

Revitalizing Learning in Families and Communities through Community Education In Nigeria

**Dr. Anurugwo Appolonia O., Dr. Chukwuemerie Obiageli C., Dr. Elekwa
Blessing C.**

Dept. of Adult & Non-Formal Educ. Faculty of Education , Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri

Dept. of Adult and Continuing Educ. Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

Dept. of Adult and Continuing Educ. Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

Corresponding Author: Dr. Elekwa Blessing C.

Abstract

In the recent past, our country has been bedeviled by several social problems that tend to breed insecurity in the lives of the populace. This ranges from unemployment, adult illiteracy, poverty, terrorism, moral decadence, youth restiveness, drug abuse, armed robbery, kidnapping, gender violence, rape to bribery and corruption. It becomes more worrisome as the effect of all these fall back to the community crippling its development. In the face of such structural problems, one has to learn, relearn and unlearn to fit into the dynamism of modern organization. It therefore becomes pertinent to revitalize learning in families and communities through community education to address the social problems in communities. In this paper, the researchers x-rayed the concepts of family, community and community education respectively, characteristics and practice of community education in Nigeria, strategies for revitalizing learning in families and communities through community education, imperativeness of establishing community learning centers (CLCs) in every community, challenges to effective community education and way forward.

Keywords: *Learning, family, community, community education, community learning centers*

Date of Submission: 10-09-2020

Date of Acceptance: 25-09-2020

I. Introduction

The rising wave of social problems in our communities has really posed a big challenge not only to the Nigerian government but to the entire populace. These glitches include robbery, kidnapping, rape, human negligence, moral decadence, poverty, unemployment, adult illiteracy among others. The anomalies seem to have gone deep-rooted and continue to increase tremendously on daily basis. Subsequently, both urban and rural communities are shrouded by insecurity of life and property amidst the social problems. The economic sector is also adversely affected as evidenced in the poverty level of majority of the citizenry. Osalor (2012) attested to this fact and reported that more than 70% of the people live in abject poverty. This situation no doubt points to a retardation in economic growth and development of the country. It is pertinent to note that development may not be sustainable in a society engulfed with such multifarious structural problems. In consonance to this idea, Greenwald and Peake (2004) asserted that a conducive environment be provided for residents, so that they can live, work and develop their country socially, economically and politically. Conversely, a country that fails to provide such conducive environment or ignores to equip her population with the right aptitude and values impedes the socio-economic growth of her citizenry.

It is probably in line with the foregoing that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) in its National Policy on Education (NPE) acclaimed education an instrument per excellence for national development. Education provides the enabling environment for capacity building in line with literacy, vocational, entrepreneurial and life skills. However, formal education seems to be limited in content and scope in providing the needed education for the entire populace all through life. This necessitated the emergence of non-formal education to play both complementary and supplementary roles to formal education. Non-formal education through its all embracive components is geared towards assisting individuals to learn, unlearn and relearn in a lifelong and life wide education. By so doing they are equipped to improve their quality of life and that of their communities. An aspect of non-formal education designed for bettering the lot of community members and improving their quality of life is community education. For better understanding of the term 'community education', it is imperative to clarify some of the variables used in this study.

Community

Traditionally a community is perceived as a group of people in a given geographical location. Beyond this conventional perception, a community entails any group sharing something in common. In other words, a community can be defined by race or ethnicity, professional or economic ties, religion, culture or shared background or interest. Amirinze (2002) perceives community as people living in one place, district, region or country taken as a whole. McClenehan cited in Oduaran (1994) posited that community as a concept can be defined from six major perspectives, which include: a social unit; an ecological or geographical unit; a legal, political or administrative unit; the equivalent of a society; an ideal or mental entity; and a process. This implies that community is defined in terms of affiliation of community members. In this regard, various types of communities may include community of interest, community of action, community of circumstance, community of practice, community of place/ecological community, religious community, educational community. Others include rural community, urban community, semi urban community and virtual community. It is pertinent to note a common feature in the diverse perspectives of the concept of community which has to do with a group of people who has something in common.

In this study, community is defined as a group of people living in a particular area, sharing common identity, interests, values and cultural traits, who pursue same goal voluntarily. Similarly, they possess a set of basic services and institutions and participate in a common mode of life. Community members are conscious of their unity and quest for development and therefore work cooperatively to better the lot of individuals. The focus of this study is on ecological community guided by norms and voluntary cooperation rather than statutory rules and regulations.

Anyanwu (1999) enumerated characteristics of community to include;

- Shared Region- They live in a particular space of land, work and earn their living inimitably which gives them distinguishable identity.
- Shared Sentiments-They share same feelings and concerns, nurture and cherish same beliefs and values in the development of their common ideals and objectives.
- Shared Bond of Fellowship- They are connected by strong ties, an attribute which distinguish them from other groups. This may be illustrated by all for duties from citizens and the giving of recognitions to those that deserved it.
- Set Standards of Behavior- They tend to set patterns of behavior congruent to their way and manners of doing things (modus operandi and modus vivendi). Community members execute common activities to and for one another. Such interaction is ceaseless and members hardly disengage from established social relations.
- Common Administration- This entails the establishments of methods of assigning duties and responsibilities to people, for effective regulation of the activities in the community. It presumes effective governance and the acknowledgement of a sequence of representatives to get things done in the community.

It is imperative, to note that a community in this context is a conglomeration of many families. A family entails a group of people who are closely related to one another, by blood, marriage or adoption. Inclusive are immediate families, extended families, kinsmen, lineages and hamlets. The family is the most important unit of the society. According to Murdock (as cited in Pathak, 2017), the family as a social group is characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. In this regard, the family still remains the dominant significant group to which the child is biologically and socially attached. It is a crucial agent of socialization that prepares an individual for active and useful service both to the family and community. This implies that, the family not only initiates learning, it also absorbs and benefits from the end product of learning.

Domjan (2010) noted that learning is an enduring change in the mechanisms of behavior. Similarly, Boaz (as cited in Physicatalyst, 2019) posited that learning is a procedure where an individual acquires various behaviours, knowledge and mindsets that are necessary to meet the demands of life in general. Learning, usually connotes a continuous process that imparts knowledge to learners with the aim of repositioning the learner's knowledge with skills and competencies for self-reliance in both the family and community. The acquisition of these knowledge, skills, attitude and values by an individual result to education.

Education

Education generally denotes a form of learning in which knowledge, skills and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next. This is done through teaching, training, research or self-study. Fafunwa (1984) defines education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitude and other forms of behaviour of positive value to the society in which he or she lives. Similarly, Rusk (cited in Nzeneri, 2008) defines education as a process through which we foster in the individual desirable and relevant changes in behaviour and attitude. In line with the above definitions, education remains an indispensable tool in the transformation of individual for societal benefit. Fafunwa's clearly asserted this when he noted that a young adult is equipped with capabilities of positive value to the society through education. These values according to Rusks, are both desirable and relevant in bettering the lots of individuals.

This underpins the essence of its transmission from one generation to the other. Education occurs through any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels or acts. In other words, there should be a remarkable change in line with the three domains of learning- cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Education can be acquired through three major forms; formal, informal and non-formal education. Formal education is purposeful, systematically and rigidly structured. It is acquired in a school setting and usually certificated. Informal education is unplanned and is incidentally or accidentally acquired as one interacts with one's environment. Non-formal education is purposeful and organized but acquired outside the formal school setting. It is an umbrella term for all out-of- school education including community education.

Community Education

The concept of community education is not limited to a single definition, as several authorities have defined it from so many perspectives. Ezimah (2004) defined community education as a procedure aimed at increasing consciousness, broadening understanding and providing the necessary skills, including the human resources for socio-economic, political and cultural development. Community Education is defined as organized learning activities that groups or individuals undertake for their personal, community, cultural or economic development (Adult and Community Education Association, Aotearoa, New Zealand, cited in Akande, 2007). It was further stated in the definition that community education touches all other areas of learning but its primary focus is the adult as learner and the community as context. In the context of this study, community education is defined as a non-formal education designed to equip community members with knowledge, attitude and skills for personal and community development. It entails sensitizing community members, updating them with relevant information and skills to make them more functional and productive in the community. It also involves re-tooling, re-skilling, learning, re-learning and unlearning skills, attitudes and values in line with individual and community improvement.

Community education embraces programmes that uphold learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities. For instance, community based organizations (CBO), faith based organizations (FBO), work related organizations and other traditional institutions in the community are all media for raising consciousness and spreading understanding among community members. In congruence, Havre Public school (2016) posited that community education provides an opportunity for residents, community schools, agencies and institutions to gather and take active participation in addressing education and community concerns. In this regard, community members partner with institutions and agencies domiciled in the community in addressing community needs.

Characteristics and Practice of Community Education in Nigeria.

Community education is a non-formal education that is functional, collective, communalistic and largely democratic. It operates across its tripartite components of lifelong learning, community involvement in schools and effective use of resources.

Beneke (2016) enumerated the following characteristics of community education;

- Working and learning in partnership
- Participation and equal rights
- Empowerment and self-efficacy confidence
- Inclusion of disadvantaged groups
- Process-oriented access

Community education is a lifelong learning venture that encourages working and learning in partnership. Individuals learn from and with each other in a non-formal setting. There is active participation of community members in communal activities normally carried out in line with norms and values guiding the community. Community education aims at empowering community members to grapple with problems inhibiting community progress. This is achieved by equipping individuals with knowledge, vocational and entrepreneurial skills, aimed at making them creative, self-employed and self-reliant. This enables them take care of themselves and contribute significantly to the society. In affirmation, Akande (2007) asserted that community education is needed to ensure confidence, self-esteem and personal independence, as well as to protect human rights and achieve social equality.

The practice of community education in Nigeria is not novel. It has been in existence as indigenous/traditional education prior to the advent of early missionaries and colonial administrators. Every tribe/ethnic group in Nigeria has peculiar culture which embodies its norms and values transmitted from one generation to the other informally. It is through this indigenous community education that a child or young adult in line with Fafunwa (1984) develops the abilities, attitude and other forms of behaviour of positive value to the society. However, Akande (2007) noted that the introduction and acceptance of western education dwindled the quest and enthusiasm for community education.

Community education is practiced in line with people's history and experiences with the sole purpose of transforming the citizens who will in turn transform the community they live in. In Nigeria, community education tends to relate education to the overall needs of the community, to make up for the inability of formal education to address community needs. Learning is jointly achieved through non-formal learning process structured and guided by the community in a strongly participatory manner. This is also applicable to acquisition and application of life skills and competences in solving family and community problems. In line with this, Obanya (2003) noted that education for all should be the responsibilities of all. This underpins the instrumentality of community education in the involvement of all and sundry in revitalizing community norms and values. In agreement to this notion Obidiegwu & Obiozor (2013) affirmed that community education has the capability of reaching all community members through the establishment of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in both the rural and urban areas.

UNESCO (2012) defines a Community Learning Centre as a resource centre which offers information and life-long learning activities for everyone in the community so as to make that community stronger. In addition, Dirbindikmas (cited in Armin, 2017) noted that CLC is a community based institution established by and developed for the community itself which aims to encourage the progress and empowerment of community life. All these portray CLC as an indispensable tool for the delivery of community education. CLC serves as avenues for the impartation of family and societal values, norms, attitude, information and skills to individuals.

Strategies for Revitalizing Learning in Families and Communities through Community Education.

The following strategies can be adopted in revitalizing learning in families and communities through community education;

- **Establishment of functional community learning center (CLC)**- CLC is a school based or school-linked programme that provides informal meeting places and coordinate community activities such as adult education, vocational, entrepreneurial skills, child care information and referral services (Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, 2020). Community halls or civic centres can be used for such purpose. Communities can maximize the potentials of their human and material resources to this effect. Obidiegwu & Obiozor (2013) noted that CLC is an effective technique for suitable development and if well implemented and managed with sincere leadership, will take care of unemployment and other social problems in the country.
- **Use of community based organizations (CBO)**- CBOs include all indigenous organizations in the community among which are age grades, women group, men group and the youth. For any community to thrive, these subsets should be well-integrated and interdependent. They should share responsibility to resolve problems and enhance the wellbeing of the community. Similarly, educational/ social development programmes can be organized for each of the subset of the community aimed at knowledge and skill acquisition relevant to their interests and needs.
- **Use of Faith Based for community (FBO)**-this has to do with the religious organizations in the community. Members of the community belong to various religious groups domiciled in the community. These groups should be used to inculcate sound moral and ethical values in the life of community members. This will help to reduce social vices in the community.
- **Cultural festivals/ceremonies**- community festivals and ceremonies are periods of showcasing community cultures, norms and values. It is also a time to acquire cultural literacy. Elders in the families and community at large should use such period to revitalize age long societal values thrown to the mud by modern civilization.
- **Community partnership ventures**- communities should partner with government and non-governmental agencies in addressing the needs of the community. For instance, agricultural extension agents to assist rural farmers to improve on their farming; health extension agents to assist with disease prevention and healthy life style; adult educators to assist in literacy and so on.
- **Mass media for public enlightenment**-families and community members can be updated with the current trend of events in the society through mass media. In consonant to this idea, Ezima (2004) noted that radio is relatively inexpensive and portable stating that with availability of batteries, radio can be used to reach different target groups in the rural and urban communities, where there is no electricity supply.
- **Establishment of skill acquisition centres**-the provision of skills to community members will in no small measure ease the unemployment challenge. Acquisition and application of functional skills, such as bricklaying, confectionary, hair care, soap making, fashion designs among others a long way in curbing idleness especially among the youths. Not being engaged more often than not leads to many social ills like armed robbery, kidnapping, rape and drug trafficking.
- **Establishment of more literacy centres**-adult literacy centers should be established in all communities. These centres should be equipped with modern infrastructure, instructional materials and qualified instructors. In addition, the curriculum should be redesigned to accommodate the needs of the adult learners.

- **Community orientation programmes-** at regular intervals, orientation programmes should be organized for various subsets of the community aimed at sensitization and conscientization of individuals. It is in such cultural and value re-orientation programmes that individuals learn, relearn and unlearn some behaviors for individual and community development.
- **Use of Internet and ICT-**the internet has made the world a global village such that even people in rural communities where network is available can access information for learning without much constraint. Learning in families and communities can be facilitated through the internet as it provides opportunities for all kinds of learners. Practical training on skills acquisition is also enhanced due to the dynamic nature of inventions in ICT. Learning of basic ICT skills in rural communities is possible through community education.

Challenges to Effective Community Education

The challenges facing effective implementation of community education includes the following: Insufficient funding, lack of awareness/sensitization, lack of inadequate literacy instructors or personnel and inadequate manpower for monitoring and evaluation.

Firstly, shortage in funds limits government's efforts in the provision of community education in Nigeria. States involved in community education programme are burdened by the cost of running such programme, because they find it difficult to pay the facilitators as well as repair furniture. This situation is worrisome, as Imhabekhai & Onyeozu (2006) observed, that no appreciable financial support has been allocated to community education, in spite of its acute financial needs to acquire life-long skills through learning process. Corroborating this view, Akande (2007) noted that community education is not seen as one of the important areas in Nigeria because it does not attract much funds. As a confirmation to this view, Umana (2018) noted that irrespective of policy provisions, non formal education is not included in the share of two percent consolidated fund meant for basic education.

Secondly, another challenge to effective community education in Nigeria is, lack of awareness of the existence of Community Learning Centres (CLCs), where skills are being learnt. Many learners that are interested in skills acquisition may not be aware of such programme, due to lack of advocacy and public enlightenment. Even some philanthropists who are willing to contribute monetarily and materially cannot do so. This hinders community development.

Another challenge is, inadequate information and communication technology (ICT) instructors. This is a barrier to the desire of Nigeria becoming a key player in the information age. However, no effort has been made by the government to recruit professionals or qualified instructors for the provision of professional advice concerning skills acquisition.

Moreso, the lack of skilled manpower in the area of monitoring and evaluation poses a serious challenge to the development of community education. The successful implementation of community education requires frequent monitoring of the programme. Unfortunately, funds to carry out the monitoring of the programmes are not given and needed information concerning the status of the programmes are unavailable, thereby causing variations in programmes types that are available and offered across the nation.

Lastly, successive governments in Nigeria had initiated several programmes meant to promote community education. Unfortunately, no attempt was made to prioritize these programmes, such as, Community Bank, Family Support Programmes (FSP), Peoples Bank, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), among others, to meet the needs of beneficiaries. Perhaps, non-involvement of the beneficiaries in the design, plan and execution of these programmes accounted for its ineffectiveness.

The Way Forward

There is need for more capacity building programmes and wider dissemination of knowledge about the importance of community education through, seminars, workshops, conferences, in-service training and other fora organized at regular intervals by the professional bodies, non-governmental agencies (NGOs), philanthropists and other stakeholders in community education programme matters.

There is need for establishment of more Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in the country for easy access to education for interested learners who wants to become more functional on the job performance. Moreover, the programmes should be learner-centered. While establishing more CLCs, there is need for recruitment of adequate facilitators, taking into cognizance the prompt payment of facilitators remuneration. More especially, intensified public enlightenment should be on the increase for more awareness of community education.

Moreso, regular and effective monitoring of programmes is needed at all levels. Workers should undergo refresher training on monitoring and evaluation activities. Also, efforts should be geared towards promoting transformative research. If it is properly implemented and managed, it will enable adult learners to reflect on their experiences and determine how to improve it for their own benefits. This calls for serious

attention in the redesigning of their curriculum in a wholesome way, so as to accommodate the needs of the learners. This is necessary because it will promote innovation and creativity.

Furthermore, there is need for government and non-governmental agencies to collaborate in promoting community education in Nigeria. Community education programme should be sufficiently funded to achieve the goal of self-reliance. Finally, for community education to be effective, the recipients of such programmes should be involved in the sharing of decision making and in its execution. Anyanwu (2002), noted that the integration for a total society can be highly enhanced and sustained through this idea of participation.

II. Conclusion

This paper communicated the fact that learning needs to be revitalized in families and communities through community education. This is to ensure confidence, self-esteem and personal independence, as well as, protect human rights and achievement of social equality. In this vein, individuals and communities are empowered by learning to make positive changes in their lives and communities. An effort was made to provide operational definitions of learning, family, community and community education. It is maintained in this paper that the resourcefulness of CLCs in providing information and life-long learning activities for the individual and in the community as a whole will result in the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria. Hence, the study provided strategies for revitalizing learning in families and communities through community education. Challenges to effective community education were also x-rayed and way forward suggested. Considering the usefulness of revitalizing learning in families and communities through community education, beneficiaries of such programmes should be involved in the planning and execution stage.

References

- [1]. Akande, J.O (2007). The practice of community education in Nigeria. *Educational Research and Review* vol. 2 (10), page264-270. <http://www.academicjournals.org/ERR>
- [2]. Armin, F. (2017). The model of community learning centre development: A case study of CLCs increases the community capacity and skill to deal with socio-economic challenges. PKBM Assolahiyah in West Java Province.
- [3]. Amirinze, M.A (2002). *Adult and community education policy and design in Nigeria*. Unique Publishers, page 70-73.
- [4]. Anyanwu, C.N. (1999). *Introduction to community development*. Ibadan: Gabesther Educational Publishers.
- [5]. Anyanwu, C.N (2002). *Community Education: The African dimension*, Ibadan: Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- [6]. Beneke, B. (2016). *Community Education – How Communities Change Through Learning*. Retrieved from <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/community-education-how-communities-change-through-learning>
- [7]. Domjan, M. (2010). *Principles of learning and behaviour* (6thed). Belmont, C.A. Wadsworth/Cengage.
- [8]. Ezimah, M.O.A (2004). *Knowing adult education: Its nature, scope and processes*. Owerri: Springfield Publishers Limited.
- [9]. Fafunwa, B. (1984). *History of education in Nigeria*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd
- [10]. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013). *National policy on education. 6th edition*. Yaba, Lagos. NERDC Press.
- [11]. Greenwald, H&Peake, G. (2004). *Police reform through community based policing: Philosophy and guidelines for implementation*. Retrieved from www.saferworld.org.uk/
- [12]. Havre Public School (2016). *Community education, definition and purpose*. P.O.Box 7791, Havre.
- [13]. Imhabekhai&Onyeozu (2006). Imperativeness in financing adult and non-formal education in Nigeria in Adult and non-formal education in Nigeria: Emerging issues. *Papers from Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE), Annual conference, Ibadan, Nigeria, November, 27- December 1st 2005, page 85-93*.
- [14]. Nzeneri, I.S. (2008). *Handbook on adult education; Principles and practices*. Uyo. Akwa-Ibom. Abigab
- [15]. Obanya, P. (2003). *Revitalizing education in Africa*. Ibadan: Stirling Holden Publishers Nigeria Limited.
- [16]. Obidiegwu, U.J &Obiozor. W.E (2013). Globalization of adult education: Theories and strategies for instructors. One street consulting limited Awka.
- [17]. Oduaran, A.B. (1994). *An introduction to community development*. Benin, Edo State. Uniben Press
- [18]. Osalor, P. (2012, May 28). *Unemployment in Nigeria, the way out*. Retrieved November 21, 2012, from <http://www.vanguardngr.com>.
- [19]. Pathak, A. (2017). Discussing the indispensability of family as a social institution. *International journal of humanities and social sciences*. Vol. 7(1) 83-92
- [20]. Physicscatalyst, (2019). *Meaning of learning in education with its concept and definition*.
- [21]. Umana, K. (2018). *Top six challenges of adult education in Nigeria*. Research Cyber Team.
- [22]. UNESCO (2012). *Manual for implementation of CLCs*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121155>

Dr. Elekwa Blessing C, et. al. "Revitalizing Learning in Families and Communities Through Community Education In Nigeria." *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 10(5), (2020): pp. 53-58.