ISSN: 3043-467X



ADULT EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR RURAL TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA

[1]Orobor, Moses E. (Ph. D)
Email: me.orobor@unizik.edu.ng
&
[1]Ejiro-Mitaire, Faith Obehi
Email: of.edeoghon@unizik.edu.ng
Phone: 07037210042

[1]Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Interest in rural development in recent times has continued to gather momentum, particularly in developing economy like ours, because majority of the people live and find their means of livelihood in the rural areas. This paper examined the issue of how the rural areas can be transformed through adult education, by exploring scholars' views and opinions on issues through extensive review of literature and philosophical analysis. The discussion opened with an explanation of the concepts of rural area; rural transformation; and, adult education. The socio-psychological issues to consider in planning educational programme for the rural populace was also examined while emphasizing on characteristics of the rural dwellers which influence the programme designed for them. The discussion climaxed with an exploration of how the rural areas can be transformed through adult education. The discussion was anchored on the fact that adult education aims at re-orientating the valued systems and ideology of the rural people, the philosophy of rural dwellers about the totality of their existence. The central argument of the paper is that, with proper conscientization of the rural dwellers through adult education, they will be in a better position to contribute to the upliftment of their Communities.

Keywords: Rural area, adult education, rural transformation

Introduction

In Nigeria in recent years, interest in rural area has continued to gather momentum. This is because overwhelming majority of the country's population live and find their means of livelihood in the rural areas. Besides, majority of the people who live in rural area are involved in the production of goods and services needed by the country. It has been reported that over 75 percent of the people engaged in agricultural activities, reside in the rural area. Their contributions to the growth of the nation cannot be under estimated as an agrarian economy. Adewale (2013) observed that owing to the neglect of the rural areas, it has become fertile grounds for outbreak of diseases, illiteracy and lack of opportunities. Above all, this increasingly deepening phenomenon and had stressed further to birth poverty. Life in rural areas has remained unbearable. The rural populace has continued to grapple with hard times; these situations or prevailing circumstance has been adduced for increased interest in rural development and transformation. In Nigeria today, it is envisaged that the process of development and its accompanying socio-inhabitants in the various communities is dependent on the ability of the rural dweller. The situation today is so much unsatisfactory, that those villages which were once like heaven on earth to their inhabitants are today the images of poverty; hunger diseases; disunity; and disorganization (Esenjor, 2015).

The traditional elements of rural life appear to have vanished away from the villages, except only in very few areas. Community consciousness among the rural dwellers is steadily decreasing. The usual and most cherished hospitality is no longer observed. Sex relations are marked by acts of irresponsibility. The rates of known social vices that crept into the area and have pervaded social rural live are also increasing. The old customs are being violated with reckless abandon. Individualism, materialism and utilitarian relationship are fast becoming the order of the

day. The ideal of morality appeared to have given way, corruption; moral degeneration and social deviance have taken their toll on rural 1life. These situations have made life and living in the rural area unpalatable. This has further worsened the problem of rural urban migration.

The problems which the rural communities face today are traceable relative neglect of the area (Idode, 2009). The situation, therefore, calls for integrated efforts aimed at developing the rural areas with a view to making life more tolerable and worthwhile for the people. This paper, therefore, examines the transformation of the rural areas using adult education. It begins with an examination of the meaning of key words used in the discourse such as rural area, rural development and adult education. Thereafter, the strategies to employ to ensuring the transformation of the rural areas through adult education were highlighted.

The Concept of Rural Area

There are no exact criteria for defining an area as rural area. Esenjor (2015) opines that it all depends on what is customarily assumed about rural areas and villages. However, he stressed that rural area refers to a geographical area away from large urban settlements and towns and, which are inhabited by rural people. The concept according to Idode (2009), could assume economic, sociological, ethnic and racial connotations. This accounts for the variations in the definition of the terms by scholars. Furthermore, the term rural is sometimes limited to spatial and occupational contexts and the degree of desegregation in social service (Dakin, 2017). It is in this light that Philip cited in Idode (2009), observed that rural Nigeria is measured by a spatial index indicating the percentage of population living in the rural areas and by occupational index; showing the percentage of the labour force in agricultural occupational, For this reason, it has not been possible to clearly identify, which proportion of Nigeria's population, according to Omoruyi

(2015), is urban which one is rural, The 1952 census used a population of 5000 people or to demarcate or delineate an urban area. By simple inference therefore locality inhabited by a population of less than 5,000 will be regarded as area. The 1960 population census referred to a locality with a population of 20,000 people and above as an urban area whiles a town or locality with less than 20,000 people as rural area. On the basis - of this classification, the Nigerian Second National Development Plan of 1970-2014 estimated about 20 percent of the total population of the country as urban dwellers. In its simplest form, the term rural area is used to describe a small geographical area as distinct from large settlements or towns inhabited by people majority of whom are peasant farmers and where activities are mainly agrarian and subsistence in nature. Hence ldode (2009), argues that on the economic activities within rural area depend directly or indirectly exploitation of land which centres mainly on farming. The rural area is characterized with close contact to nature. This means that, life is influenced with the environment. Nature becomes a significant part of a farmer's life. Besides, agriculture is the main stay or occupation of the people with a small size and population who are highly homogenous with a very high social interaction, Solidarity and low mobility. In view of the foregoing, a rural area can be described at least as a geographical area or location inhabited bya population of people that is small (at least more than 5,000) majority of whom peasant farmers and whose economy is predominantly agrarian and subsistence ii nature.

Rural Development/ Transformation

Often time, rural development and transformation are regarded as the complimentary terms. However, the two concepts can be conceived differently. Akinola, Majoyinola & Folaranmi (2015), observed that to some people, rural development is the provision of amenities and infrastructural

facilities in the rural areas. This means the provision of roads, services, water, storage, communication facilities and services, marketing facilities hospitals or clinic or dispensaries, schools, electricity etc in the area. However, Oyaide (2017) observed that installation or provision of infrastructural facilities all over the rural area does not by itself constitute rural development. In whatever way rural development or transformation is conceived, it describes a process of development in the rural context which seeks to bring about positive-economic change, aimed at raising the living standard, quality of life and dignity of rural dwellers (Eheazu, 2007). Omoruyi (2015) on his part, referred to it as the restructuring of the economy of the rural areas in order to satisfy the material needs and aspirations of the rural dwellers or masses, and to promote individual and collective incentives to participate in the process of development. He stressed further, that, rural development also involve bringing about improvement in a host of multi activities like agriculture, rural industrial promotion, provision or creation of infrastructure, the establishment of structures that will allow for mass participation. Rural development is aimed at bringing about improvement in the living standard of the rural masses with a view to encouraging and stimulating the people to participate in the planned process of change in the rural area. Objectives of rural development include facilitation of improved income distribution, full and productive employment, increased productivity, improved food for self-sufficiency and the provision of basic needs and amenities.

Nature of Adult Education

Adult education is essential for rural transformation. It can be designed to enable the rural dwellers or population to acquire skills and knowledge necessary for self-development, self-reliance and rural development. Adult education provides one of the processes of learning that are

parts of the fabric of rural life or society's programmes of out-of-school community learning or education originating with central and local government or voluntary organizations and projects for development within the local or rural communities. Adult education in the context of rural development, describes. Organized learning activities designed to bring about changes in information; knowledge; understanding; skills; appreciation, and, attitudes or for, the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problem. According to Adewale (2015), such adult education should be:

1. Educational in nature, that is, must not be for mere recreation or entertainment.
2. Relatively organized and planned and not just random or casual.
3. Purposeful, intentional, deliberate and directed towards identified needs or Interests of the recipients.
4. Characterized by the voluntary participation of the adult, including the decision to join in the first instance, freedom to withdraw at will and even participation in programme planning and evaluation
5. Needs oriented and needs determined as well as problem solving.
6. Dealing with relevant matters that are of immediate concern, that is, it is not an education preparing for distant usefulness.
7. Learner- centered, involving the learner in the learning process with the ultimate aim of making his learning self-initiated and self-directed, among others.

In the same vein Callaway (2014), observed that such education for rural development should be the type that:

a. It is intentionally organized as training activity;

b. It is usually adapted for specific needs of particular clientele including rural adults, the youths and women and the school drop-outs;

c. Is usually outside the traditional schooling:

d. Is learner-centered and involves a wide variety of curricular instructional materials and methods.

On the basis of the above, it is clear that adult education can be employed as a tool for rural transformation or development, by exposing the rural youths, adults (including illiterates and drop--outs from school), to a pragmatic kind of out-of- school learning activities or programmes relating to the peculiarities through:

1. Technical Skill training for older youths and adults to prepare them for of their life, work and general environment. Such learning activities include: gainful employment or meaningful living within their environment in the future.
2. Technical upgrading of existing artisans and craftsmen (including the self- employed) in order to improve their standard, versatility, productivity and income.
3. More comprehensive small industry, promotional schemes combining organized training for managers and their employers, assistance in securing credit, on the spot, technical and management consulting services information and advisory services.

Issues in Adult Education and Rural Transformation

Certain issues are crucial to the success of the efforts in promoting transformation through adult education. These issues need to be carefully articulated and considered to ensure that they do not constitute hindrances to the success of the efforts of promoting genuine development in rural areas. These issues are briefly examined below:

I. Integrating rural transformation or development into the overall adult education plan or structure. Experiences in the country have revealed, that, the formal education system have little to offer in the area of dealing with the problem of hunger and poor agricultural productivity, because, it has failed to teach practical skills that are necessary for rural development. There is need therefore for the realizati0n of the overall learning process at the community level. The training programme initiated must be based on the needs of the rural areas, where both the youths and adults can acquire knowledge and realize their potential for development. For the rural dwellers to perform their tasks of farming, trading, arts, crafts, business etc. efficiently, they need training and re-training for their Occupations. Such training programmes for the rural dwellers should be viewed as part of rural development process (Akinola et al, 2015).

II. There must be an enabling environment for health. The issue at stake here is how to organize the health component of adult education, which will enhance rural development. The achievement of the successful integration of and implementation of the health component of adult education undoubtedly contribute to the standard of hygiene and level of participation of rural areas in community development. The kind of benefits derivable from such is manifested in safer water and sanitation, food security and nutrition.

III. The peasants' personality pattern and interpersonal behaviour. This is one development of the rural area negatively. According to Oglonvwo (2014), there are certain peasants' characteristics, which tend to frustrate education and rural development. These include: resignation of the peasant to fate. They always resign to their fate and become passive, when faced with problem, because of their peculiar nature. They always believe that success is the fate. They are fatalistic in their outlook. Their attitude and behaviour product of supernatural intervention and misfortune also

often blamed on discourage efforts of self-help and modernization. Besides, the rural peasants are also suspicious and distrustful of other people and this attitude discourages rural development.

Rural Development through Adult Education

Education is a basic human right. Unfortunately, many rural dwellers are not educated. However, according to Ogbene (2015), to observe one's right to education requires financial, material and moral support. This presupposes, that, adult education programme organized for the people must be affordable. This is the only way they can be encouraged to take due advantage of them to better their lots. When the rural dwellers get educated through adult education, they will acquire basic skills and knowledge that will enable them perform their daily activities more efficiently and effectively. Besides, adult education aims at re-orientating the philosophy of the rural dwellers about the inevitable importance of nature to their existence. This means that the rural populace can be conscientized on the protection of their environment. They can be taught not to destroy their natural resources like trees. This will go a long way in protecting the natural habitat and will help to contribute to the development of the society. Furthermore, the importance of environmental education among the rural dwellers can also be emphasized through adult education. They can be re-orientated towards the hazards involved in living in a filthy environment. They can be conscientized always about the need to clean their environment (Oladapo, 2018).

Adults, especially those in the rural areas must learn about family planning. In this regard, they must be taught that having many children that cannot be cared for only increase the level of poverty of the society and retard the level of progress of the society. They must be made to understand that having many children can affect the quality of life of the family. This is a feat adult education can achieve for the rural people and their communities. Adult education through its

literacy programme can enable the illiterate rural dwellers acquire the basic literacy skills of reading and writing. This will enable them think positively and be in a position to contribute meaningfully to the development of themselves, their immediate environment and the nation at large. Functional literacy can equally increase the learning power of the rural dwellers through increase productivity. The increase in their level of productivity and income, will also enable them contribute to the development of their environment economically. In fact, a rational relationship has been established between adult education through its programmes and poverty eradication, improved conditions of life and attack against illiteracy, under-development, ignorance and diseases (Bhola, 2013; Ampene, 2013; Duke, 2014). In this regard, Akintayo & Oghenekohwo as reported in Bhola (2013) have argued that whatever the indices used for the measurement or determination of development, such indices cannot be devoid of the instrument of education. To this end, adult education; they posited is a vital instrument per excellence for achieving national development or transformation.

In a very practical term, it is the adults whose services and participation most readily needed in the planning and execution of national development transformation programmes, especially at the grass- root. As major actors in rural development activities, they cannot carry out the role of formulating and implementing any plan, unless they are sufficiently well-informed to be able to choose from among available options or alternatives open to them. Adult education by providing such skills and knowledge will help promote rural development or transformation. Adult education through its literacy and non-formal education programmes, can equip the rural people with the knowledge, that will enable them participate, with good sense of judgment and understanding in the administration of their local affairs. It will also make the people aware of the

need for social, economic and political improvements. The knowledge they acquire can impact on them in both their domestic and social life, in their appreciating better standard of living of communication and cultivation of the right attitudes and behaviour concomitant with decent living and how to work towards some set purposes and cope with the task of social consequences of development.

Conclusion

In this paper, the issue of promoting rural development through adult education was treated. It was argued that the intellectual ability and level of awareness of people in the rural communities can be raised through adult education. It has also been observed that the initiative and productive capacity of the rural dwellers can be enhanced- through adult education programme. The improvement in the productive capacity of the people will enable them to contribute to the economic base of their communities. Adult education is one means by which the educational needs of the adults in the rural area can be meant. Through adult education programmes, the various problems such as illiteracy, ignorance, poverty which characterized rural life and have been found to hinder growth economically, socially and otherwise can be eliminated.

More importantly, the adult populace in the rural areas can be oriented towards developing the appropriate skills and knowledge and attitudes and behaviour necessary for promoting and putting local affairs in the direction of the change or development. The point stressed here is that the rural masses or populace, especially the adults, need adult education in all its ramifications to become aware of their needs, those of their communities and how to contribute to the development in their area. It can therefore, be summarily concluded that adult education is essential ingredient for meaningful rural development or transformation.

Recommendation

From the above discussion, if rural development must be achieved, all the issues that constitute barrier to adult learning must be taken care of, while at the same time promoting the education of the masses, through the various adult education programmes such as literacy, functional literacy, continuing education, cooperative education, entrepreneurship education, vocational adult education to mention but a few.

References

Adewale, A.F. (2018). Psycho-social predictors for workers' participation in Continuing Education Programmes in Lagos State. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Lagos, Lagos.

Akinola, B. Majoyinola, J. & Folaranmi, A. (2021). *Developing adult education and community development. New Paradigms.* Ibadan: Educational research and study group.

Ampene, T. (2013). *Ecology and education in Nigeria. Studies on the education of community development* 2nd (ed).: Tabansi Publishers Ltd

Bhola M. (2013). *What you should know about the world in which you live*? Emmai: Books, Nigeria.

Callaway, A. K. (2014). Effects of cerebellum on settlement in middle Hawal Valley. *Journal of Archeological Research, 22*(2), 123 -145.

Dakin, A. (2009). Educating African youths for rural development. Netherlands: Bernard Van Leer Foundation.

Duke, O. (2014). Continuing education from policy to practice. *Adult Education in Nigeria, 56*(2); 10-12.

Eheazu, B. H. (2007). *Attacking rural poverty. Lagos.* Nigeria: University of Lagos Press.

Esenjor, H. M. (2012). Socio-cultural approach to non-formal education, as a strategy for rural development in Nigeria. In A.B. Oduaran and A. Eheazu (eds) *Issues in Nigeria Adult and Community* (pp 75-87).

Folaranmi, A. (2021). Issues in Nigerian adult and community development. Benin: The Nigeria National Council for Adult Education (pp.20-21).

Idode, W. (2009). Training for rural occupation and development through non-formal education. In A. B. Oduaran and B. H. Eheazu (eds.), *Issues in Nigeria Adult and Community*

Development Education. (pp 75-87). Benin City: Nigerian National Council for Adult Education.

Ogbene, M. (2012). Towards a participatory strategy for integrated rural development. *Rural Sociology*, *46*(4) 699.

Ogionwo, L. (2020). *The rural world: Education and development.* Paris: UNESCO Press.

Oladapo, C. O (2019). Educating the rural Nigeria workers. In A. B. Oduaran and B.H. Eheazu (eds). *Issues in Nigeria Adult and Community Development Education* (pp 41-50). Benin City: Nigerian National Council for Adult Education.

Omoruyi, F.E. (2015). *Promoting skills development in Nigeria.* Enugu: Auto-Century Publishing C*o.*

Oyaide, C. (2017). *An Introduction to Adult Education.* Lagos: Gabi Concept Limited.