

Adult Education and Community Development as Strategies for Mitigating the Challenges of Family Life Education in Rivers State

Dr Mrs Alice Igwe & Dr Ezechinnah, Chukwuma Alexander

Department of Adult Education and Community Development, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni

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ABSTRACT

Adult Education and Community Development compliments each other in the bid to ameliorate and alleviate the living conditions of people. In developing countries where many people are living in rural communities, they are veritable instruments par excellence for tackling illiteracy, ignorance and diseases. To this end, the collaboration of government agencies, non-government organizations, communities and community-based organizations toward development programmes is therefore inevitable. This paper examined the concept of adult education, community development, family life and their complimentary roles. It also looked at some programmes capable of stimulating and sustaining family life education. The paper recommended amongst others that, there should be full and active participation of family members and in extension community members in planning and execution of adult education programmes that will improve family life education and that Government at all levels should periodically organize adult education programmes and sensitization workshops for her citizens. It concluded that adult education and community development as strategies for mitigating the challenges of family life education can only be achieved when a deliberate attempt from community members to work together in order to guide the future of their communities and the design of a corresponding set of methods for assisting members of the community in such a process as to enhance their well-being and aspirations.

Keywords: Adult, Community, Development, Mitigation, Family life, Education.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria today and the World at large, humans are faced with a number of family and societal issues; these issues (stresses) come from many directions and impose great burdens on families. The interrelationship between the family and the society, human growth and development has made it imperative in addressing family issues for family members to live well and make meaningful contributions to the advancement of the society. Emphasizing on the point above, Oaks, (2012), and Ensign, (2010), Laments that “Families all over the World and Nigeria in particular, face the same issues; and sadly, most of these problems are abuse, addictions, communication issues, suicide, parenting, prostitution, wife battering, adolescent pregnancies, high school dropout rate for girls, youth restiveness” and so on. Results of most findings into the root of these challenges have revealed that the family institution is challenged and not living up to expectation in its performance of her duties bringing up responsible and law-abiding individuals in the society. Today, so many people have made regrettably wrong choices and decisions in life and in their marriages, so many marriages have fallen apart and the children left in the hands of strangers to suffer and grow wayward. More so, leaders who have occupied high positions in private and public sector think it is an individual achievement and will not want to assist or help others.

According to Eyring,(2012),our most important and powerful assignment are in the family, they are important because the family has the opportunity of the start of a child’s life to put their feet firmly on the right path. Therefore, to strengthen the family Institutions to live up to its expectations in performing her

role in the society, family life education and community development has been identified as an important means of education that the family needs to help ameliorate family issues and problems through its teaching and learning programmes to empower it and its members to enhance her maximum contributions to solving the challenges facing it and the society at large. Supporting the statements above, Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008), assert that, “The family is the basic unit of the social life which forms the link between the individual and the society; the family as the basic organized unit of the society comprised of the man and the woman joined together by a recognized form of marriage and their children. They stressed that, the family is the primordial unit of communication and national life, it serves as the control and training center for whatever is considered accepted and unaccepted to the community and national life.

Family life education as defined by the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR, 2007) is the educational efforts to strengthen individual and family life through a family perspective, continuing the lineage of the family, the objectives of family education is to enrich and improve the quality of individual and family life. It is pertinent to note that family life education work on a preventive model teaching families to prevent problems before they occur. Jank (2016), Affirms that, “family life education is the professional practice of equipping and empowering family member to develop knowledge and skills that enhances the well-being and potentials of families”.

This type of education however, is very important because adults as heads of families have many responsibilities knowledge and experiences which provides the foundation for learning for a balance life. Hence, their readiness and demand for information and learning geared towards personal growth, goal fulfilment and socialization. Nzeneri, (2010), strongly believes that life is battle. In his inaugural lecture titled (Adults in battles. Any hope of victory?) He stated that “life is a battle” and every aspect of man’s life requires adequate training”. Some of the areas of battles and social awkwardness for humans in the society as identified by Ywee(2021), ranges from

- Spending time together: families are lacking in spending when it comes to spending time together. This lack of quality time spent sharing values and communicating takes a toll on family relationships over the year.
- Expensive living: expensive living brings constraints to the family.
- Outside influence: the home must be guarded to ensure values are being instill.
- Owambe parties: constant parties can be a drain on both wallet and the time families spend together.
- Social Media: everywhere you turn there is the influence of the internet and social media. Parents must model the importance of life outside of social media. Spend quality time together as a family free of devices.
- Corruption: corruption is at the height and seems to have penetrated every level in the society. Raising a child allergic to corruption starts from the home. In the same vein, Ducan and Goddard, (2020)In their family work outreach listed some common challenges Nigerian families go through are as follows; Poor work life balance, Lack of adequate healthcare, Poor infrastructure, financial challenges, High cost of quality education, Family size, High rate of dependency and getting a better future for their children.

It is a major concern that family life in Nigeria and elsewhere comes with its unique set of battles and problems. These problems are evident in the sacrifices families make just to leave a meaningful and satisfying life by making adequate provisions for their family members.

Family life education is about understanding the meaning of families, family and connections.(Powell and Cassidy,2007) revealed that, Family Life education (FLE) developed as an educational specialty in response to the changing social conditions of the time such as urbanization, industrialization, and the changing roles of women resulting in family and societal difficulties including increased parent-child strife, juvenile delinquency” Family life education content are treated both as formal and non-formal education. Hennon-

Arcusas cited by Okonta(2007) observed that “most family life education programmes for youths are provided in school setting, offered through home economics, guidance and counselling, social studies or health care and so on. These programmes may be successful in helping students acquire knowledge, skills, attitude and values”. To support the claim above, Oyebamiji and Adekola, (2008) stressed that, “family life education relate more to learning about families rather than learning in families. They emphasized that, most (FLE) programmes and services are directed primarily to individuals who are currently or preparing to be family members”.

ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Adult education and Community development are strongly intertwined. A detailed examination of both reveals that the desired change or changes are their primary objective or purpose. In accordance with Odokara, who was cited by Ezimah (2004), the theme of social commitment is prominent in concepts, adult education, and community development, with a focus on the advancement of individual skills and the promotion of social, moral, and intellectual responsibility in relation to local, national, and international citizenship. By combining the processes of adult education and community development to address social concerns, he emphasized the complimentary responsibilities of adult education and community development in bringing about social change. Even more crucial to the two disciples for each given society or group is the problem of leadership, is much more crucial because it is necessary for a community or group of people to accomplish any success in the process of development. This is especially true when considering the mobilizing roles of adult education and community development. According to Ezimah (2004), adult education and community development work in tandem to create a variety of development tools, the mobilization of people for change is their shared goal.

Hence, the two main topics of their operations are people and change. It is important to not overemphasize the need to organize people for change in our rural communities. It is not sufficient to acknowledge the need for change; the populace must also take some sort of action. Except when there is active mobilization of the people, the project may be hindered in self-help initiatives when the success of a project depends on the usage of available human and material resources.

Adult education and community development are also concerned with integrated approach in development programmes. There are multifaceted issues that need to be attended to in rural areas and includes education, health-care, roads and markets. Through integrated development approach, different programmes meant to solve different problems are planned simultaneously to achieve a far-reaching impact on the lives of the families.

Adults generally are known as problem solvers, so, they explore and utilize resources available to their disposal such as skills and other livelihood activities to help shape their destinies in different areas of their lives. According to Brotanica, (2023), Adult Education, also called continuing education, is defined as “any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women” In the same vein, England and Wales, (.2022) defines adult education as “any kind of education given to people who are old enough to work, vote, fight and marry and who have completed the cycle of continuous education (if any).Nzeneri, (2013), explained that “adult education is that education undertaken by adults who need to make up for what they lost in formal schooling, or for those who desire to use their leisure more meaningfully or people who were unable to acquire new and improved skills in order to adjust to changes and challenges, technology and occupation”. Obasi, as cited in Okorie and Ibanga (2020), adult education is understood as a transmission process of general technical or vocational knowledge as well as skills, values and attitudes which takes place outside the formal education system with the view to remedy early inadequacies of mature people or equip them with knowledge and cultural elements needed for their self fulfilment and active participation in the society”. Similarly, Oyeozu, and Okorie as cited in Okoria and Ibanga, (2020) contended that, “ adult education is any form of learning an adult engages in that is beyond traditional schooling, which

encompasses literacy and personal fulfilment as lifelong learner; adult education is premised on the philosophy that adults want to learn, they are capable and willing to take responsibility for their learning outcome and the learning itself should respond to their learning needs.

Community development on the other hand is to enable community members to improve community resources, which will in turn help community members to work together to improve its living standard and the well-being of others. Kenny, cited in Goel (2014) defines community development as a method of empowering communities to take collective control and responsibility for their own development; adding that, the main focus of community development approach is on instituting those interactive processes that help communities to take autonomous decision on meeting their needs and addressing issues that affect their lives the most. According to Eheazu and Uzoagu, (2020), Community development stem from a deliberate attempt from community members to work together in order to guide the future of their communities and the design of a corresponding set of methods for assisting members of the community in such a process as to enhance their well-being and aspirations”. Nzeneri as reported in Onyeozu and Edeogh on (2016) “Community development is defined as self-help and hard work freely undertaken by youth and adults through the inspired vision for better standard of living.

ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

Adult education and community development are instruments for change and are referred to as change agents. It helps to modify the behaviour of individuals in the community in many ways. It helps to improve the critical thinking quality of the individuals. It modifies behaviors of people towards production through acquisition of knowledge and skills in relevant occupations. It develops individuals respect for standard. It modifies individuals’ moral quality to an acceptable level by community members. It helps to reduce the menace or criminal behavior of individuals resulting from ignorance and illiteracy. It also helps to develop individuals’ creativity and independent living. It makes individual to become an acceptable member of his community through systematic adjustment.

Several programmes are organized by change agents in adult education and community development which are useful for the socio-economic transformation of our family lives. These programmes include amongst others; Agricultural extension education, Community education, Literacy education, Co-operatives, Rural industries and Family Life Health programmes

1. Agricultural Extension Education. Nigeria, though an oil and gas driven economy, has the potential for agriculture. The rural dwellers are subsistence farmers who hardly produce enough for family consumption. The need to provide agricultural extension services which will help to increase their production capacity is necessary. According to Ezimah (2004), agricultural extension provides a sound base for rural development. He furthered that extension is conceived as the development of the individual, village leaders and the rural society as whole and as a continuous education process. The programme is meant to bring attitudinal change in the rural dwellers towards agriculture. When there is innovation in farming techniques for instance, introduction of improved seedling. The farmer will be able to produce for domestic consumption as well as surplus for sales at the market. This leads to better socio-economic well-being of the family.
2. Community Education. This programme is hinged on the premises that the consciousness of the people themselves plays a vital role in effecting change. Change in attitude skills in line with contemporary demand and knowledge. Community education to Ezimah (2004) is an educational process that encourages the utilization of all learning resources within the community for the purposes of mobilizing the community for its own developments. It is evident that every human society has potentials to evolve social economic transformation which will enhance their standard of living. Education takes a centre stage in this process. Community education is usually planned for and utilized by adult citizens. People are mobilized through campaigns and enlightenment programmes.

3. Co-operative societies. Cooperatives are important tool for real transformation. They assist members to pull their resources together hence ensures sustenance of business co-operators through this medium. Embark on self- help projects which are of direct bearing on the lives of these rural communities. Omolewa cited in Dokubo (2012) posits that, it is very essential that co-operators work with other like-minded people in groups to make a meaningful achievement not only satisfying the basic human needs but also raise the condition of living of the rural people to acceptable standards. Similarly, Dokubo (2012) remarks that, the main thrust of cooperative society is that co-operators should help themselves by providing for member's needs through group work or combined efforts and resources. This is the approach with which co-operators in Nigeria embark on self-help development projects, such as construction of roads, markets, health centers, maternity homes, schools, bridges, town halls, civic centers, rural electricity and water supply. The impression that government should provide all that is needed for the development of rural communities is no longer feasible, though it is its responsibility, but has to be corroborated by co-operative societies for sustainability. Co-operators identify socio-economic needs and consequently plan and mobilized available resources to satisfy them.
4. Literacy Education. Literacy has been identified as an essential tool for family development. It is therefore logical to say that the low standard of living prevailing in the rural families has illiteracy as one of the causative factors. The ability to acquire the skills of reading, writing and computation is transformation of an individual from illiteracy to literacy, especially basic literacy. Ihejirika (2012), adult basic literacy to rudimentary or fundamental for it enables its recipient to understand higher concepts in education. It involves the skills of reading, writing and computing figures. A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enables him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group or community. The rural families, do not need only basic literacy skills, they also need functional literacy. According to Imhabekhai (2009), the desire and ability to read, write and compute materials in vocation will motivate the learners for better participation, and that, the utility of the skills bring about functionality and progress in the vocation or occupation and thereby fosters permanent literacy. Literacy, all over the world is a pivot on which multiple human activities revolves. Be it political, social, economic or cultural activities, skills of literacy are required for it to be done to acceptable standards. With it, our rural communities will assume some urban characteristics.
5. Rural Industries. Rural communities can be transformed through rural industries. These include small and medium-scale enterprises (SME) like potter, metal work, tailoring, soap making and weaving among others. Barikor (1983) commenting on the role of industries in rural transformation notes that, this could help to promote self-employment, rural based job opportunities and investment, intensify community development and dent the rural-urban migration syndrome. The economy of the rural dwellers is very poor. It in-turn affect their investment capacity in their various business. Some of them are illiterates hence, ignorant of strategies available for them to change require programmes that will give the rural industrialists enlightenment and soft loans will play significant role in changing their business and by extension their standard of living.
6. Family life health programmes. The issue of health is also very vital. The success of all other programmes meant for rural transformation hinge on good health of the people. A healthy labour force and entrepreneurs are needed to propel or implement change programmes. The scourge of HIV/AIDS is ravaging African countries which Nigeria is not an exception. There is still the practice of female genital mutilation going on in some families across Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper therefore, recommended that;

1. There should be full and active participation of family members and in extension community members in planning and execution of adult education programmes that will improve family life education.

2. Government at all levels should periodically organize adult education programmes and sensitization workshops for her citizens.
3. Adult education practitioners and professionals should be fully involved and engaged in planning and implementation of these adult education programmes.

CONCLUSION

Family life education in Nigeria is associated with lack of political will and low human capacity building. The global efforts towards eradication of poverty, ignorance and illiteracy among other things as reflected in the relevant policies of the Country. It is on these bases that adult education and community development programmes can-not be over emphasized as they are indispensable tools for the transformation of family life in Nigeria. Therefore, adult education and community development as strategies for mitigating the challenges of family life education can only be achieved when a deliberate attempt from community members to work together in order to guide the future of their communities and the design of a corresponding set of methods for assisting members of the community in such a process as to enhance their well-being and aspirations.

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