Leveraging on Adult Literacy Education for Community Development in Nigeria

Murtala Akanbi Yusuf[1*] & Ibrahim Abdullahi Shehu[2]

[1]Department of Adult Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Nigeria
[2]Department of Social Development, Umaru Ali Shinkafi polytechnic, Nigeria

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to look at leveraging on adult literacy education for community development in Nigeria. The research examines certain connected literatures on the subject at hand. Based on a thorough assessment of the literature, it was discovered that a person is literary when he has gained the necessary knowledge and abilities to engage in all the activities that require literacy for efficient functioning in his group or community. Furthermore, adults in communities require more than basic literacy knowledge; they also require functional literacy. Global attempts to eradicate poverty, ignorance, and illiteracy, among other things, as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals, would be ineffective unless appropriate initiatives based on the adult population, the pivot of dynamic and sustainable development, are implemented. Adult literacy education programmes are indeed critical tools for transforming Nigerian communities. Without the growth of human potential, the creation of high-rise buildings and other infrastructure in communities will not result in the essential change.

Keywords*: Community, Development, Adult literacy, Education*

1. Introduction

Community development is a responsibility of all. It is well entrenched in the tradition of African society. The International Association for Community Development (IACD) (2016) defines community development as "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings." Community development is seen as a process and outcomes (Louisiana Community Network, n.d). Community development as a process is premised on the assumption that people are architects of their development and they can work as a team to effect positive change if the atmosphere is safe, open and non-threatening. Community development is not easy and requires people with specific knowledge and skills to facilitate the process. It is a process through which people develop the ability to collectively help themselves and reduce reliance on external resources. It includes a set of steps to guide problem solving, program planning and task completion (Louisiana

Community Network, n.d). The outcomes aspect of community development are the results of the process. The results can be inform of improvement in terms of quantity and quality of infrastructure such as road, hospital, school, market, etc. natural assets such as farmland, mineral resources, human capital such as skilled workforce and financial resources as such as micro loan funds. All of these represent a physical increase in community capital that is visible and easily identified as a community asset.

What features in all of the descriptions of community development is that it is participatory, empowering and educational. The participation of all in the development of community is sometimes not automatic as people may display apathy to the process. This requires that members of the community are mobilised. The mobilisation of community members underscores the importance of education in the process and outcomes of community development. This is because development and education are inextricably linked. According to Kane (2006), education, both formal and informal, is the foundation of a "transformative approach" to community development. Education can increase people's chances of experiencing social change at the grassroots level. It promotes the accumulation of educational experiences that go beyond academic or professional qualifications, and it assists individuals in discovering their place in the community (Hunt, 2009). Like in other developing

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*) Corresponding Author
E-mail: murtalayusuf2004@gmail.com

nations, a considerable section of the Nigerian population lives in rural regions, where most people are uneducated and rely on agriculture for a living. If the development should take place in an atmosphere of people involvement, education and literacy in particular must be given priority.

Adult Literacy Education and Community Development are considered as two sides of a coin. This is because adult literacy is seen as an important tools through which community can be informed and mobilised for development. The current development paradigm have revealed that literacy education and community development are equally essential topics of research and practice. And educational level of people to a large extent determines the level of participation and commitment of people to the development efforts. In another testimony, Adekola (2008) submitted that, modern development strategies have recognised the importance of adult literacy as a vehicle for community development. It is believed that Adult Literacy programmes have demonstrated that they are significantly more helpful instruments in attaining desired improvements for the welfare and betterment of people's lives, as well as national development. According to Olajide (2003), the ideas of adult literacy education have some underlying elements that support the social essence of growth and development of individuals and their communities to a larger extent. One may say that adult literacy education and community development appear to be conjoined or at least non-identical twins that work hand in hand. The focus of this paper therefore, is to examine how adult literacy education can be leveraged upon for sustainable community development in Nigeria.

2. Method

This article is premised on literature reviews, using content analysis and specific on books and articles featuring literature on community development and adult literacy education. In addition, the author searched literature, based on international journals, books, articles and reports. Analysis on this articles was made by classifying and collecting the best views based on the issue.

Sociologically, the reviews were made on how adult literacy education can be explored to bring about community development in Nigeria. These were captured in result and discussion section as well as conclusions.

3. Result and Discussion

Community development is a relatively new word in the social sciences, as well as a relatively recent art form in the Western world. This is because the notion was first articulated in 1948 at the Cambridge Summer Conference. However, Anyanwu (1981) observed that community development is not a new phenomenon in Africa. He remarked that men have attempted to improve their lot since the dawn of time, and community development is only a new manner of doing so. Adekola (1997) agreed with the preceding viewpoint when he stated that community development has always been a component of African culture. He based his position on Fafunwa's (1974) assertion that the goals of African Traditional Education include the development of a sense of belonging and the encouragement of active engagement in family and community activities. Fafunwa (1974) demonstrated that, prior to the arrival of imperialism, Nigerian traditional communities, like other African cultures, had learned to fulfil their social and economic demands. He contended, for example, that age groups often engage in community work. They may assist other members of the group in clearing, planting, or harvesting, or they may assist the community at large in road construction or the chief in carrying out a specific job.

In traditional African civilization, community development is working together as members of a specific community to pursue common goals that benefit the whole group and intended to help the whole community. The role of community development in African society is best highlighted in the 1986 National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) lecture series, as recounted in Adegboyega (1988): One of the enduring and flourishing heritages of traditional societies in Africa is their involvement in community development. It has been the indigenous mechanism and technique developed and employed by the people to identify their felt needs, choose what they want and take co-operative action to satisfy the needs. Long before the introduction of the science of development planning and studies, many rural communities in Nigeria had learnt to pool their resources and provide both functional and physical facilities for themselves. It was in this ways that they involved themselves in construction of fortification, moats and tranches round their settlements, shrines, churches and mosques for religious worship and of late educational institution."

The experts' viewpoints clearly demonstrated that community development is not a new phenomenon in African countries. Community development, on the other hand, has become an area of interest for development practitioners, social scientists, adult educators, social workers, and even politicians, with the

rising areas of knowledge and emphasis on actual development for the improvement of people's lives.

According to Anyanwu (2002), the idea of community development lacks a comprehensive definition that can accommodate its ever-expanding range. Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2004) reinforce this viewpoint by observing that it is difficult to describe what is encompassed by the notion of community development in a concise, appropriate, and comprehensive manner. This implies that what defines community development cannot be properly defined in a few significant words referred to as definition. While no commonly recognized definition exists, a few key characteristics or aspects of community development recur repeatedly in the literature. These characteristics, when combined, constitute a broadly recognized definition of the phrase community development.

Based on the recurrence of the characteristics, Ojokheta and Oladeji (2004) discovered that there is little or no variance in researchers' perceptions of the notion. This indicates that they are saying the same thing in various ways. In recent time, the International Association for Community Development (2016), succeeded in defining the concept of community development as "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings." One important feature of community development is people participation. It is believed that development can only take and be sustained when people that need such development are actively involved in the whole process; initiation, planning, execution and outcomes.

It is unfortunate that non-involvement of community members and sometimes apathy displayed by community members has prevented real development to be attained. In this connection, Ibanga (2017), commented that non-involvement of the community and use of top-down approach in decision making process for project initiation and implementation incapacitates the potentials of the communities as well as undermining the benefiting communities.

The researcher is of the view that education in form of Adult Literacy has a lot to do address these problems for development to be attained in Nigeria communities.

Literacy is traditionally defined as the capacity to read, write, listen, talk, and enumerate. Literacy in the current environment, on the other hand, entails the capacity to utilize and communicate in a wide range of technology. Literacy, in general, is the ability to operate successfully at specific levels in a society where literacy plays a role in granting access to power. According to Essien (2005), literacy is concerned with the capacity to read and write in a language. A literate individual is thus someone who can read and write in one or more languages. As a result, the definitions for what defines 'literate' vary from civilization to society.

Literacy education has also been broadened to incorporate computer skills, basic mathematics, sound, still and moving pictures, and graphical aspects in digital-based communication. Furthermore, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTT) and the International Reading Association (2008) have announced that "visually portraying" has been included to the list of communicative abilities that comprise literacy.

The condition of having acquired a given level of literacy varies depending on who defines the norm and why. Functional literacy, as obtained via basic education, is critical to a nation's capacity to progress and attain long-term development goals. Functional literacy is an intellectual tool that enables an individual to not only be literate, but also to perform additional duties that benefit him/her and the society in which he/she lives (Asiedu & Oyedeji, 1985). It helps people to put their newly learned information to work in order to increase economic or academic performance or benefits. Because of the relevance of functional literacy to individual and social liberation, teaching it in a multilingual setting like Nigeria has received a lot of attention (Etor, 2002).

The greater a person's reading level, the greater his or her earning potential. Street (1995) contends that a family's socioeconomic status has more to do with a child's reading level, and that literacy levels are related to money. The higher the family income, the more likely the children will be literate; in other words, while illiteracy does not create poverty, poverty does induce illiteracy. The United States Department of Education (2003) has as its motto "No Child Left Behind" in its program titled "Promoting Educational Excellence for All Americans. "It emphasizes functional literacy, which would allow an American citizen to be gainfully employed and efficiently thrive in the global labour market. Literacy improves the position of women, lowers the population rate, improves environmental protection, and promotes the overall level of living of individuals and nations. Literacy has the potential to boost agricultural output.

The Nigerian government is currently emphasizing agriculture, and for different agricultural programs, such as the Fadama project financed by the World Bank, to be successful, farmers must be functionally literate (Falusi

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et al., 2005). According to the United Nations Development Programme UNDP (1999), boosting agricultural output requires a minimum of 4 to 6 years of schooling. Literacy and numeracy enable farmers to adapt to new agricultural methods, manage risks, document yield and sales, respond to market signals, and mix and apply chemicals in accordance with manufacturer specifications. A basic education also helps farmers to seek and get financial institution assistance. Literacy is also linked to good health. Parker et al. (1995) discovered that 2.36 percent of patients with inadequate functional health literacy did not know how to take medication four times a day, compared to 9.4 percent with marginal functional literacy and 4.5 percent with health literacy in their study of functional health literacy among patients at two public hospitals in the United States. It was also stated that in Kerala, India, female, and child death rates fell drastically in the 1960s when girls exposed to the country's literacy revolution after 1948 began to raise children (UNESCO, 2005).

In Nigeria, education is viewed as a ticket to a better life. Nigerians want their children to get a good education and to be able to work once they finish their studies. To do this, many families forego a significant portion of their income for their children's education at institutions with superior teaching facilities. Ayodele (2001) also contends that national unity, economic prosperity, and technical advancement in the country cannot be achieved without literacy and good communication among residents.

Illiteracy is most widespread in underdeveloped nations, according to UNESCO (2005). South Asian, Arab, and Sub-Saharan African countries have the highest illiteracy rates, ranging from 40 to 50 percent. East Asia and Latin America have illiteracy rates of 10 to 15%, whereas emerging countries have rates of only a few percent. Nigeria, a country in Sub-Saharan Africa, has an illiteracy rate of 25.6 percent among adult males and 40 percent among adult females. The country's illiteracy rate for boys aged 15 to 20 is 9.3 percent, while it is 13.5 percent for girls of the same age. Literacy is an excellent measure of a country's educational attainment, and it may also be a better indicator of school enrolment, because it generally represents a minimum level of successfully completed schooling. In developing countries, the illiteracy rate among young people aged 15 to 20 (secondary school age) is high. These data represent the proportion of young people who are unable to operate properly in their communities due to a lack of access to authority and resources. It also illustrates the proportion of young people who can just write numbers, their names, or memorize ceremonial words, or who are only familiar with the fundamentals of reading and writing, as proposed by Udosen (2004).

According to Brandt, as described by Kazemek (2004), literacy is a mix of individual and economic growth. Education is regarded as a tool for organizing social and economic change. This concept governed Nigerian policymakers before to independence (UNESCO, 1976). The former western region started its historic initiative of universal free education in 1995. Another point of contention is whether this program met its aims and satisfied its intended recipients.

Literacy has been considered as a critical development tool. As a result, it stands to reason that illiteracy is one of the root causes of the low level of life in rural areas. The capacity to learn to read, write, and compute is the change of an individual from illiteracy to literacy, particularly basic literacy. According to Ihejirika (2012), adult basic literacy is rudimentary or fundamental since it allows its recipients to grasp higher concepts in schooling. It necessitates the ability to read, write, and compute numbers (i.e numeracy).A person is literary when he has gained the necessary information and abilities to engage in all the activities that demand literacy for efficient functioning in his group or community. Rural residents require more than just basic literacy abilities; they also require functional literacy. According to Imhabekhai (2009), the desire and capacity to read, write, and calculate materials in vocation will inspire learners for improved involvement, and the usefulness of the abilities will bring about functionality and growth in the vocation or occupation, fostering permanent literacy. Literacy is a pivot around which many human activities revolve all throughout the world. Literacy skills are essential for all actions, whether political, social, economic, or cultural, in order to be completed to acceptable levels. Our rural communities will take on certain metropolitan traits as a result of it.

A comparison of ideas and approaches to community development and literacy education demonstrates that, despite differences, they may be complementary (Padamsee, Ewert & Deshler, 1996). Attempts to link literacy education's functional, cultural, and critical approaches to community development methods have been less instructional than aligning them to ideas associated with effective community development practice. Matching literacy education's functional, cultural, and critical perspectives to the key principles of community development identified above results in a continuum that builds community capacity for community development through adult literacy education while providing opportunities for learners to build human and social capital. Literacy education for adults is of outmost importance.

A quick examination of the aims and scope of adult education and community development indicates that both are concerned in practice with the creation and promotion of improved living conditions for individuals, particularly adult members of the community, via education. Indeed, the aims and scope of adult education and community development point to them as problem-solving initiatives aimed at improving humanity's living conditions. The parallels in emphasis and aims are so close that even if the objectives were merged into one, none of the concepts would lose much in terms of structure and what they stand to achieve. According to Anyanwu (2002), current developments appear to be turning away from the idea and practice of community development and toward community education, which Akintayo (2004) describes as one of the sectors of adult education.

4. Conclusiom

Based on a superficial examination of the literatures stated above, a person is literary when he has acquired the required knowledge and abilities to engage in all the activities that necessitate literacy for effective functioning in his group or society. Residents in rural areas require more than just basic literacy skills; they also demand functional literacy. Global efforts to eradicate poverty, ignorance, and illiteracy, among other things, as expressed in the Millennium Development Goals, cannot be realized unless suitable programs centered on the adult population, which is the pivot of dynamic and sustainable development, are established.Literacy education and community development programs are therefore essential instruments for the transformation of rural communities in Nigeria. The construction of high-rise buildings and other infrastructure in communities without the development of human capability will not result in the necessary change. As a result, the slogan "train a man, build a community" can only be realized through adult education and community development programs and activities that bring about change and transformation in people's self-perception, allowing them to stimulate their potentials to face the reality of their developmental needs. This will remove the "lazy guy" mindset of "there is God" and allow people to control and conquer the environment for their own benefit. Areas, government institutions, non-governmental organizations, well-meaning people, and community-based groups are all presumably stakeholders in this march to transform rural communities. As a result, it is suggested that: Active engagement of community members in the planning and execution of development programs be encouraged. The government should provide orientation and sensitization workshops and seminars for adult education practitioners on a regular basis to ensure successful service delivery. Adult education agencies and their programs should be adequately funded. The bottom-up approach to program development and execution should be promoted. Adult education and community development programs should be governed by quality assurance standards.

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