



Role of Community Organizations in Supporting Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper discusses the role of community organizations in supporting adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. It assesses the impacts of community organization and the effort made by a community organization in supporting adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. The paper also provides a clarification of community organization, adult education and non-formal education. It also discusses adult and non-formal education programmes, roles of community organizations and the challenges faced by a community organization. It was recommended that adequate funding should be allocated to community organizations, and there is a need to provide adequate organizational support and attitudinal change of people in political authority for the development of a new course to improve the living condition of people.

Keywords: Development, Community Organization, Adult Education, Non-Formal Education

Introduction

Every nation indeed every community all over the world whether urban or rural, developed or developing, has the experience and is experiencing one form of problem or the other. These problems manifest in different forms and circumstances. It could be political, social, economic or even cultural into communal self-help that gives rise to community organization (Ugwuzor, 2016). Community organization programmes can either be initiated by people or the government or both of the community (Abiona, 2009). Community organizations can also be seen as those organizations formed by members of the community to provide for the needs and challenges of the people and the community through a joint effort of members. The essence of this organization is to serve as an avenue through which the citizens of the country meet together to discuss issues affecting them and the community with the view to jointly proffer solutions through the effort of the members.

Adult and non-formal education is a very important field in the Nigerian educational system/endeavours. It is systematically planned designed to educate, develop, train, improve and produced skilled and informed citizens in different occupational skills and enterprises with knowledge and skills that can aid them to solve their basic needs and also contributes meaningfully to their community and national development and sustainability, Akande (2010) is of the opinion that poverty, corruption, unemployment and environmental legation are always common in the areas rooted with unskilled and uneducated people; and probably without career or professional incomes, adult education with its predetermined objectives focuses on liberating people from illiteracy, poor



standard of living, ignorance, poverty, unemployment and economic and social challenges that threatened people's lives and properties in their communities (Nzeneri, 2010). Adult and non-formal education objectives include among others to provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the advantage of any education, providing further education for different categories completers of the formal education system to improve their basic knowledge and skills, to provides vocational and in-service and on-the-job training, to professionals to improve their skills, supporting this Mbagwu (2016) states that adult and non-formal education is a viable tool for innovation, creativity, functionality and career emancipation in our present realities.

Nigeria is experiencing some challenges at the moment, such as (hunger, conflict, disease, poverty, and marginalization) being experienced in Nigeria to be reduced. It is necessary that adults who have no jobs and the young adults who have dropped out of school be encouraged to undertake non-formal education programme therefore as a result of this it is the role of a community organization to support adult and non-formal education programmes so that the above challenges can be overcome.

Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Community

In ordinary language, the community is a popular word that is used in development circles, of the humanity. The community is the basic operational unit or the activity centre of mainly human services like community development, extension services, adult education, and social welfare. It is the unit to which practitioners address themselves to be relevant in the provision of basic needs to the people under local conditions. However, our discussion must evolve from a good clarification of what community is all about. According to Imhabekhi (2009), Community is a geographical area where people cluster together and have things to do with one another than with people outside the cluster. A community is a legal entity or government in which people are governed by the same officials. A community is a set of attitudes, beliefs, and loyalties by which people feel as part of such a group. Anyanwu (2009) defined a community as a group of people living in a given geographical environment, whether large or small and united by community interest. Hence, the term 'community' may be applied to a rural area, locality, city, town, state or nation in which people share in common the basic conditions of life.

Community Organizations

Community organization involves the collaboration of separate community or welfare agencies with or without the additional participation of statutory authorities, in the promotion of joint initiatives. Community organization is a term that is popularly employed in the social work community. However, scholars and practitioners have found difficulty in defining it. This is as a result of shifts in the area of focus and concern of community organizations. In general, four major ideas are reflected in the various definitions offered for a community organization. First, the idea of cooperation, collaboration and integration; second, the idea of meeting needs; third, the idea that community organization deals with programme "relationships" as contrasted with the "direct service" of group work; fourth, the broad philosophical working relationship between the democratic process and specialism (Abiona, 2009). According to Anyanwu (2002) community organization is a process by which a community identifies its needs or objectives; orders or ranks, these needs or objectives; develops the confidence and will to work towards these needs or objectives; finds the resources to



deal with these needs or objectives; takes actions in respect of them; and in so doing, extends and develops collaborative attitudes and practices in the community. Community organizations provide mutual strength and cohesion in which people decide for themselves what issues are important and thus systematically engage mega structures in an equal forum to pursue those issues. They help connect people to corporate power structures, and governmental agencies and teach people how to use the power of the community to make their common voices heard. Community organizations exist almost everywhere. Community organizations are mediating structures that stand with the individual and the neighbourhood, between the neighbourhood and organizational mega structures and society.

Ross, as cited in Abiona (2009), defines community organization as a process by which a community identifies its need or objectives, orders or ranks these needs or objectives find the resources internal and or external – to deal with these needs or objectives, taking action in respect of them, and in so doing extend and develops cooperatives and collaborative attitudes and practice in the community.

Adult and Non-Formal Education

Abiona (2009) defines adult education as “that force which its ideal application can bring about a maximum of adjustment of attitude within a society in the shortest possible time and which involves and impacts new skills and techniques required and made necessary by change”

UNESCO in Nzeneri (2015) gave a broad and universal definition of adult education by highlighting that it is: The entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level or method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in school, college and university as well as in apprenticeship, whereby a person is regarded as an adult by society to which they belong developed their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications, or turn them into a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in two-fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced, independent, social economic and cultural development.

Adult education can also be seen as a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular or full-time basis can pursue organized studies or develop their knowledge and skills and so become equipped to perform roles in their societies in more or less creative or critical fashion so that they can be of greater use to themselves, their families and to the community. Adult education is the process whereby adults engage in systematic and sustained learning activities to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. (Merriam, Sharau& Brockett, 2007)

Non-formal education is referred to as an organized systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal school system to provide a selected type of learning to a particular sub-group in the population (Obi,2015). This includes adult education, an apprenticeship system, containing education, in-service Programmes, personal and professional development, on-the-job training, refresher courses, staff development Programmes and student industrial training (Ololube and Egbezor 2012). Non-formal education can take place within and outside the school system: it cares for a person of all ages. It may cover educational Programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life skills, work skills and general depending on the country context.



Adult and non-formal education is the veritable index for meeting the clarion call of the present desire for human and material development and sustainable demands and challenges of 21st Century in Nigeria. Ihejirika (2015) states that adult and non-formal education cut across all out of school education Programmes which among others include. Functional literacy, vocational education, skills acquisition programs, and in service-training, etc. Functional literacy is a combination of socio-economic and literacy programs. That is why most often adult and non-formal education is referred to as carrier oriented, work-oriented, occupational oriented or economic oriented education. Functional literacy education focuses on developing and strengthening human and material resources: and equipping the beneficiaries with skills and knowledge for effectiveness in social economic and political performances for national and sustainable development (Inhabekhai, 2009; Olasupo, 2015)

Adult Education Programmes in Nigeria

Adult Education Programme in Nigeria includes the following:

- i. **Women education:** these are educational programmes designed for women to make them more productive and contributing members of their families and society. It is a means of enhancing their chances in life (Dimkpa, 2011). Women's education Programmes in Nigeria include vocational training in dressmaking tailoring, hairdressing, knitting, embroidery, soap making, and others. Various states in Nigeria have established women's development centres where women are empowered. Also under the administration Dr Goodluck Jonathan has the first lady, Dame patience Jonathan championed the cause of women in her project- Women for Change and Development initiatives. In the past, other Programmes such as the Better Life for Rural Women and the Family Support Programmes were directed at improving the lots of women in Nigeria.
- ii. **Remedial Education:** this is usually designed for school drop-outs or individuals with an educational deficiency. in Nigeria, it is generally referred to as extramural classes provided by institutions of learning to prepare candidates for further education and/or employment, it offers the school dropout or those or with deficiencies in their qualifications a second chance to acquire education and go higher in education. It could be at any level of education; primary, secondary, tertiary, professional or vocational (Imhabekhi, 2009).
- iii. **Literacy Education:** literacy education is associated with the teaching of reading, writing and numeric or arithmetic skills popularly referred to as the 3Rs. In Nigeria, literacy education is embedded in adult education programmes which is why adult education is often referred to as literacy education. UNESCO has categorized them into three levels which are: (i) basic (ii) middle (iii) self-learning (Ezimah, 2004).
- iv. **Vocational Education:** this is usually designed for the acquisition of economic skills to earn a living. It includes professional training such as in-service training and on-the-job and off-the-job training for workers to further improve themselves and achieve greater productivity at their workplaces. For instance, the National Directorate for Employment (NDE) is organized by the Federal Government to provide vocational skills to men and women in the society (Ezimah, 2004).
- v. **Civic Education:** This includes Programmes that enlighten the people on the socio-cultural and political conditions of the community such as community development, cultural



education and political education (Imhabekhi, 2009). These Programmes are aimed at improving peoples living condition by educating them on matters that concern them so that they can also contribute to their own development. The people become active members in decision making of the society. Awareness creation can be done through the mass media (television, radio and newspapers).

- vi. **Population Education:** This is a program designed to enlighten youth as well as an adult on population matters, family size, sex and other issues relating to reproduction to help them adjust to the changing societal needs and increased cost of living' According to Imhabekhai (2009) population education refers to education that is provided to a person of reproductive age and those yet to get there, to expose them to strategies and method of planning and determining the family size they can raise and can adequately cater for. Efforts have been put in place by the government to achieve this objective. One such effort is by the National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) which has introduced the teaching of sexuality education in the colleges of education in the country.

Non-Formal Education Programmes in Nigeria

There are different programmes of non-formal education. These programmes vary from one country to another country. According to Amadike (2012), the following are non-formal education programmes in Nigeria:

1. Programme for out of school children
2. Functional literacy and life skill training
3. Agricultural extension and rural development
4. Continuing education
5. Distance education programme
6. Nomadic education
7. Vocational training programme for industrial workers
8. Individual interest promotion workers
9. Quality of life improvement programme
10. Future-oriented programme

Each of the above programmes is designed to address a specific objective in a constantly changing society.

Roles of Community Organization in Supporting Adult and Non-Formal Education Programme in Nigeria

According to the World Health Organization (W.H.O), in Khasnabis (2010) outlines the roles of community organization in supporting adult education programme, which includes: **Facilitating Fun and Flexible Learning Environments:** Community organizations and the government are assisting to remove barriers to inclusion by making schools accessible by adding ramps, wider doors, and additional/bigger windows; providing training for teachers and other staff; providing assistive, low-cost devices such as hearing aids, glasses, wheelchairs; and creating learner-centred teaching materials and methods including posters and storybooks that raise awareness - so making the whole environment "disability friendly".



Help make Existing Non-Formal Education Programme Inclusive: A wide range of non-formal education programmes may already be operating in the community. These programmes may be oriented towards literacy and basic education, health promotion (reproductive health issues, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS), environmental issues, agriculture, fishing, rural development and/or community development. Non-formal education programmes offer excellent opportunities for people with disabilities to be educated alongside their non-disabled peers. Community organization programmes can identify existing non-formal education programmes and encourage them to become inclusive rather than establish parallel programmes for people with disabilities. Making non-formal education programmes inclusive will involve encouraging the enrolment of people with disabilities in all types of programmes, and ensuring that teaching is conducted in accessible places and that teaching formats are accessible.

Government Programme: Government ministries, e.g. ministries of social welfare, education or youth, are often responsible for managing non-formal education programmes. These programmes are usually focused on literacy, adult learning and vocational training. Community organization programmes need to find out about existing non-formal education policies, who is responsible for implementing these policies, the current focus of non-formal education, whether people with disabilities are included and whether grants or loans are available to enable them to participate. This will help community organizations to shape a strategy to include people with disabilities in existing non-formal education programmes.

Access through Policy Actions: It is part of the roles of community organizations to have access to policy on non-formal education in Nigeria: “NFEC (Non-Formal Education Centre) has made efforts to pay special attention to the people who have problems caused by their ethnicity, language, gender and physical disabilities and make non-formal education programme inclusive”. An inclusive education policy will be adopted to ensure access, quality and co-existence. The following policy actions will be adopted for the implementation of the above policy: Special educational and pedagogical measures will be adopted to eliminate caste, ethnicity, gender, language, and disability-related discrimination. Special arrangements will be made to ensure access to quality non-formal education for the children with various disabilities, conflict-affected children and adults, and child labourers.

Community-Based Non-Formal Education Initiatives: These may include nongovernmental organizations carrying out various development or awareness activities, faith-based schools, crèches or daycare centres, schools to promote girls' education and schools for older children with disabilities (who were not identified early or included in primary education), formal school dropouts and working children. Community organizations can identify the different forms of community-based non-formal education initiatives available and facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities, including children. Community organization personnel can work together with non-formal education facilitators to ensure teaching materials are accessible (e.g. large print, Braille, tape, audio facilities), that the environment is accessible and welcoming, and that students are supported in their learning.

Ensure the curriculum is practical and relevant: Lacking the rigid constraints of formal schools, adult and non-formal education curricula often have greater flexibility and can be easily adapted to



suit the needs of individuals. Community organization can help ensure that non-formal education: Prioritizes basic literacy and numeracy; is oriented to practical skills, life skills and personal development; is effective in teaching decision-making skills; Focuses on vocational skills, income-generating activities and job creation; empowers students, instilling confidence and a sense of ownership in programme and project – community organization can ensure that disabled people's organizations are involved in promoting the empowerment of students with disabilities; Promotes effective communication between students with disabilities and their families, peers and the community, e.g. through basic sign language, Braille, speaking clearly.

Challenges Affecting Community Organizations in Support of Adult Education Programme

The Challenges of Poor Funding: Inadequacy of funds is a serious problem that militates against the effective implementation of Millennium Development Goals, particularly as it concerns adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. Okediran (2006) observed that inadequate funding presents a serious challenge to the effective implementation of effective community organizations in Nigeria. Specifically, poor funding for adult and non-formal education, undoubtedly, limits the opportunities to widen people's access to education. It should be noted also that the quality of education being received by adult learners in adult and non-formal education in certain cases is poor in the country. It must be remarked that poorly run adult and non-formal educational programmes occasioned by poor funding in the sector do not promote effective teaching and learning in the system. Okedera (2006) stated that poorly run and unprofessionally taught literacy education programmes are not effective in achieving meaningful results in the teaching and learning process in society. Indeed, the provision of adequate funds certainly helps to guarantee the employment of professionally competent adult education workers who will be prepared to promote effective teaching and learning in adult and non-formal education for the benefit of adult learners in Nigeria.

Aruma, (2010) asserted that sourcing for counterpart funds from participating local communities, local, state and federal governments in Millennium Development Goals remains a serious challenge to the stakeholders in this globally approved development initiative in Nigeria. The relevant stakeholders in both community organizations, as well as adult and non-formal education, should be adequately involved in sourcing adequate funds to achieve meaningful results in the sector in Nigeria.

The Challenges of Inadequacy of Organizational Support: It has been observed that inadequacy of organizational support presents another challenge to the promotion of community organization in the area of adult and non-formal education in the country. Pratt and Boyden (1985) noted that a good organization which is supported by an adequate budget to pay and train workers as well as to support learning groups with learning materials is very important in the society. Indeed, reliable organizational support for adult and non-formal education is very critical if it is to record achievement in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. Regrettably, poor organizational support for adult and non-formal education is a serious problem to this sector of the Nigerian educational system. Aruma (2010) remarked that this poor institutional support to achieve certain specific targets of the Millennium Development Goals hampers notable success in the global development initiatives in the relevant areas concerned in the country. Essentially, concerted efforts should be made to encourage the promotion of organizational support for adult



and non-formal education at various levels notably national and international levels in Nigeria. Certainly, well co-ordinated national and international concerns will stimulate achieving effective implementation of Millennium Development Goals for sustainability in promoting enabling learning environment for adult learners in the country.

The Challenges of Lack of Political Will and Commitment: Another challenge of adult and non-formal education in achieving Millennium Development Goals for sustainability is the lack of political will and commitment in Nigeria. The term political will is perceived to mean the concerns of people in governance who have the governmental authority to provide certain things which will certainly impact positively on people's lives through appropriate institutional reforms and policies in the country. Todaro (2009) defined political will as a determined and deliberate choice of a course of action by people in the political authority to enhance people's living conditions through various reforms of social, economic as well as institutional structures. Consequently, political will is simply defined as a deliberate choice of action by people in governance with vested political authority to improve the poor living conditions of people through the instrumentality of appropriate laws, reforms and policies in the society.

Indeed, the focus of political will and commitment is stimulating effective service delivery in improving the socio-economic conditions of people through the use of appropriate laws, reforms and policies that are development-oriented in the society. In the words of Todaro and Smith (2009), the concept of political will means the determined effort of people in political authority to see that certain socio-economic objectives and goals are achieved through reforms and policies. Aruma, (2011) remarked that the people in political authority must deliberately demonstrate strong political will and commitment in order to improve the socio-economic living conditions of people through the instrumentality of appropriate institutional reforms, policies and frameworks in the society. Certainly, a lack of political will and commitment presents a serious challenge to adult and non-formal education in achieving Millennium Development Goals for sustainability in Nigeria. There is, indeed, an urgent need for an attitudinal change of people in political authority to develop a new course in ensuring that improved living conditions for people are achieved through the instrumentality of appropriate laws, reforms and policies that focus specifically on people-oriented development in the society. There is, of course, a serious need to mobilize actions and relevant human and material as well as financial resources to guarantee effective implementation of adult learning in adult and non-formal education to achieve meaningful results in Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. Conclusion fundamentally, good reforms in the educational sector will certainly help.

Conclusion

The study shows that community organization includes work, projects, community development, community building and community organization. It also leads to a greater understanding of community context. It is characterized by community building, community planning, direct action and mobilization. It is also been concluded that adult and non-formal education programmes have suffered immensely from poor monitoring occasioned by lack of institutional support, lack of organizational support, and inadequacy of funds among others in Nigeria. Some of the roles and challenges of community organizations have been discussed in the study.



Recommendations

- i. Adequate funding should be allocated to community organizations to fully support adult and non-formal education programmes effectively and efficiently'
- ii. There is a need to provide adequate organizational support to both adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.
- iii. There is, indeed, an urgent need for an attitudinal change of people in political authority to develop a new course in ensuring that improved living conditions for people are achieved through the instrumentality of appropriate laws, reforms and policies that focus specifically on people-oriented development in the society.

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