully. Community education also provides social infrastructure or facilities such as schools, hospitals, health centers, roads, power, drinking water, and sanitation, as well as an atmosphere that is conducive to development.

Nigerian agriculture still relies heavily on subsistence farming, and small farmers lack access to loans that would allow them to use modern tools like pesticides, chemicals, and better seeds. There is also a lack of infrastructure in rural areas. These needs are met by community education, which also has the potential to boost output and productivity and raise food and income levels for those who farm.

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Improve Health

Community education encompasses a range of health awareness initiatives, such as health worker training and retraining, and occasionally offering incentives to health workers to live and work in rural regions. This slows the spread of diseases that can be prevented, like polio, breast cancer, etc. Educating the community by holding workshops helps women learn about health. Research suggests that this has a favorable impact on household nutrition. Vulnerable people in these communities can obtain medications and other medical treatments thanks to community education and the presence of health facilities. Considering that the majority of government-owned hospitals and health centers might not be able to provide services that fulfill the demands of communities, they could potentially have an impact on the health of communities and the people who live there.

Improve the Environment

The environment is improved through community education in a number of ways. The teaching of literacy is one of these tactics. Wordu (2020) notes that because a higher percentage of people live in rural areas and lack reading, tackling the issue of environmental protection calls for the general public to acquire fundamental skills, notably literacy. People who are literate may obtain and comprehend fundamental environmental information and its applications to environmental conservation, which can transform their perspective on the environment.

Raising community members' understanding of environmental issues, particularly the effects of human activity on the environment both now and in the future, is another tactic employed in community education. Agencies that work to enhance the environment have funding mitigation on their agendas. According to Putonor (2022), there are a number of environmental components that need to be improved, including the decontamination of

surface and ground water, the atmosphere, the landscape (including wetlands), soil management, sediment treatment, mangrove restoration, noise reduction and monitoring, flora (vegetation), and the maintenance of high-quality fauna (fish and other aquatic life and animals). keeping an eye on how pollution affects public health, monitoring the effects of illicit artisanal refineries on nearby populations, etc. Without a doubt, by concentrating on these areas, communities might gain from increases in agricultural income and productivity.

Improve Participation in all Things

By conscientizing individuals, community education can be used to mobilize them for active participation in development processes. They become subjects in the process of development instead of just objects as a result. Even at the community level, most Nigerians—especially those from vulnerable categories like the poorest male, female, and youth members—rarely engage in decision-making. They might therefore be unable to participate in choices that have an impact on their life. This is known as engaging in politics. According to Olugbemi, in Etigbano and Akpobomere (2020), political engagement refers to the voluntary actions that include holding public and party positions, running for office, participating in election campaigns, casting a ballot, and being exposed to political stimuli. It is anticipated that this will improve their communities' social and economic well-being. Community education has been seen as an assault on gender inequality (Wordu, 2018). As a result, it is a way to improve the economic standing of women in roles.

Policy Implications

There is need for policy to take the following into consideration:

1. **Planning:** To prevent needless duplication, learners' requirements must be addressed in precise and tangible action plans. This will assist in getting rid of mushroom activities that don't work well. This shouldn't be interpreted as a means of limiting the project's adaptability to the target audience's needs and execution flexibility. To include the goals, recipients, available resources, and connections between the program and other community services, the planning approach should incorporate both central and distinct plans for every program (Wordu, 2020, 2018).
2. **Functional Literacy:** The functional literacy approach should be adopted in the teaching of literacy to enhance productivity and output among the learners. This is because this literacy approach is based on the socio-economic context of the learners.
3. **Gender equality:** equalization of opportunities between men and women is required to address gender discrimination against women in access to educational and other services.
4. **Evaluation:** Periodic evaluation of impact community education so as to improve on the process and outcomes.

Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that community development and education can have a significant impact on the eradication of poverty in a number of ways, including by enhancing indigenous agriculture enhancing environmental quality, enhancing health, and raising involvement in all endeavors. These results point to the need to embrace a variety of learning opportunities outside of the organized educational system in order to seek beyond it in order to achieve life's essential needs. It follows that raising people's quality of life is the fundamental purpose of community education. We might therefore conclude that in order to make meaning of education, it needs to be functional. This is so that life's issues can be resolved by functional education.

Another finding from this study is that community resources and member resources alone will not be sufficient to combat poverty; instead, both public and private organizations must play a crucial role in providing all kinds of resources for the learning and development of the community's members. Due to increasing depletion as well as inadequate resource quality, rural communities no longer have enough resources to meet their needs for enhancing the quality of life.

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