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IMPACT OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines community education for socio-economic transformation among rural communities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive and exploratory research designs. Six research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The population of the study consisted of 890 members of rural communities that participated in community education programmes. 700 respondents were selected as sample for the study using multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected with the aid of a questionnaire titled “Community Education for Socio-economic transformation Questionnaire (QCESET).” The reliability value of the instrument was 0.76. Data obtained were analyzed using mean statistic and percentages. Findings indicate that food increases in food production. There is no significant improvement in the areas of employment, health, capital expenditure, literacy, self-discipline and respect for others rights and dignity. Except food production, findings indicate that community education did not have positive impact on socio-economic development in Rivers State. The study concluded that to address hunger, there is need to look beyond standardized classroom learning to embrace diverse learning opportunities that exist outside the classroom. It recommended that community education programmes be overhauled to reflect the problems/challenges encountered in rural communities. It also recommended that resources of the common people be controlled by them. In addition, it recommended decentralization for policy effectiveness and certificate to be awarded to completers of literacy programmes.

KEYWORDS: *Community Education, Socio-Economic Transformation, Socio-Economic Development.*

INTRODUCTION

A critical condition for socio-economic development is availability of resources on which people depend for their livelihoods such as farming, fishing, lumbering, hunting, small-scale business, etc. These livelihoods have been limited by inadequate or unavailability of resources. The root cause of this is the massive exploitation of the natural resources of local communities by government both federal and state. Government may allow or overlook foreign or national companies logging, fishing and mining without regard to the communities that primarily depend on these lands and resources for their livelihoods and way of life. Some of lands are designated as protected areas by government, thereby hindering communities that are served by these from using them (Todaro and Smith, 2009). This situation accounts for rising rate of incidence of poverty particularly in rural areas and in other to counter balance the effect of massive exploitation of the people's natural resources, government used empowerment.

In response to the socio-economic condition in rural areas both federal and state governments have employed numerous educational strategies including formal education, training of workers in their various departments, etc. These educational strategies failed to reach the masses in the society particularly those in rural areas which led to the adoption of community education strategy. Community education can promote socio-economic development in several ways of which one of them is improvement in the people's well-being. This is because community education assists individuals and communities to make the best use of their talents and ability to improve their lives through altering their knowledge skills, attitudes, values and beliefs in a positive direction and provision of resources.

Statement of the Problem

Community education is widely acknowledged as an instrument for socio-economic development both in urban and rural areas. The federal and Rivers State government spend huge sums of money to promote, support and co-ordinate its programmes. Community education is implemented in various local government areas as well as communities. These include youth entrepreneurship programmes, youth empowerment programmes, skills acquisition programmes, agricultural extension programmes, etc. Despite, the opportunities for learning offered to both individuals and communities through community education, data available show that people in rural areas still live in impoverished conditions. This calls to question, the extent to which community education has enhanced the socio-economic well-being of the rural masses of Rivers State. To establish how community education has transformed the socio-economic condition of the rural people of Rivers State is the problem of the study.

Aim and objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine community education for socio-economic transformation in rural communities of Rivers State. The study specifically sought to:

1. Identify the socio-economic problems/challenges of rural people in Rivers State.
2. Identify the community education programmes implemented for socio-economic transformation of rural communities in Rivers State.
3. Determine the impact of community education on socio-economic development in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The research questions for the study are:

1. What are the socio-economic problems/challenges encountered in rural communities in Rivers State?
2. What are the community education programmes for socio-economic transformation of rural communities in Rivers State?
3. What is the impact of community education on socio-economic development of rural communities in Rivers State?

Scope of the Study

The study focused on impact of community education on socio-economic transformation of rural communities in Rivers State. The study was delimited to Andoni, Biara, Egi, Kpite, Akinima, Isaama, Omuagwa and Omuaturu communities in Andoni, Gokana Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Tai, Ahoda-West, Asari-Toru, Ikwerre and Etche Local Government Areas respectively. The study specifically focused on members of these communities who took part in community education programmes.

Literature Review

Socio-economic transformation

Socio-economic transformation is synonymous with improvement in basic necessities of life such as food, water, health, education and shelter. Wordu (2018) posits that socio-economic transformation pre-supposes socio-economic development. Socio-economic development as defined by the National Economic Commission and the United Nations Institute for social development is “an attempt to deal with the problem of uneven development and involve the total economy and society in the process of change. It is a departure from development based solely on economic growth, and concerned with the general style of development and the various components and their interactions such as participation, cross sectional spatial and distributional aspects (Ake, 1981). It requires improvement in areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure, employment, participation, etc. It also involves women in development. The indices for measuring socio-economic development according to Wordu (2018) include:

- i) Improvement in food production
- ii) Improvement in incomes
- iii) Improvement in employment
- iv) Improvement in participation
- v) Improvement in participation\improvement in standard of living
- vi) Improvement in health
- vii) Improvement in education
- viii) Improved participation in decision-making
- ix) Increased involvement of women in the economy

Concept of Community Education

Community education involves teaching both children and adults to improve their lives and their communities (Aidcey and Voorhies, 1969 in Anyanwu, 2002). Anyanwu (2002) believes community education “is essentially locally based, non-formally education but not grounded in education theory, a new basic education for life, for adjustments and acquisition of new habits and values for social effectiveness in a fast changing world. This definition suggests that community education as a new form of non-formal education, not fully developed and understood.

ANONTAS (2000) cited in Wordu (2018:30) defines community education as:

A process of empowerment, social justice, change, challenge, respect and collective consciousness. It is within the community and of the community reflecting the developing needs of individuals and their locale. It builds the capacity of local communities to engage development responses to educational and structural disadvantage and take part in decision-making and policy formulation within the community. It is distinct from general adult education provision due both to its ethos and the methodologies it employs.

This definition focuses on adult only, but community education involves adults, youths and children.

Barikor (2005) sees community education as outreach programmes, multi-service non-formal education infrastructure extending educational services to the general public other than the regular students. Similarly, Wordu (2018) defines community education operationally, as outreach programmes an organization outside the organization’s premises to reach out to people elsewhere.

The Impacts of Community Education on Socio-Economic Development

The impacts of community education on socio-economic development include: knowledge gained, improvement in general well-being, attack on gender discrimination, change in taste and making socio-economic development popular. Well-being conceived broadly encompasses conditions that enable individuals to adequately provide for themselves and their families, such as income, educational attainment, agency and empowerment as well as subjective well-being.

Africa’s Affirmation on Food Production

Studies on Africa’s food production have been reported by Mulangu and Porto (2012). They indicate that yields have been growing by an average growth rate of 1%, 0%, 1% and 2% respectively. Yield decline is notable with fruit and oil crop while cereal yield had been consistently growing. Fishery production is said to be growing at an annual growth rate of 5% in Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria with respect to cereal fruit, oil crop and tuber root crops.

Empirical Studies

Galigan (2007) investigated the impact of community education in Donegal, using a sample size of 3,463. Data was collected using FGD and analyzed with simple percentages. The study shows that community education could improve the quality of peoples’ lives. It reveals that community education leads to both social and economic outcomes. Nnena (2014) examined community education as a tool for sustainable development using a sample of 11,211 drawn from a

population of 31,850 in Etche Local Government Area in Rivers State. Her study reveals that community education led to improvement in the peoples' standard of living. Patrick (2008) evaluated ABE and skills acquisition programmes of non-governmental agencies in Rivers and Lagos States. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population and sample sizes were 11,360 and 1,400 respectively. Data was collected using a questionnaire and analysis carried out using simple percentages. Findings indicate positive impact in the area of employment, income, asset ownership and skills. Ladan (2016) focused on the beneficiaries of FADAMA II Project based on documentary analysis. He reported that, the project benefited farmers in such areas as improved food production, increased income and reduction of conflicts.

Methodology

This involves research design, the population of the study, sample and sampling technique, instrumentation, validity of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive and explorative designs. Descriptive survey is applicable when a research wants to describe a particular situation. It involves both quantitative and qualitative techniques of data collection, such as questionnaire, test, interview schedule, observation etc.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of 890 persons who participated in community education programmes in the study area. It was based on a list of community members who participated in community education for socio-economic transformation programmes in the rural communities selected for the study. This list was collected from the Local Government Areas of the respondents.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study consisted of seven hundred and twelve (712) persons who participated in the community education programmes. This sample size represents 80 percent of the population of the study. This sample was selected through multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage purpose sampling was used to select eight LGAs in rural areas for the study. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select 80 percent of participants in community education, programmes in the communities used for the study.

Instrumentation

Community education for socio-economic transformation questionnaire was the major instrument used to obtain data for the study.

Validity of the Instrument

The research instrument was validated by researcher's experts and three other persons who are experts in Community Development as well as Measurement and Evaluation.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using test-retest method. The questionnaire was administered to the same respondents from Omuagwa and Kpitem communities on two different

occasions. 20 copies of the questionnaire were administered twice to community education participants who were not part of the sample used for the study. The correlation of the two (2) sets of data collected was done using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r). A reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. The significance was tested at 0.05 levels. Consequently, with 0.76 reliability coefficient, the instrument was considered reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher and eight assistants trained on how to administer the instrument to the respondents, administered the instrument on the respondents during a community gathering. The trained research assistants were all graduates in various disciplines and reside in the communities involved in this study. 712 copies of the instrument were administered. All the 712 copies were retrieved but 12 copies were found to be invalid. The remaining 700 copies representing 98.3 percent were correctly completed and were used for data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The researcher adopted descriptive statistics of simple percentages and mean statistics to analyse data on the six research questions. A criterion mean of 2.5 ($\frac{4+3+2+1}{3}$) was used in determining whether the respondents agree or disagree.

Research Question 1: What are the socio-economic problems and challenges encountered in rural communities in Rivers State?

TABLE 1: SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN RIVERS STATE.

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SA	X	Remark
		(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
1.	Extreme poverty is a challenge facing rural communities.	309	204	119	68	3.1	Encountered
		(1,236)	(612)	(238)	(68)		
2.	Low income is a socio-economic problem of rural communities	175	204	184	137	2.6	Encountered
		(700)	(612)	(368)	(137)		
3.	Unemployment is a problem rural communities	306	205	123	66	3.1	Encountered
		(1,224)	(615)	(246)	(66)		
4.	Illiteracy is an obstacle to farmers and fishermen in rural communities	201	125	315	59	2.7	Encountered
		(804)	(375)	(630)	(59)		
5.	Hiv/aids and malaria attack is a challenge among rural dwellers	312	241	124	23	2.5	Encountered
		(2648)	(735)	(348)	(23)		
6.	Rural-urban immigration affects rural communities negatively	74	67	368	191	2.0	Not Encountered
		(296)	(201)	(736)	(191)		

Data in Table 1 indicate the problems and challenges encountered in rural communities in Rivers State. Data show that the majority of respondents agree on items one to five with a mean score of

3.1, 2.6, 3.1, 3.7, and respectively. Therefore, the problems/challenges encountered in rural communities in Rivers State were extreme poverty, low income, unemployment, illiteracy and Hiv/Aids and malaria. With a mean score of 2.0, respondents did not agree that rural-urban drift is a problem encountered by rural community dwellers in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What are the community education programmes implemented for socio-economic transformation in rural communities in Rivers State?

TABLE 2: PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN RIVERS STATE.

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SA	X	Remark
		(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
7.	Agricultural skills training is implemented	309	204	119	68	3.1	Implemented
		(1,236)	(612)	(238)	(68)		
8.	Mechanical skills training is carried out	306	205	110	79	3.1	Implemented
		(1,224)	(615)	(220)	(79)		
9.	Business/Entrepreneurial education programme is implemented	73	139	341	147	2.2	Not Implemented
		(292)	(417)	(682)	(147)		
10.	Health and nutrition education is part of the programmes implemented.	200	221	49	230	3.4	Implemented
		(800)	(663)	(98)	(230)		
11.	Social studies is regularly carried out	246	36	182	236	2.4	Not Implemented
		(984)	(108)	(364)	(236)		
12.	Civic education is part of the training and education in rural communities.	314	229	107	50	3.2	Implemented
		(1,256)	(687)	(214)	(50)		
13.	Literacy and numeracy programmes are carried out	273	227	127	72	3.0	Implemented
		(1,092)	(681)	(254)	(72)		
14.	C.R.K. is part of the training and education carried out in rural communities	254	237	147	62	3.0	Implemented
		(1,016)	(711)	(294)	(62)		
15.	Computer skills training is provided for rural dwellers	8	22	356	314	1.6	Not Implemented
		(1,524)	(66)	(712)	(314)		

Data in Table 2 show that majority of the respondents agree on items seven, eight, ten, twelve, thirteen, and fourteen with a mean score of 3.1, 3.1, 3.4, 3.2, 3.0 and 3.0 respectively. In effect, the community education programmes implemented for socio-economic transformation in Rivers State were agricultural skills training, mechanical skills training, health/nutrition education,

literacy and numeracy, civic education and Christian religious knowledge. With a mean score of 2.2, 2.4, and 1.6, respondents show that community education programmes listed in items 9, 11 and 15 are not implemented for socio-economic transformation in Rivers State.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of community education on socio-economic transformation before and after the involvement of participants?

TABLE 3: IMPACT OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN RIVERS STATE.

S/N	Statement	Before participation				After participation			
		SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
16.	I achieved self-employment through community education	5	1	388	300	113	102	280	205
	29.3		0.7	1.0	55.4	42.9	16.4	14.6	40.0
17.	I experience increased food production through community education	2	4	354	340	101	179	52	368
	52.6		0.3	0.6	50.6	48.6	14.4	25.6	7.4
18.	My income increased as a result of community education		2	3	362	333	103	92	240
	37.9		0.3	0.4	51.7	47.6	14.7	13.1	34.3
19.	Through community education I achieved improved health awareness		4	10	296	320	111	125	225
	239		0.6	1.4	42.3	45.7	15.9	17.9	32.1
20.	Community education enabled me to read and write		5	7	240	448	49	76	262
	313		0.7	1.0	34.3	62.1	7.0	10.9	37.4
21.	The knowledge I gained enabled me to be self disciplined		3	10	322	365	48	86	236
	352		0.4	1.4	46.0	52.1	6.9	12.3	33.7
22.	I achieved increased self-respect through community education		4	9	261	426	100	78	225
	297		0.6	1.3	37.3	60.9	14.3	11.1	32.1
	42.4								

23.	Through community education I 267	5	7	324	355	93	160	180
	achieved increased capital expenditure	0.7	1.0	46.3	50.7	13.3	22.9	25.7 38.1

Data in Table 3 reveal the impact of community education on socio-economic transformation. To determine the impact of community education two sets of data were used. These indicate impact before and after participating in community education. Data show that 12 (1.7%) of respondents agree that they were self-employed while 688 (98.3) disagree with this. Data has it that after participating in community education, the number that agree increased to 215 (30.2%) while the number that disagree reduced to 485 (69.3%). Based on the number that agrees before and after participation, it can be said community education had low impact on self-employment. Data also indicate that 120 (17.1%) of the respondents agree that they experienced increased food production while 580 (82.8%) had a contrary view. Data show that after participating in community education the number that agree increased to 420 (60%) while the number that disagree reduced to 280(40%). Based on the number that agrees before and after participating in community education, it can be said that community education had moderate impact on food production.

Data also show that 5 (0.7%) agree that their incomes increased before participating in community education. Respondents numbering 695 (99.3%) disagree with this view. Data indicate after participating in community education, the number of those that agree increased to 253 (36.2%) while the number that disagree reduced to 505 (72.2%). Looking at the number that agrees before and after participating in community education, it can be viewed that community education had very low impact on income. Data show 14 (2.0%) of respondents agree that they experienced improved health awareness before participating in community education while 686 (98.0%) do not consider this to be so. Data show that the number of those that agree increased to 236 (33.8%) while those that disagree decreased to 464 (66.2%) after participating in the community education. Looking at the number that agreed before and after participating in community education, education had very low impact in the area of health.

Data indicate that 12 (1.7%) of respondents agree that they read and write before participating in community education while 688 (98.3) had a contrary view. Data indicate that number that agree increased to 125 (17.9%) while the number that disagree fell to 575 (82.1%) after participating in community education. This shows that community education had extremely, low impact in the area of literacy and numeracy attainment among its participants. Data also indicate that 13 (1.9%) believe that they experienced increased self-discipline before participating in community education and that 687 (98.10%) disagree with this. The number that agreed increased to 134 (19.2%) while the number that disagreed reduced to 566 (80.8%) after participating in community education. Based on this area of community education had very low impact in the self-discipline.

Data indicate 13 (1.7%) agree that they experienced increased respect for others' rights and autonomy before participating in community education. While 687 (98.1%) disagree with this view. Data indicate that after participating in community education the number that agree increased to 178 (25.4%) while the number that disagree decreased to 522 (74.6%). Premised on

the number that agrees before and after participating in community education, show that community education had very low impact in the area of respect for others' rights and autonomy.

Focusing on capital expenditure, 12 (1.7%) agree while 679 (97.0%) disagree that they achieved an increase before involving in community education. After participating in community education, the number that agree rose to 195 (27.8%) while the number that disagree decreased to 447 (63.8%). Look at the number that agrees before and after participating in community education, that community education had very low impact in the area of capital expenditure among its participants.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The following are the discussion of the findings:

Findings indicate that the socio-economic, challenges/problems confronted in rural areas include extreme poverty, low income, unemployment, illiteracy and Hiv/Aids and malaria. Todaro and Smith (2009) corroborate these findings expressing that poverty, illiteracy and malaria/Hiv/Aids are high in sub-Saharan Africa.

The findings to the second research question shows that the programmes implemented for socio-economic transformation were agricultural education and extension, mechanical skills, health/nutrition education, literacy and numeracy, civic education and religious education programmes Ban and Adesina (2006) and Oladapo (2006) corroborate these findings as their own findings show that programmes implemented in community education involve vocational and liberal aspects, such as literacy, religious education, agriculture and extension, civic education, etc.

Findings on the impact of community education reveal that 28% were self-employed, food production increase of 40%, while 26% and 35% improved their capital expenditure respectively. The study also reveals that 17% and 24% improved self discipline and respect for other rights and autonomy respectively. Studies confirming these findings include Patrick (2010), Ladan (2008) and Nnana (2014). Mulangu and Porto (2002) corroborate these findings. They showed that food production increased in African countries including Nigeria. Pointing out the cereals and root/tuber has been growth but fishery production grows faster than both in Nigeria. Ladan (2006) also corroborate this finding, noting that food production was one of the benefits of FADAMA project to the participants.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the impact of community education on socio-economic transformation of rural areas in Rivers State. Findings indicate that community education do not have significant impact on socio-economic transformation in Rivers State. However, a different conclusion can be made in respect of food production which recorded 60% increase, that to overcome hunger, we must look beyond the classroom. The study also shows that the programmes implemented are not closely related to the socio-economic challenges/problems faced by rural dwellers. This leads to the conclusion that community education in Rivers State needs overhauling. Based on the programme implementation challenges, which include poor governance, weak institution, lack of political will, corruption and inadequate funding it can be concluded, that progress in education depends on the larger society.

Policy Implications

The following policy implications are necessary:

- a) There is need for specific and concrete actions plans that address the needs of the learners to eliminate duplications
- b) Functional literacy. The issue of literacy has to be addressed because of its role in socio-economic develop of rural communities. It should be based on the socio-economic context of the participants.
- c) Evaluation. Period evaluation of impact of community education on socio-economic transformation is required.

Recommendation

The following are the recommendations of the study, which include:

1. Decentralization for policy effectiveness. There should be decentralization of the decision making process.
2. Institutions that promote local control of indigenous resources should be encouraged to enhance participation of rural dwellers in socio-economic development.
3. Local communities should be involved in leadership.
4. First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) should be awarded at the completion of literacy programmes to enhance enrolment and completion of programme.

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