

ADULT EDUCATION AND RURAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

MANNIR ABBA

Department of Adult Education and Extension Services
Faculty of Education and Extension Services,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto
E-Mail, Mannirabba@Yahoo.Com.

ABSTRACT

As Nigeria attempts without much success to pull it self out of rural socio-economic underdevelopment despite its rich variety of natural resources at it disposal. Still the country is unsuccessful in war against illiteracy, poverty, hunger, unemployment, and diseases like malaria, cholera, polio, missiles, HIV/AIDS and environmental problems that hindered most of the rural people in the country. This paper presents a conceptualization of how adult education can be a veritable tool or strategic objective as well as an instrument for rural socio- economic development in the country. Adult education has the potential for improving the quality of life for individuals living in rural areas expanding their access to income and employment opportunities. Adult education is a continuing process where adults, who perform multiple social roles, participate in organized learning activities to improve their human resources skill or their human capital assets.

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation and the most populous country of African origin. According to the 2006 national headcount, out of 140 million people in Nigeria 82.3 million is rural (National Population Commission, 2006) in Tukur (2008). The country is endowed with a variety of natural resources, such as oil reserves which amounted the country as a member of the Organization of petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and a leading producer of Cocoa, Cotton, rubber, palm oil etc. in spite of all these variety of natural resources in the country, Nigeria is still in problems of poverty, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy, diseases etc, which constraints rural socio-economic

development effort in the country. According to Tukur (2008), Nigeria's rural development programmes like that of other development nation depend for its ultimate success on its rural population who make up to 80% of the entire population. Therefore, the need for rural education programmes can be understood, for a country with such a large number of its population in the rural areas. No meaningful development may be achieved without their active participation in the nation's development programmes.

However, for Nigeria to achieve its rural socio-economic development goal there is need to educate the rural adults and youth since they are the pillars of development, without them the young ones can not function well. The paper first engage in historical review of inadequate commitment to develop adult education and missed opportunities to utilize it as strategic objective as well as an instrument for rural, socio-economic development in Nigeria, it then discussed the linkages between Adult education and rural, socio-economic development. Finally, the paper made conclusion and some recommendations.

Historical Review of Missed Opportunities to Develop Adult Education in Nigeria

Nigeria was colonized by Britain, the British government had no clearly defined policy on education for Nigeria before 1925. Education activities in the colony were manage by colonial governments in consultation with Christian missions and their home offices (Fafunwa, 1974) in Nnazor (2008). In 1992, a commission was set up by the Phelps- stocks fund to look into education in West and Equatorial Africa, which included Nigeria, produced a report titled: education in Africa. The report emphasized the need for a policy on adult and community education (Fafunwa, 1974) in Nnazor (2008). The commission's recommendation for the development of an institution and policy on adult education represented the first formal acknowledgement of the need to develop adult education along side youth education with the need to educate the entire community if education was to result a meaningful development .Following the Phelps-Stokes report the British Colonial Government issued its first education policy for Nigeria in 1925. The Policy and its implementation strategies did not address in any significant way, community or adult education. Rather, the colonial government concentrated on school education. Consequently, an opportunity to begin to develop adult education as a veritable tool for rural, socio- economic development in Nigeria was missed. (Nnazor, 2008).

Moreover in 1951, the central Board of Education agreed on a policy on adult education, the aim of which as articulated in the policy, was to organize remedial primary education for adults. This include basic literacy and craft making. The policy stressed the importance of women's participation in adult education programs (Fafunwa, 1974) in Nnazor (2008). In line with the policy, adult literacy classes sprung up in many part of Nigeria. There was considerable commitment for adult literacy among the people and the governments of the three regions of Nigeria: East West and North, the effort was particularly strong from 1950 to 1956, but the free primary education schemes initiated from 1955 and 1957 resulted in the winning of the strong effort and in drastic decline in government support for adult literacy. Thus the first serious attempt to develop adult education in the country (Nnazor, 2008).

In 1959, the Ashby Commission was set up to determine Nigeria's human resources need, as well as the country's needs for post secondary education over the next twenty years, 1960-1980. Reviewing Nigeria's primary, secondary and post secondary education, the commission noted that the country had made progress in these levels and recommended further expansion. The commission was however, paid less attention to adult education. Nevertheless, adult education was barely kept a live by regional government and non-governmental agencies (Nnazor, 2008).

Since before and after independence of Nigeria, there were a lot of National Development plans articulating the country's development strategies. None of the plans provided a comprehensive framework for the development of adult education as an instrument for rural, socio-economic development in the country. The Nigerian National policy on education adopted in 1977 and modified in 1981. The policy provides for equal access to education, including continuing and further education and commits to the eradication of illiteracy and promotion of life long learning. Consequently very little attention paid to its development. For instance, 28 years after the adoption of the policy on education, the literacy rate for Nigerians 15 years and older is about 66% (UNESCO institute for statistics, (2004) in Nnazor (2008). There has hardly been a sustainable and comprehensive set of programs demonstrating government's commitment for the development of adult education as a veritable tool for rural, socio-economic development in Nigeria.

The Linkages between Adult Education and Rural, Socio-Economic Development

Adult education, for this paper, is more often described than it is defined. Very simply stated, it is an activity for adults that involves learning. Activities are usually

planned to achieve some goals such as gain knowledge about a specific topic, develop a particular skill or achieve a particular status or attain personal satisfaction by accomplishing a task. Darkenwald and Merriam, (1982). Houle (1976) has defined adult education as; any process by which individuals, group or institutions try to help men and women improve their skills, knowledge and sensitiveness “(pp.7,19,32, 248-249).

In another perspective; adult education, “encompasses all education and training activities undertaken by adults for professional and personal reasons. It includes general, vocational and enterprise based training within a life long perspective” (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2003, p.4) in Nnazor (2008).

Adult Education has been recognized (as a key element in individual and regional economic development opportunity (MDC) Inc. 1986 and Schultz, 1961) in McNamara and Moore (1988).

Rural development means many different things to people. Deavers (1980) define rural development policy as “deliberate action by Federal State and local Governments and private institutions and individuals to achieve three goals (a) improve access by rural residents to adequate housing and essential community facilities and services (b) improved rural income levels and employment opportunities and (c) responsible use of rural life” it can be viewed as a process of changing communities and resources.

However the common wealth secretariat defines rural development as:

‘A comprehensive mode of social transformation which recognizes that national development must involve all elements of the population. It is a socio-economic process which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and incomes within a society. It involves the integration of the rural poor. The vast majority of the population of all developing countries, into the national economy (Bown and Tomori, 1979)’.

However, Rural development amounts to an overall improvement in the lot of persons who do not dwell in the cities or urban areas. For such improvement to be

meaningful, it must be concerned not merely with improving the infrastructures in the rural areas, it must touch on the occupations of the people concerned and also affect all aspects of their lives. Thus, it ought to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people, through gaining greater awareness of their own abilities and possibilities.

There are a number of reasons why rural development is usually considered to be of overall national importance. These include the following:

- a. Rural people constitute the vast majority of Nigerian population. This is so in spite of the migration of people from rural to urban areas.
- b. Most of the food which Nigerians eat is produced by rural dwellers.
- c. Much of the country's agricultural needs for raw material? and 'subsequent industrial and economic growth are produced in the rural areas.
- d. Two of the five national objectives as stated in the National Policy on Education are the building of:
 - i. a just and egalitarian society;
 - ii. a united strong and self-reliant nation.
- e. Inequalities exist in social and educational amenities between urban and rural areas.
- f. Inequalities exist in living standards between rural dwellers.
- g. Most rural dwellers live below subsistence level.

If we must achieve a self-reliant economy, egalitarianism and full employment for all, it is important to examine what prevails in the rural areas where a majority of our countrymen reside. It is important to find out what sort of activities the rural dwellers engage in and identify what factors impede the development of their community. We shall attempt to answer these questions.

- a. Most people living in rural areas are engaged in agriculture. The people are usually small subsistence farmers, farm workers, wine tappers, those engaged in animal husbandry, fishing and forestry. Others engage in non farm, artisan and entrepreneurial activities. These include tailors, dressmakers, barbers, carpenters, masons, motor and motorcycle mechanics, radio and watch

repairers, cobblers, bicycle repairers, patent medicine sellers, commercials^ motorcyclists and traders. Then there are teachers and local government official etc.

- b. Based on what has been said above, rural development should aim at the overall social and economic growth of the community with emphasis on equitable distribution. This would mean more equitable distribution of farmland; more equitable distribution of income; widespread improvement in health, nutrition and housing; greatly broadened opportunities for all individuals to realize their fullest potential; a strong voice for all rural people in shaping the decision and actions that affect their lives.

To bring about such rural development a number of methods have been suggested.

These include the following.

- a. Massive external technical and infrastructural aid to the rural communities.
- b. Changing the belief system and pattern of rural people so that they can accept change.
- c. Extending the benefits of technological innovations to the rural people through extension services.
- d. Integrated approach whereby all factors considered essential components for rural development are coordinated under a single "management system" with emphasis on rational deployment of resources.
- e. Self-help approach in which case the chief motive for rural development must come from within the rural dwellers themselves so that once they are ready to move, outside help of various kinds responding to their expressed needs may come in to sustain progress.

Next, we consider the role of education in bringing about rural development. Whichever approach we may elect to employ for rural development, education would have a primary role to play.

- a. Massive aid to rural communities in terms of, say, tractors, equipment, roads, generators, pipe borne water and so on will not come so much if the people do not learn how to use such facilities and if there is no enough resource and technical know-how around to maintain them. Education is important if such equipment are to be maximally used and maintained.
- b. Changing the belief system of the rural people is largely an educational enterprise.

- c. Meaningful extension services do not result from dumping innovations on the people. Innovations must be built not only on the needs of the people but also on the level of their present indigenous and acquired skills. They must also be taught how to adapt innovation to suit their own peculiar purposes.
- d. The integrated rural development approach could become impersonal and authoritarian if the people are not actively involved in the planning and decision making. They need education to be able to order priorities and decide between alternatives.
- e. The self-help approach is based largely on mobilizing and energizing the people so that they can identify their felt and real needs.

Obviously, this will be best achieved if the people are educated to learn that they hold the key to the solution of their own problems. Apart from the relevance of education for each of the specific strategy identified above, the rural dwellers like their urban counterparts need education generally for improving *on* their skills and awareness. Regrettably, opportunities for formal, non-formal and informal education for rural people are much less than for their urban counterparts in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, there is often a widely held assumption that there is a direct relationship between man's level of awareness, the greater his ability to improve his objective condition. Hence, man is the central pivot to any development effort. Consequently, any attempt to address under development, poverty and powerlessness must address itself to the adult mind. When people are equipped with the right skills, information and attitude, it is believed that they would then be able to move towards qualitative improvement of their living condition and improve their environment as well.

Social Role as a Motivator for Participation in Adult Education in Nigeria

Parent, spouse employee, volunteer, committee member, and hobbyist are just a few of the multiple social roles that adult play (Loomis, 1960). In most communities in Nigeria, personal interest, pressure or stress to action on these social roles is also a motivator for participating in adult education programs which would be referred to as human capital investments. An employee may be promoted to a new job or assume responsibilities that "trigger" (Aslanian and Brickell, 1983) the need for learning skills or acknowledge spouse may shift their social status from spouse to parent which may also trigger the need to participate in adult education programs so as to learn new skills and knowledge and to perform new roles.

Emphasis on diet, nutrition, exercise and health habits (Bruhn and, Cordova, 1987) is currently a strong motivator for participation in adult continuing education program. The desire for being productive, healthy family groups and fully functioning individuals is also a motivator to learn more skills and knowledge to develop a healthful lifestyle.

Also women empowerment is another aspect of social development especially in our rural areas, which requires women's education as a veritable tool to achieve the desired objectives. Infant mortality and malnutrition are significantly lower with mothers who have completed even primary education. Women are responsible for 70 percent of food production in most rural areas of country, at this juncture we can justify that, women's education is another important factor for rural socio-economic development in Nigeria,

Agricultural production can rise by as much as possible when poor farmers receive even as four years of schooling. Adults who are skilled are quite different with those that unskilled (Perelman, 1984). The "haves" seem to be, They have jobs, careers, training opportunities, and employment options. The "have nots" are in a constant struggle to "get even". They have few opportunities to get ahead. Basic literacy education, vocational technical training, and continuing education offer some opportunities for the "have nots" to possibly "get even" and may be "get ahead."

Adult Education and Rural Development in Nigeria

Rural development connotes economic and social development of the people in the country side. The gradual and overall improvement in the existential living conditions of the rural people is a major goal of rural development. Thus, in order to effectively meet challenges of the multifaceted nature of the development problems, of the rural areas. A comprehensive and integrated approach would be required. This approach entails the entire socio economic as well as political and cultural spheres within which the rural communities operate. Some of the projects relevant for an integrated rural development programme include; agriculture and cooperatives water resources, environmental sanitation, public enlightenment, vocational training and adult literacy (Dukku,1997).

Adult education is more of promoting changes, as well as assisting the adult population to control both the change and the environment in which the change occurs. In this respect, there is need to educate the adult and to enable them acquire the skills, knowledge and consciousness that will enable them to think more clearly

on how to improve their human relations to facilitate their participation in measures designed to promote their welfare, and to expedite their personal community growth.

However, these adults are seeking information, knowledge and skills about their current social role and status. They may participate in learning activities at any of variety of government and non-governmental institution to acquire some skills that will enable them to actively and financially contribute in their rural development project without reliance on any external assistance.

At this juncture, we must reiterate the argument that adult education in itself can not solve the development problems of the rural dwellers unless and until it is linked with activities that are concrete and far reaching. Thus adult education programs should focus on creating critical awareness among rural communities so that the latter can evolve and articulate sound responses to their development problems and need. Adult education therefore, should be an integral component of any integrated rural development programme. The education aspect or components of any rural development programme must never be neglected.

Conclusion

While investment in Adult Education programs is presented in the literature as a capital building process and as a strategies objective, as well as *an* instrument for rural, socio-economic development in Nigeria, the paper summarized some of the factors constraints the development of adult education as a veritable tool for rural socio economic development in the country, with enrolment of about 16,797,078 primary and 4,448,951 secondary students in 2001 (Dike, 2001) and University enrolments of 411,347 in 1998 (Jibril, 2003) In Nnazor (2008). Nigeria has made modest but significant progress in the development of formal and youth education. Nevertheless, a country that almost concentrates its educational investment on youth and formal education is unwittingly failing to adequately develop and utilize its human resources[^]. Having optimally. Considering that knowledge and skills have become the means for personal and rural, economic development, the pervasive poverty, hunger, diseases, illiteracy, environmental mismanagement, unemployment etc can be associated with the inadequate an education and training system committed to equipping adults to contribute effectively to rural, socio economic development programs in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the business of rural socio-economic development is not the monopoly of one government agency. Rather, several agencies are involved in harnessing both

human and material resources towards rural transformation. Hence the need for a concerted and coordinated action is always required for a successful rural development programme.

In this country, quite a lot of resources have been invested and several government agencies on rural development set up since independence thirty nine years ago. Large sums of money have been expended into various rural development activities such as agriculture, water supply, rural electrification, primary health care, road network, etc. agencies such as the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), Rural Development Boards (RDBs), Directorate for Food, Road, and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) International Fund for Agricultural Development / Community Based Agricultural and Rural Development Project (IFAD/CBARDP) Europeans Economic Communities (EEC) etc. were set up to tackle the problem of underdevelopment in the rural areas. Although these agencies had met some successes it is far cry when compared with the enormous resources invested in them. One explanation to this situation was that most of these agencies were executing their plans without really involving the people in the rural areas for whom those projects were targeted instead, you would have urban based bureaucrats and contractors deciding the type and location as well as execution of project in the rural areas. This has been one of the major obstacles to a successful integrated rural development effort in this country.

Moreover, another major obstacle to speedy adult education programs for rural socio-economic development in this country has been lack of political will on the part of successive Nigerian governments toward rural, socio-economic transformation. Too much rhetorics and little action on the ground could hardly advance the rural development, drive. Hence, mass literacy campaign since 1940s yielded only marginal successes.

Finally, the paper noted that inadequate attention to the development of adult education as a strategic objective as well as an instrument for rural socio economic development is not unique to Nigeria it is a typical phenomenon in most African countries. Other factors account for the underdevelopment of adult education and education in general in Africa include “the constraints of funding, lack of continuity of policy, increasing huge debt, problem of gender and language” (Omolewa, 2000, p.15, in Nnazor (2008). The lack or inadequacy of physical and instructional facilities in government owned adult education training centres is indicative of the neglect and marginal status of adult education (Aderinoye, 2002) in Nnazor (2008).

Recommendations

Having identified the relationship or linkages between Adult Education a rural., socio economic development in Nigeria and factors accounts for the under development of adult education as a veritable tool for rural socio economic development in Nigeria, the paper proper to offer some suggestions for a way forward to develop adult education as an instrument for rural, socio economic development and to help in the amelioration of the mentioned problems attached to it as follows:

Now that the rural development has been enjoying greater funding from both government and foreign sources, concerted efforts should be made to ensure that the money does not go down the drain. One of this insurance is to allow the planning and execution of rural, socio-economic development projects to be mainly spear headed by the rural people themselves. Rural development agencies should simply guide the rural dwellers and it is the latter's responsibility to make the final determination on programme development and execution. This would however depend on the level of literacy and political consciousness of the rural communities vis-à-vis the kind of project earmarked for them.

The rural people therefore need to be sensitized through adult education so that they could become more aware of their problems and how to tackle such problems. Although Adult education in itself does not solve the under development state of the rural areas, it could yet play a catalytic role by concretizing the people to stand up and remove the development obstacles confronting them. It should therefore be pursued vigorously in the rural areas in order to help the people help themselves.

Consequently, for an integrated rural development programme to succeed in Nigeria, there must be a concerted action from the various rural development agencies as well as the necessity of genuine commitment and support from all the three tiers of government toward rural transformation. Specifically, there is a need for close cooperation and coordination of the activities of the various government agencies. Agencies responsible for agricultural extension and cooperatives, dissemination of information (i.e. the mass media, and the state agencies for mass education must work closely together to educate and empower the rural people to the desired economic and social development activities of the agricultural extension agents and the Adult Education organisers in the rural areas should be closely coordinated and where possible the adult education curriculum should incorporate all the major elements within the rural development package.

There is need for researchers to under take further research in relation to this topic in order to have a better understanding of the relationship between adult education investment and rural socio-economic development so that it will serve as a tool for governmental and non-governmental development agencies to achieve the desired rural socio economic development goal in Nigeria.

Government should adequately fund the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal education for conducting research and related matters to adult and non-formal education and implementation of its policy in the country.

State government should provide the agencies with the needed adequate physical and logistic facilities required for the development of adult education as a veritable tool for rural, socio-economic development in Nigeria.

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