

Adult Education for Income Generation and Improved Livelihood of Communities in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Communities in Nigeria require a greater number of the adult population to possess the requisite knowledge and skills through education. In Nigeria, most people engage in several income-generating activities to make a living. Income earnings in rural communities have been diversified across farm, non-farm, and off-farm activities. Thus, the need to consider education and training through adult and non-formal education in equipping adult inhabitants within the rural communities to adapt to these changes. Education is an eye opener and a power -full instrument for income generation and improved livelihood. Adult education is a strong toll for liberating man from constraint, ignorance, a vicious cycle of poverty, hunger, unemployment, social inequalities, disease, and crime to mention but a few. Adult education programs provide individuals and groups with basic daily lives activities and sustaining livelihood as action-oriented, problem and development-oriented. The process guarantees sustainable improved livelihood conditions of people, thereby facilitating progress in income generation and improved livelihood, particularly among the vast rural majority.

Introduction

For centuries, humans have maintained extensive social ties across space and time, and sometimes come together in groups. This human grouping, is categorized either in its physical form as well as particular geographical settings such as hamlet, village, town, neighbourhood, or seen in a form of communication platforms like chat rooms, social networking, and so on, whose ties span across one's geographical or political location, exist to pursue groups' common interest. Although, the assemblage of humans varies in form (which may be either place-based or communication platforms) but pursues a common interest, however, prevailing norms, culture, religion, values, customs, and identity, inherent in them, create distinguishable features differentiating one group from the others at differing periods. For instance, the nomadic group, known to have existed as far back as two million years ago, revealed a subsistent lifestyle based on hunting, fishing, and gathering; and also, exhibits egalitarian socio-political relationships within the group, while the pastoralist group maintains herding lifestyle wherein livestock were domesticated, and stone tools, ceramics

and burial traditions were generally noted as the dominant culture (Laird, Sawchuk, Kwekason, Mabulla, Ndiema, Tryon, Lewis & Ranhorn, 2022).

Unlike other species, man's desire and need to stay in close contact with one another for interdependence, results in the formation of communities wherein exist. Intent, beliefs, resources, preferences, needs, risks, and a host of other conditions common among people, influence the identity of individuals as well as their level of cohesiveness. Accordingly, man is a social animal who is relatively weak by nature and cannot live alone but prefers to dwell or stay amid other humans, and as well, requires shelter and protection from the elements (McKenzie, n.d). Thus, the essence of the human community. A community is seen as a social group within a society that shares similar culture, norms, values as well and status. It may participate in organizing social life within a given location, or may be bound by a sense of belonging sustained over time and space (Zuleyka), 2016). Philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle long ago, viewed community life as a sine qua non for human flourishing and individual wellbeing, and specifically, in the words of Aristotle "it is either a god or an animal that can survive outside human community" (Agulanna, 2010).

Community provides support and safety to members in challenging times, it becomes a source of motivation, gives people a sense of belongingness, it provides a platform through which ideas and activities are shared. It enables economic life to be more efficiently organized; it helps promote national unity and allows for inequalities to be countered (Heywood, 1977). On the other hand, humans, as part of the community, function in ways that contribute to the maintenance of the community. For instance, during the nomadic era (hunting and gathering era), humans hunted animals with tools like bows arrows, traps, carried out fishing practices with nets as well as spears, and gathered food for the overall survival of members within a group. While the pastoralist period reveals the rearing of cattle, goat, sheep for the survival of humans existing during the period. These survival strategies adopted by humans, led to the development of more advanced forms of living and survival strategies, as necessitated by socio-economic reality. Although, humans have relied on different modes of living (often referred to as livelihood) in their quest for survival, however, socio-economic changes caused by industrialization as well as advancement in technology have had tremendous impact on humans and their mode of living. The introduction of a new factory system within the eighteenth century, renders obsolete most existing modes of production, thus, having devastating effects on the means of living as well as survival of workers.

Arguably, discourse on livelihood is not new. As Scoones (2021) opines that for decades, an integrated, holistic, bottom-up perspective which dwells on understanding of what people do to make a living in diverse social contexts and circumstances has been central to rural development. thinking and practice. Early geographical and social anthropological studies examined “livelihoods” or “modes of life” (Evans Pritchard 1940; Vidal de la Bache 1911; cited in Sakdapolorak 2014), and Karl Polanyi, whose interest was in the relationships between society and markets in economic transformation (1944), in a book, titled “The Livelihood of Man” (Polanyi 1977; cited in Kaag et al. 2004), indicate concern on human’s mode of living. However, livelihood thinking in today’s academic and professional discourse is being reinvented for new challenges, including climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and social protection, just to mention but few. The livelihood of individuals is being altered over time due to obsolescence resulting from physical deterioration or changes in use or fashion; the introduction of new types of industry, as well as change in the organization of existing industries. These challenges and changes influence many residents inhabiting rural communities around the world, especially in developing and underdeveloped economies, including Nigeria.

Accordingly, rural communities in Nigeria, inhabit about fifty-three percent of the nation’s population (United States Agency for International Development, 2015). Much of the overall development of the nation’s economy lies within the contributions of communities in the rural areas, through food supplies, raw materials for agro-allied industries, surplus labour, and markets for goods produced in other sectors of the economy. Among others. Most of the inhabitants in the rural communities rely on agriculture for survival. Agriculture plays a major role in the development of most developing and underdeveloped economies. The bulk of the supplies of raw materials for industrial use and food supplies emanates from the contribution of residents in the rural communities engaging in one form of agricultural activity or the other. Buttressing, Ifeanyi-Obi and Njoku (2014) opine that most rural communities in developing countries like Nigeria, depend mainly on income from farming, though, it is supplemented by other activities such as weaving, arts and crafts, pottery, and petty trading.

However, Afodu, Afolami, Akinboye, Ogbonna, Bello, Shobo and Ogunnowo (2019) observed that inhabitants of rural communities in Nigeria whose livelihoods are mainly dependent on farming are predominantly resource-poor. Awaekwe and Agbasi (2022) state that rural farmers are resource-poor due to the high rates of subsistence farming practices

within the rural communities and also, very few of the farmers aspire to expand their scale of production. Most farmers in rural communities in Nigeria do not think of commercializing their farm produce beyond their localities, but rather tend to set up small farm holdings, in spite of the opportunities existing in the agricultural sectors. Corroborating, Obinyan (2000) reveals that farmers in rural settlements often cultivate farms that are not up to two hectares of land, resulting in low productivity.

Similarly, most inhabitants within the coastal communities whose livelihood is dependent on fishing for survival mainly engage in small-scale fishing practices. Lammers, Torsten, and Jasmin (2020) view small-scale inland fisheries as an increasing source of income for people who live close to water bodies. Although fishing provides huge opportunities as well as profit potentials for rural dwellers, as it involves a diverse set of activities and processes including catching, processing, preservation, distribution, and marketing. However, the profit and revenue potentials in the sector in Nigeria are yet to be fully explored due to the dominant small-scale fishing practice. Filling this deficit, requires to be improved and advanced technological know-how in the use and applications of modern agricultural and aquatic implements as well as techniques, capable of transforming the dominant subsistence practice within the rural areas to large-scale production.

While farming and fishing become the main sources of livelihood for many residents in rural communities in Nigeria, man's uncontrollable use of the environment in the course of engaging in farming and fishing within the rural communities. Also, changes in the climatic conditions have become a potential threat to the sustenance of livelihoods. Thus, the desire to diversify to other non-farming as well as fishing income-generating activities for survival. Nmeragini, Nzeakor, and Ekweanya (2019) reveal that income-earning portfolios in rural communities have been diversified across farm, non-farm, and off-farm activities. The non-farm income-generating activities within the rural communities include processing, marketing, manufacturing, wage, and casual local employment, often seen as all economic activities except conventional crop production and livestock rearing. Kazungu and Guuroh (2014) put forward income-generating activities within the rural areas in Nigeria to include: household and non-household manufacturing, trade, handicrafts, repairs, constructions, processing, transportation, communication, mining, and quarrying, as well as community and personal services.

Notably, farmers particularly, in rural areas engage in different non-farm income-generating activities apparently to balance the shortfall of income due to the seasonality of primary agricultural production. This is done to create a continuous stream of income to cater to the various household needs (Ovwigbo, 2014). The reasons for diversification to non-farm activities include declining farm incomes and a desire to insure against agricultural production risk (Nmeregini, Nzeakor & Ekweanya, 2019). However, Chenery and Syrquin cited in Zhang (2014) reveal that as a country grows, the share of gross domestic product derived from the agricultural sector shrinks, while GDP got from capital-intensive industries increases. This implies a shift from agriculture to manufacturing and services-oriented activities at the macro level, resulting in a decline in rural household participation in agricultural-related activities to massive participation of rural inhabitants in non-agricultural activities at the micro-level. Thus, there is a need to consider education and training through adult and non-formal education in equipping adult inhabitants within the rural communities to adapt to these changes.

Obi (2006) states that adults need to acquire literacy skills, as it is the key to the toolbox that contains empowerment and better livelihood. It provides the individual with the basic knowledge of reading, writing, numeracy, and computation which enable one to engage in daily life's activities. Melanie (2005) cited in Ozurumba, Ochiagha, Echem and Ugwuoke (2022) described the entire process of literacy as sustaining one's livelihood as action-oriented, problem-solving, and development-oriented. The process guarantees sustainable improved living conditions for people, thereby facilitating progress in poverty elimination particularly among the vast rural majority. Against this backdrop, this study intends to examine adult education for income generation and improved livelihood of communities in Nigeria

Concept of Community

Phillips and Pittman (2009) viewed a community as a location or a collection of individuals with a common interest or tie, whether nearby or widely separated area. Mattessich and Monsey cited in Phillips and Pittman (2009), view community as people who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other as well as a place where they live. Canuto and Jason in Uzoagu & Ijah (2022) view the community as an ancient human settlement like a hamlet, village, town, or city wherein members communicate or relate with one another and possess unique attributes that differentiate them from others. From an ecological perspective, the community is seen as the

coming together of populations that are probably different but interact with each other and such interaction can either result in competition mutualism or predation (Sahney & Benton in Uzoagu & Ijah, 2022). Usman, Deepali and Kabiru (2018) conceptualize a community as a people or group of people who share common interests or functions and may include a farming community, educational community, culture or religion, and so on. Communities within the rural area engaged in diverse activities through which they depend on income generation as well as improved mode of living.

Income generation in communities in Nigeria

Income generation is seen as the process of generating revenue or income through various means. Onyebu (2016) referred to income generation as gaining or increasing income or money that an individual or business receives in exchange for the provision of goods or services after investing capital. More so, it is seen as the small-scale projects that create income sources for individual beneficiaries or beneficiary groups while promoting the principal right of self-determination as well as the objectives of integration, reputation and re-integration (FAO, 2011). As observed, household income within the rural settlement (communities) in most developing and underdeveloped countries around the world, is heavily reliance on agricultural activities. Reports indicate that about 90 percent of rural households in some African countries engaged in agricultural activities and two-thirds of their incomes are derived from on-farm agriculture (Davis, Giuseppe & Zezza, 2017).

In Nigeria, it has been found that most people engage in several income-generating activities to 'make a living' with various combinations of farm and non-farm activities (Olawoye 2001). Most Nigerians inhabiting rural areas engage in agricultural income-generating activities like crop planting, palm oil processing, cassava processing, keeping of local fowls, poultry production, goat rearing, sheep rearing, piggery production, fishing, hunting, cattle-rearing, and oil bean processing. However, recently, Nmeregini, Nzeakor and Ekweanya (2019) reveal that income-earning portfolios in rural communities have been diversified across farm, non-farm, and off-farm activities. The non-farm income-generating activities within the rural communities include processing, marketing, manufacturing, wage, and casual local employment, often seen as all economic activities except conventional crop production and livestock rearing.

Livelihood

Titi and Singh in Olanrewaju and Iroye (2018) conceptualized livelihood as humans' capacity to generate and maintain their means of living and improve their well-being and that of future generations. Accordingly, these capacities are contingent upon the availability and accessibility of options that are ecological, economic, and political which are predicated on equity, ownership of resources, and participatory decision-making (Olanrewaju & Iroye, 2018). Livelihood is seen as how humans secure the necessities of life, and it typically centres around land/property, crops, food, knowledge, finances, and social relations just to mention but few, and their interconnection with communal political, economic, and socio-cultural characteristics. In other words, the livelihood of communities or individuals is seen as activities in which humans engage in. They resolve around various assets like social capital, physical capital, financial capital, natural capital, as well as human capital for survival and improved well-being.

Concept of adult education

The construct 'adult education' is a combination of concepts (adult and education), and has been defined differently by scholars in education. However, it is of utmost importance to have a proper understanding of the concept of adult to have a grasp of the construct of 'adult education'. Olajide and Ayantunji (2016) explained the concept of an adult using chronological (age) maturity, physical (size) maturity, biological (development of secondary sexual characteristics) maturity, mental/psychological (thinking reasonably and logically) maturity, and social role (being responsible for oneself and/or for others), definable criteria. In other words, one's adulthood is manifest in age maturation, physical size, development of secondary sexual characteristics, reasoning and logical maturation as well as social roles. While some societies use biological parameters in defining an adult, others rely on chronological, historical, economic, psychological, political, and social parameters in defining an adult, nonetheless, Olajide and Ayantunji (2016) averred that physical, chronological, and biological criteria vary across societies (countries). Also, Olajide and Ayantunji (2016) opine that mental maturity and social role criteria are highly reliable and often utilized in many societies around the world for defining an adult. However, Nzenneri (2010) views an adult as an individual who is physically and psychologically mature as well as socially, economically, politically, culturally, and environmentally responsible.

Natukho, Amutabi and Otango in Oghenkohwo (2017) opined that adult education is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. Bala, Osagie and Yakubu (2019) view adult education as any educational activity that caters to the need of adults to improve their performance in all areas of adult life to improve their living standard. However, adult education is seen as ‘the entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level, and method, formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in the schools, colleges, and universities as well as apprenticeship, ... in the two-fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 19th General Conference cited in Uzoagu, 2019). In other words, adult education is a functional type of education wherein enable individuals improve their abilities to perform effectively and productively in the development of their society.

It provides functional basic education for adults and youth, provides remedial and life-long education for youths and adults, and provides - -serve, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals. Also, to improve their skills (as stated in Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014), however, the motive is to drastically reduce the level of illiteracy thereby promoting basic literacy that can assist adults to address all forms of poverty of knowledge and know-how; Mitigate all forms of social exclusions that are designed to limit access to life-long learning as well as promote learning opportunities to all persons irrespective of age, sex, position, class, race, and colour (Oghenekohwo, 2017). Adult basic education is essential for the economic development of nations, as it equips recipients with essential literacy and numeracy skills, and yields high rates of investment, thereby enhancing labour productivity. Buttressing, Seya (2014) opines that investment in the development of human capital, through adult education, is crucial for developing labour force and managerial know-how, capable of competing in today’s global economy. However, the concept of adult education has now emerged from mere adult literacy to “man making” where the emphasis is not only on physical, intellectual, social, economic, and aesthetic aspects but also on moral and spiritual aspects to make the individual educated and cultured in the true sense.

Notably, Adetuyi and Ajibade (2016) take a broader view of the concept of adult education. Adult education cuts across a wide range of human endeavours in the form of literacy education, civic education, agricultural extension education, health extension education, and

mass education. It also includes; population education, nomadic and migrant education, peace education/international education, vocational education, consumer education, women education, prisoners' welfare education, distance education, rural transformation, community development and so on.

Adult education for income generation and improved livelihood in communities in Nigeria

Arguably, adult education has, over the years, become one of the most promising forms of education around the world, as it is widely accepted as a tool for individual, community, and society as well as economic transformation and development. Adult basic literacy seen as an integral part of adult literacy programmes is the foundation on which other literacy programmes are anchored. Observably, Adult literacy helps participants understand and develop meaning in other adult educational programs efficiently and effectively. It supports enhancing the critical thinking superiority of citizens in the communities, as well as helps provide the skill sets required to meaningfully engage in any occupation. However, at present, wherein the world has become a global village and digitalized, participation in any socio-economic activities requires literacy. According to Aderinoye (2015), literacy is related to knowledge, creativity, critical thinking, autonomy, identity, self-esteem, social awareness, participation, empowerment as well as transformation, all of which are highly essential for human satisfaction, beyond material conditions in all strata of the society.

Generally, literacy involves the acquisition of skills in reading, writing, numeracy, and computing. Literacy is important to economic activities, as illiterate individuals find it difficult to function properly in business and communication in communities. In other words, it becomes difficult to communicate and conduct economic activities without basic literacy. Ozurumba, Echem and Ugwuoke (2022) opine that adult literacy helps make humans function effectively in their daily activities, as it provides knowledge and cognitive development capable of enabling humans to persistently contribute toward their livelihood and also self-reliance. Rogers, (2008) in a study found that most participants who attend functional adult literacy programmes are mainly motivated by the benefit it offers in their economic activities or livelihood. For instance, reading, writing, numeracy,, and computing skills gained through adult literacy education by small-scale crop farms within the rural areas can improve their potential in maintaining books of accounts. This can determine their profit margin, and eventually increase their savings and investments out of the income generated. Similarly, technological advancements play a significant role in agricultural activities as it

fosters rural economic growth and increases the income of rural dwellers through e-commerce as well as live-streaming e-commerce. However, Wang, Cai & Ji (2022) observe that there is an uneven distribution of the digital dividend due to difference in digital literacy among farmers. Although several factors influence income disparity within the rural areas, at present (characterizing globalization). Thus, Gao, Zang and Sun (2018) opined that the application of digital technology has brought income opportunities for farmers and rural inhabitants with high digital literacy have more income increases. Hence, the importance and positive influence of adult literacy education on income generation and improved livelihood in rural communities

The federal government of Nigeria had long recognized the importance of adult literacy programmes and their contributions to income generation and improvement in the livelihood of Nomads and fishermen. This was achieved through the establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) by Decree 41 of 1989 (NCNE Act, Cap 243 LFN)). however, Aderinoye (2015) observed that the level of literacy is extremely low among nomads in Nigeria, due to the failure in the part of the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) and States Agency for Mass Literacy in designing program that is compatible with the socio-cultural needs of the nomads in terms of the content and mode of delivery. Thus, the a need to re-visit and enhance the adult literacy program design to improve the literacy level of farmers and fishermen within the rural level. As it is capable of boosting their income-generating activities as well as improving their livelihood.

Although, income generating activities in rural communities in Nigeria were mainly dependent on one form of agricultural practice or the other, however, declining farm incomes within rural areas of Nigeria in recent times, have witnessed massive changes. There is shift from agricultural practices to other non-agricultural related activities like petty trading, manufacturing, trade, handicrafts, repairs, constructions, processing, transportation, communication, banking (POS service agent), mining, and quarrying, as well as community and personal services. Hence, the need to consider education and training through adult and non-formal education (like adult and vocational education) in equipping adults within the rural communities to adapt to these changes. Ubong (2007) opines that vocational education, as a foundation for entrepreneurial education, is one of the means through which adults can rely upon in achieving education for self-reliance. Vocational and technical education equips adults with various skills like carpentry, catering, air-conditioning and refrigerating

maintenance and repairs skills, welding and fabrication, hair-dressing, electrical installation, metalwork, and driving just to mention but few.

Adult vocational education programmes enhance the knowledge of adult members in the communities and minimize the level of unemployment within the rural areas. As observed, carpentry, plumbing, mason, fashion, beauty care, automobile training in-car services, automobile generator services, electrical wire or installation, and repairs of handsets have been organized in communities in Nigeria by various organizations (Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria). This was done to ensure a high level of self-reliance and meaningful employment among adults (Gimah), 2019). Vocational and technical education have not greatly contributed to minimizing the high level of poverty, hunger, and unemployment. This is due to factors like inadequate funding of technical and vocational education, inadequate facilities, Staff training and retention, curriculum of technical education, Nigerian value system (Oranu in Adesuwa, 2021). However, adult who engage in the vocational and technical education in rural communities have created alternative sources of income generation for improved standard of living.

Conclusion

Education is seen as a powerful instrument for social change and a major tool through which the socioeconomic development and growth of nations are achieved. It affords individuals the opportunity to develop the skills and traits required to be set free from the shackles of poverty, misery, unemployment and many other aspects of social inequalities as well as issues. The issue of social inequalities in Nigeria are quite high within the rural areas due to income variability. This is induced by a decline in dependence on agricultural-related practices, as sources of income generation within the rural communities, despite the huge profit potentials in the sector. The inability to cope with the declining income, as well as economic growth, results in income diversification among rural dwellers. Thus, the a need for adult literacy and vocational education in rural communities in Nigeria. As they are capable of equipping adults in rural communities with relevant knowledge and skills required for effective and efficient agricultural-related activities, as well as other alternative sources of income generation for improved standard of living.

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