Contributions of Community Education in the Eradication of Poverty among Communities in Rivers State, Nigeria

Olori Christian N.1,*, Dimkpa Ezimma E.1, Olori Gloria I.2

1Department of Adult & Non-Formal Education, Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State
2Institute of Education, Rivers State University of Science & Technology, Port Harcourt, Rivers State
*Corresponding author: oloricon@yahoo.com

Abstract This is a descriptive survey research study that sets to examine the extent community education has contributed to the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State of Nigeria. Two research questions and one null hypothesis were developed to guide the study. The population of the study was 1,672 respondents made up of 270 married men, 517 married women and 885 youths in there selected local government areas of the state. A sample of 428 respondents was drawn from the population using a purposive sampling technique. A-15 item structured questionnaire weighted on a 4-point rating scale was the data collecting instrument, face validated by three validates from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Descriptive statistics of means and inferential statistics of analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used for data analysis. Findings of the study revealed that the extent community education has contributed to the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State was low. Inhibiting factors associated with the low level of community education were ignorance, corruption of most of the community leaders, lack of political will and low level of education. There was no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents on the extent community education has contributed to the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State. It was therefore recommended among others that sensitisation on empowerment of community members and establishment of more adult education programmes in the state be made.

Keywords: contributions, community, community education, poverty


1. Introduction

Education is generally acknowledged as a weapon for development by various scholars. It is a tool for the transformation and empowerment of citizens in a country. Nigeria as a developing country sees education as a catalyst for empowerment which provides communities with necessary skills required for sound social living. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) [7] submits that education is an instrument par excellence for effective national development. Development in this context encapsulates a purposive change in a society that contributes to the social, political, cultural and economic wellbeing of the people without creating any disharmony. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) [8] sees development as the only way to sustain alleviation of poverty, improve community services and living standards. This view of development is traced to the economic perspective. Suffice to say that development could be viewed from different perspectives. National development on the other hand entails all activities engaged by a nation for the enhancement of standard of living. Ugwu [13] explains that the main purpose of national development is the liberation of its citizens from the shackles of poverty.

Community education involves the use of community learning resources and research to bring about community change and recognition that people can learn through with and from each other to create a better world. Ezimah [6] added that it is a process aimed at raising consciousness, spreading understanding and providing the necessary skills, including the human and material resources, for the social, economic, political and cultural development of the community. The array of definitions of community education points to the fact that it is an organised learning activities directed to communities in attempt improve their standard of living. Interestingly, it is the education for peoples’ empowerment over their own lives in order to bring about transformation and change in individuals, communities, societies and nations. Anyanwu [4] noted that the philosophy of community education is tied up with the idea of enabling people to exploit their resources and use such to increase their competence and confidence in handling their own affairs. It is therefore a process and movement for the attainment of community growth.

Accordingly, the attainment of excellence as conceived by the Federal Republic of Nigeria requires diversity in the mode of training such as formal, informal and non-formal. Community education is an aspect of non-formal education. It is a programme of adult education geared at
empowering members of a community for enhanced quality of life. Akande [3] sees community education as a type of education needed to ensure the self-confidence, self-respect and personal independence as well as to safeguard human rights to achieve social equality. It is a veritable tool for the stimulation of community members to actively participate in social activities that would generate employment, increase their incomes as well as improve their quality of life. The Canadian Association for Community Education [12] sees community education as a process whereby learning is used for individual, community and global betterment. This education they added is characterised by the integrated involvement of people of all ages.

Two schools of thought have emerged in the definition of community education as conceived by Anyanwu [4]. The first sees community education as a guide to community development activities. In this school, emphasis is placed on material improvement of communities and achievement of tangible goals. The second views community education in terms of building up communities. It involves the improvement of individuals in the community. Anyanwu concluded by stating the objectives of community education as follows; to

1. Educate and motivate the people for self-help.
2. Develop responsible leadership among the people.
3. Inculcate among the members of a community a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness.
4. Introduce and strengthen democracy at the grassroots level, through the creation and/or revitalisation of institutions designed to serve as instrument of local participation.
5. Initiate a self-generative, self-sustaining and enduring process of growth.
6. Establish and maintain co-operative and harmonious relationships in the community and to
7. Bring about gradual and self-chosen changes in the life of a community, with a minimum of stress and disruption.

Poverty is another concept in the study that requires an explanation. It is a phenomenon that is multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary. The term has been subjected to variety of interpretations by scholars in different areas of endeavour. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) [5] classifies poverty to structural, economic, social, cultural and political deprivation. As a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, Adehavo [1], explains that poverty goes beyond condition of lack of resources, but extends to social inequality, insecurity, illiteracy, poor health, restricted or total lack of opportunity for personal growth and self-realisation. As a human condition, Preece [10] describes poverty in terms of sustained or chronic deprivation of resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for enjoyment of adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The World Bank [14] posits that it is conceived as the inability of certain person to attain a minimum standard of living. Some other writers have conceptualised the term in terms of being absolute or relative. As absolute, Ogwumike and Ozughala [9] submit that it is characterised by inadequate health facilities, poor quality of education and low life expectancy. It is relative when a household possesses per capital of less than 1/3 of the average per capital income

of the country concerned. Poverty from these wide range of meaning denotes the deprivation that incapacitates an individual or group of people to effectively and freely exercise their rights on issues of personal and collective concerns. This view corroborates with Adebayo’s [1] stipulation that poverty takes various forms. This includes lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods, hunger, and malnutrition, ill-health, limited or no access to education, homelessness, inadequate housing, unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It also included restrictions on or lack of participation in the decision making process in civil, social and cultural life.

Prior to the emergence of western education in Rivers State, indigenous community education was practised. Sarumi [11] explains that this education was comprehensive, effective, work-oriented and less expensive. It was also community-based, where the entire community was seen as a teacher. Thus, functional, collective, communalistic and democratic. Adeyinka [2] further reports that boys and girls were given the kind of education that enabled them to fulfill masculine and feminine responsibilities in the community. Consequently, this philosophy that undermines community education as relevant to people’s needs, aspirations and locally-based was evident. However, with the emergence of western education in the state, there seems to be a wrong notion among people on what community education actually is and therefore wonders how it could serve as a catalyst for the eradication of poverty. Akande [3] rightly observed that some of the challenges facing community education are as follows:

- Inadequate financial allocation attributable to lack of political will on the part of the government.
- Considerable efforts not made to recruit professionals such as adult educators, community educators and social welfare officials.
- The non-involvement of beneficiaries by community development programmers in the sharing of decision making for the effectiveness of the programme.
- The presence of overlapping roles among the governmental and quasi-governmental agencies involved in the provision of community education.
- Lack of effective collaboration among the majority of NGOs involved in the promotion of community education, and
- Incessant and protracted communal, ethnic, regional and religious conflicts.

These problems emanate from the fact that community education is multi-dimensional, and differs in scope and interpretations by various writers. However, it is doubtful whether, community education has contributed to the eradication poverty in Rivers State. Informed by this, attempt is made by the researchers to assess the level of contribution of community education in the eradication of poverty in Rivers State.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

From the background, scholars have identified community education as a non-formal education programme directed at improving the quality of life of the communities. In educating the people on the use of their own resources to improve their living condition, community education is seen playing a significant role in
the reduction of poverty. However, despite the contribution of community education, empirical studies to ascertain the extent of contribution of this education in the eradication of poverty in Rivers State to the best knowledge of the researchers have not been conducted. The absence of these studies in the State has provided knowledge gap, which this present study intends to fill. The problem of this study therefore is to assess the extent community education has contributed to the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the extent community education has contributed to poverty eradication among communities in Rivers State. The objectives of the study are specifically to:

1. Determine the extent of community education has contributed to poverty eradication among communities in Rivers State.
2. Find out the inhibiting factors affecting community education from eradicating poverty among communities in Rivers State.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research questions are posed to guide the study:

1. To what extent has community education contributed to poverty eradication among communities in Rivers State?
2. What are the inhibiting factors affecting community education from eradicating poverty among communities in Rivers State?

1.4. Hypothesis

The null hypothesis of this was tested at .05 level of significance

Ho: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents regarding the extent community education has contributed to poverty eradication among communities in Rivers State.

2. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. This design aimed at assessing the opinion of respondents on the extent community education has contributed to the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State of Nigeria. The population for the study was 1,672 respondents comprising of 270 married men, 517 married women, and 885 youths from Ogba Egbema Ndoni, Emohua and Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Areas of Rivers State. The sample size for the study was 418 respondents (25% of the study population). Breakdown of the sample shows that there are 68 married men, 129 married women and 221 youths. Purposive sampling technique was employed in drawing the sample size.

Data collecting instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire. This was titled ‘Questionnaire on the Contributions of Community Education in the Eradication of Poverty’ (QCCEEP). It contained a-15 item questionnaire weighted on a-4 point scale. The QCCEEP was faced validated by three validates from the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies of the University of Nigeria. Nsukka. The reliability coefficient index of 0.79 was obtained using the Cronbach Alpha after administering 25 copies of the questionnaire to 25 respondents from Ikwerre and Bonny Local Government Areas with similar characteristics with the study area.

The administration of the questionnaire was done by the researchers to the respondents in their respective local government areas. Out of the 418 copies distributed, 397 copies were duly filled and returned, giving 95% returned rate. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using the mean for the research questions. The criterion mean of 2.50 was used to accept an item, below 2.50 was rejected. The level of contribution was classified as follows:

- 3.50 - 4.00 Very High Extent (VHE)
- 2.50 - 3.49 High Extent (HE)
- 2.00 - 2.49 Low Extent (LE)
- 1.00 - 1.99 Very Low Extent (VLE)

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance. Significant difference was found if the calculated f-ratio is less than the critical f-value. This means that the null hypothesis was accepted. On the other hand, significant difference was found if the calculated f-ratio is greater than the critical f-value. This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected.

3. Results

Data on Table 1 show very low extent for respondents in items 1(1.99, 1.95, 1.89), 3(1.65, 1.52, 1.84), and 6(1.74, 1.1.52, 1.79). Item 2 has mean scores of high extent for both married men and youths, but low (2.29) for married women. Item 4 has the mean score of low extent (2.10) for married men, and very low extent (1.69, 1.80) for both married women and youths. The mean scores of high extent for respondents were accorded to items 5 and 7. With the cluster mean of 2.25, the table indicated that the extent community education has contributed to poverty eradication in Rivers State was low.

Table 2 shows that results of all the items were rated above 2.50 as agreed, except the mean score of married women in item 13 which was 2.27. With the cluster mean of 2.94, the table revealed that several inhibiting factors affecting community education from eradicating poverty in Rivers State were identified. These factors included lack of political will, ignorance, corruption, non-involvement of direct beneficiaries in decision making, inadequate funding of projects, low educational attainment and poor maintenance culture.

Table 3 shows that the calculated f-value (.499) is not significant at .904 level of significance, which is not significant at .05 level of significance, hence, the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This means that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents regarding the extent community education has contributed to the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State.
Table 1. Mean ratings of respondents on the extent community education has contributed to poverty eradication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Men ( \bar{X} ) (n=68)</th>
<th>Women ( \bar{X} ) (n=124)</th>
<th>Youths ( \bar{X} ) (n=206)</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Provision of skill acquisition centres for economic empowerment.</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>* Very low extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enhancement of civic and political consciousness.</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>** Low extent **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reduction in security threat.</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>*** High extent ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Collective participation in decision making.</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>** Very low extent **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Increase in health awareness level.</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>* High extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Increase in the fight against illiteracy.</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>** Very low extent **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Increase in the urge for collective social activities.</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>*** High extent ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>* Low extent **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cluster Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>* Low extent **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* represents married men, ** presents married women, *** represents youths.

Table 2. Mean ratings of respondents on inhibiting factors affecting community education from the eradication of poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Men ( \bar{X} ) (n=68)</th>
<th>Women ( \bar{X} ) (n=124)</th>
<th>Youths ( \bar{X} ) (n=206)</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lack of political will by administrators</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>* Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ignorance of most community members</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>** Agree **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Corruption of some of the community leaders.</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>** Agree **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Non-involvement of direct beneficiaries in decision making.</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>* Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Inadequate funding of projects.</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>** Agree **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Low educational attainment of most community members.</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>** Agree **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Poor maintenance culture</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>* Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Non-involvement of professionals in community education matters.</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>** Agree **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>* Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cluster Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>** Agree **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* represents married men, ** presents married women, *** represents youths.

Table 3. ANOVA summary for the mean responses of married men, married women and youths on the extent of contribution of community education in the eradicating of poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>3.172</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td></td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>222.979</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>.578</td>
<td></td>
<td>.904</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>226.151</td>
<td>397</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discussion

Findings in research question one showed that the extent to which community education has contributed to the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State was low. Supporting the findings, respondents indicated that there were high rate of insecurity and illiteracy level in the state. This is not unconnected with the fact that enlightened community members tend to
make positive contributions in the development of their environment. This further corroborates with Akande’s [3] stipulation that community education is capable of ensuring self-confidence, self-respect, personal independence as well as safeguarding human rights for the attainment of social equality. Anyanwu [4] added that it introduces and strengthens democracy at the grassroots level.

In research question two, findings revealed various factors inhibiting community education from the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State. Some of these factors as indicated by respondents included lack of political by the administrators, ignorance of most community members, corruption of some community leaders and the non-involvement of direct beneficiaries in decision making. The findings further noted that inadequate funding of projects, non-involvement of professionals, low educational attainment and poor maintenance culture were also identified as contributing factors. These factors are attributable to the fact that scholars have given different interpretations on what community education denotes. It may therefore not be surprising that community education loses its importance in the cause of the diverse views. This finding is supported by Akande [3] who identifies lack of political will as one of the challenges facing community education.

The ANOVA test for the null hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference found in the mean responses of respondents on the extent community education has contributed to the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State. The existence of no significant difference further shows that the respondents have similar views regarding the extent community education has contributed to the eradication of poverty.

5. Implication of the Research Findings

Findings on the low contribution level of community education in the eradication of poverty is an indication for the need to re-orientate the people about the philosophy underlying community education using the services of professionals in adult education, community education as well as social workers.

The factors inhibiting community education from eradicating poverty call for leaders with good will to promote activities of community education.

6. Conclusion

The level of contribution of community education in the eradication of poverty among communities in Rivers State was low. This low level contribution of community education was associated with several factors. These inhibiting factors included lack of political will, ignorance, corruption of some of the leaders in the community, non-involvement of beneficiaries in decision making, non-involvement of professionals in community education affairs, low educational attainment of most community members and poor maintenance culture of existing projects.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The services of professionals in community education affairs should be employed in the organisation and co-ordination of community education activities.
2. Sensitisation on the importance of community education should be made through awareness campaign.
3. More adult education programmes should be established to accommodate varying needs of the communities.
4. Beneficiaries of projects should be encouraged to participate in decision making affecting their well being in the community.
5. Synergy between the government and community leaders should be intensified for better implementation of policies affecting the communities.

References