

# *Evidence-Based Insights: Assessing the Role of Adult Education in Fostering Community Development in Rivers State, Nigeria*

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**Abstract** – This study examined the role of adult education in fostering community development in Oyigbo and Obio/Akpors of Rivers State. Descriptive Survey design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised of 37,786 beneficiaries of adult education programmes 5 percent of the population was sampled for the study. A sample of 1770 was drawn from the target population. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. A self-structured questionnaire which has a reliability coefficient of 0.71 was used for the study. The data collected were analyzed using mean score. The findings of the study showed that adult education contributes immensely to community development in both Oyigbo and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area's respectively. The study recommended that adequate funding since adult education is essentially central to both personal and communal development and contributes to national development as well. Thus, the government should therefore, adequately fund education, especially adult education for the promotion of community development in these areas of study.

**Keywords** – Adult Education, Fostering, Community Development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

At a time when social dynamics and workforce demands are constantly evolving, empowering communities is fundamental to sustainable development. In this context, adult education programs have proven to be effective catalysts for change. The ability to adapt, learn, and grow is not limited to the early school years. It lasts a lifetime. This understanding led to a deep recognition that adult education, with its diverse initiatives, plays an important role in promoting sustainable community development. This article explores the critical importance of adult education programs in strengthening communities and how these efforts can serve as a foundation for creating lasting positive change at the local level.

The rates of underdevelopment in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor communities are deeply concerning. The absence of education and skills prevents individuals from earning a sustainable living, making them burdens on their families and communities. This desperation often leads some to engage in criminal activities such as robbery, kidnapping, militancy, and vandalism of vital infrastructure like oil pipelines. The sluggish pace of community development in these areas is primarily attributed to high levels of unemployment, illiteracy, and a lack of employable skills among the residents. Genuine progress is hindered when a significant portion of the population remains unemployed, unskilled, and illiterate, emphasizing the critical need for education and skill development in these communities.

The goal of adult education programs is to enhance the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of individuals considered as adults in the society. In Nigeria, these programs have a long history, gaining prominence when the Adult Education

Department at the University of Ibadan received the UNESCO literacy prize in 1989. It has been acknowledged that community-based adult education programs are vital, especially in rural areas where tradition holds strong.

Currently, several NGOs are working towards this vision in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor local government areas. For instance, Solace Society for Mathematics in Egbelu community offers educational development services and youth empowerment programs in Oyigbo. In Obio-Akpor, the Self Help and Rural Development Association (SHERDA) provides agricultural empowerment, property management consultancy, youth empowerment, and adult literacy programs.

These efforts have injected vitality and sustainability into the communities, addressing various aspects, including health, democracy, good governance, economic ventures, and functional literacy. The Rivers State government, through the Ministry of Women Affairs, is also contributing to youth and women empowerment with projects and programs such as microfinance schemes, sensitization, and ICT training centers.

However, despite these initiatives, challenges persist, including inadequate funding, poverty, inadequate infrastructure, poor administration, lack of attention, and low awareness. This study aims to explore the roles of adult education in fostering community development in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor local government areas of Rivers State. Different adult education programmes were designed and implemented in different communities in these local government areas of Rivers State. The presence of these adult education programmes as strategies for promoting community development motivated the researcher to carry out this study to assess the role of adult education in fostering community development in the state. The question therefore is; does adult education foster the promotion of community development Oyigbo and Obio/Akpor Local Government of Rivers State.

## **II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

These words Adult Education and community Development are combination of two nouns. "Adult" Education to understand this term one needs to understand their meaning separately. The definition of who qualifies as an adult is a complex matter, influenced by legal, social, physiological, and cultural factors. For example, in some societies, adulthood might be determined by reaching the age of 21, while in Nigeria, official adulthood starts at 18 when an individual gains the right to vote. In certain cultural contexts, physiological maturity, marked by the capacity for marriage, parenthood, and civic responsibilities, is the basis for defining adulthood. Consequently, someone considered an adult might be anywhere between 15 and 51, 18 and 81. In summary, the definition of adulthood varies across cultures and is influenced by multiple factors, including legal, social, physiological, and cultural considerations, resulting in diverse age ranges for what is considered an adult. (CIA World Fact Book, 2012).

### **Education**

The conventional perception of education in many nations has traditionally centered on formal learning, often concentrating solely on children and young individuals, thereby neglecting adults, marginalized communities, and the vulnerable. The INCHEON Declaration of 2030 asserts that the right to education is a fundamental human right that should be accessible to everyone, regardless of age or location. It advocates for inclusive, equitable, high-quality education that promotes lifelong learning for all. This underscores that education is not only a public good but also a core human right and a foundation for ensuring the realization of other rights (as envisioned in Goal 3 of Envision 2030). This highlights the crucial notion that in order for any form of development to be both enduring and sustainable, education must be extended to all segments of society, illiteracy must be eradicated, and ignorance dispelled. By providing education to all, individuals are empowered to think creatively and innovate, ultimately reducing poverty and the prevalence of diseases in cities and communities.

In UNESCO's 2018 report, Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, emphasized that education stands as a fundamental right and serves as the cornerstone of advancement in any nation. He stressed that parents require knowledge about health and nutrition to provide their children with a strong foundation in life. Ukeje (2020) succinctly encapsulated the essence of education, defining it as a transformative force that empowers individuals. Education involves the acquisition of knowledge and ideas that shape one's attitudes, actions, and accomplishments. It encompasses the development of a child's moral, physical, emotional, and intellectual capacities, preparing them to contribute to societal reform. Education also involves mastering the laws of nature and effectively applying them for personal well-being and social progress. Ultimately, education is the skill of utilizing knowledge for a holistic and fulfilling life. Within UNESCO's operations in Nigeria, education receives the largest share of

resources, both in terms of financial allocation and staffing. UNESCO's primary goal is to enhance and elevate education and schooling in member states, with a strong focus on promoting innovative and best practices in the field.

### **Adult Education**

Adult education is understood as a transmission 'process' of general, technical or vocational knowledge, as well as skills, values and attitudes, which takes place out of the formal education system with a view to remedying early educational inadequacies of mature people or equipping them with the knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies. It is any educative and purposeful learning activity organized for adults to initiate them into a new way of life by providing them with relevant skills, competencies, knowledge, information and attitudes required to excel in that aspect of life" Seya (2014). Supportive of this view Nzeneri in Onajite, and Olaye's (2020) opined that Adult Education as the process that encompasses all the experiences and information necessary for individuals to acquire knowledge, develop their intellect, and fortify their will, all of which are obtained through sensory perception. Adult education is perceived as a multifaceted endeavor designed specifically for adults with the overarching goal of facilitating learning. It covers a comprehensive spectrum, including foundational literacy, post-literacy, vocational and work-related education, distance learning, human resource development, and ongoing professional growth. Its primary responsibility is to assist adults in adapting to change and leading productive lives in an ever-evolving world.

In Ojokheta's study from (2018), he discussed the expansive scope of adult education, as delineated in the "Belem Framework for Action" presented at UNESCO's international conference in Belem, Brazil in 2009. This framework emphasized that "adult education is an integral component of the lifelong learning journey, encompassing a spectrum of learning experiences from formal to non-formal to informal. It is a critical element in achieving equity and inclusion, reducing poverty, and fostering the development of tolerant, sustainable, and knowledge-based societies. As a lifelong process, adult education is accessible to various segments of the population, enabling them to learn and acquire skills and knowledge of their choice, thereby contributing to the progress of society."

In Nigeria, adult education is presently aligned with national development objectives, as outlined by Ewuzie (2012). The aim of adult education within the context of national development is to facilitate adult individuals or groups in learning and, through this learning, altering their attitudes and behaviors. The policy on education in Nigeria sets forth the objectives of adult education:

1. Offering functional literacy education to adults who have never had access to formal education.
2. Providing functional and remedial education for young people who left the formal school system prematurely.

### **Community**

A community can be described as a collective of individuals with social interdependence, engaging in mutual discussions and decision-making, while also sharing common practices that both shape and fostered by the community itself. Bellah in Social work in (2021).

### **Development**

Development is a complex concept with varied interpretations. Agwu (2016) opined that development can be simplified as the enhancement of people's lives and their progression to a more advanced state, signifying growth and progress. In Nigeria, adult education is closely aligned with national development goals, focusing on facilitating learning and transforming attitudes and behaviors among adults or groups. The policy on education in Nigeria outlines the objectives of adult education, which include providing functional literacy education for those without formal education and offering remedial education for young individuals who left the formal school system prematurely. In essence, development has multifaceted meanings, and adult education plays a crucial role in achieving national development objectives, particularly in improving literacy and addressing educational gaps for those who missed formal schooling. According to Adekola and Nwogu, (2015) the' concept of community development lacks a precise definition that caters for its ever expanding field. While no widely accepted definition is available, few important elements or aspects of community development appear again and again in literature. These elements together provide a generally acceptable description of the term community development. Such elements as noted by Osuji as cited by Adekola and Nwogu (2015) include:

1. community as the unit of action
2. community initiative and leadership as resources
3. Use of both internal and external resources
4. Inclusive participation
5. An organized and comprehensive approach that attempt to involve the entire community, and
6. Democratic and rational task accomplishment

(Higgms, 2013) Verity (2013) in his study of community development by contemporary standard is a polymorphous product, an amalgam of many dynamic and contemporary factors involving education, economic, political and cultural efforts to emancipate the community from retrogressive tradition, poverty, ignorance and diseases. One leading aspect in this definition is the term emancipation, that is to say that community development is not a philanthropic gesture but learning that brings about freedom and development.

### **III. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

From the background of the study, it has been established that adult education programs in the Rivers State, particularly in the Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor local government areas, play a pivotal role in addressing various challenges that have been prevalent in the study area. These challenges include a high prevalence of diseases, elevated mortality rates, low living standards, increased unemployment, rapid population growth, and a dependency on external assistance. These problems have been attributed, in part, to inadequate leadership among the residents of these local government areas.

Despite various government initiatives and empirical studies, the significance of adult education programs in addressing these issues remains clear.

### **IV. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The study had the following specific objectives:

1. To investigate the role of Adult education in fostering community development in the Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor local government areas of Rivers State.
2. To explore the factors that support the positive impact of adult education on community development in the Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor local government areas of Rivers State.
3. To identify the challenges and obstacles that hinder the effectiveness of Adult Education in promoting community development in the Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor local government areas of Rivers State.

### **V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the roles of Adult education in fostering community development in Oyigbo and Obio/Akpor communities of Rivers State?
2. What are the factors that support the positive impact of adult education on community development in the Oyigbo and Obi/Akpor?

### **VI. METHODOLOGY**

The Descriptive Survey research design was adopted for the study and the population of the study comprised for 37,786 beneficiaries of adult Education in Oyigbo and Obio/Akpor L.G.A's of Rivers State while the sample for this study consist of 1889, respondents which was drawn using give percent of the population of the study. The data for this research was collect with self structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaires on Evidence-based insight: Assessing the role of adult education in fostering community development in Oyigbo Local Government Area of Rivers State. Validity was carried out by 3 experts in adult education. Reliability of instrument was determined using split half method. The instrument was divided into two sections "A" contains the background of the respondents while information's based on the research question on a weighted scale of 4 – 1 (four

point scale) Structured as strongly agreed (4) agreed (3), disagreed (2) strongly agreed (1) Data collected from respondents were analyzed using mean and grand mean to answer the research question A criterion mean of 2.5 was used to accept an item while items below 2.50 was rejected. The hypothesis was tested using chi-squares at 0.05 level of significance

**VII. RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** What are the roles of Adult education in fostering community development in Oyigbo and Obio/Akpor communities of Rivers State?

Table 1.1: The Contributions of Adult Education to Community Development in Obio-Akpor and Oyigbo Local Government Areas of Rivers State

S/N	Statements	Responses						
		SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean (x)	Remark
7	Adult education contributes very well to improve people’s living conditions in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs	301 (1204)	1234 (3702)	199 (398)	36 (36)	1770 (5340)	3.02	Agreed
8	Adult education helps people to understand the urgent need for peace in their communities in order to promote community development in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs	283 (1132)	1300 (3900)	166 (332)	21 (21)	1770 (5385)	3.04	Agreed
9	Adult education helps people to come together in other to establish community development projects that will generate income for them in their communities in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs	269 (1076)	1275 (3825)	194 (388)	32 (32)	1770 (5321)	3.01	Agreed
10	Adult education helps different communities in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs to establish community development project that will provide employment to people in area of study.	277 (1108)	1288 (3864)	176 (352)	29 (29)	1770 (5353)	3.02	Agreed
11	Adult education through functional literacy education that will enable them to be gainfully engaged in the development of the society in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs	299 (1196)	1280 (3840)	158 (316)	33 (33)	1770 (5385)	3.04	Agreed
12	Adult education helps farmer to acquire useful knowledge on how to enhance their agricultural productivity in area of the study in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs	288 (1152)	1287 (3861)	175 (350)	20 (20)	1770 (5383)	3.04	
13	Adult education through provision of vocational trainings helps to reduce rural-urban migration in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs	343 (1372)	1285 (3855)	212 (242)	21 (21)	1770 (5490)	3.10	Agreed
	Grand mean						3.04	Agreed

The data in Table 1.1: Show that all the items got positive responses from the respondents. The grand mean of 3.04 confirmed this as indicated in Table 1.1. The data in Table 1.1 reveal that based on the criterion weighted mean value of 2.5 and above, adult education through provision of vocational trainings helps to reduce rural-urban migration in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State attracted the highest mean score of 3.10 and was identified as the most important contribution of adult education to community development in the area of study.

**Research Question 2:** What are the factors that support the positive impact of adult education on community development in the Oyigbo and Obio/Akpor?

Table 2.2: The Factors which facilitate the contributions of Adult Education to Community Development in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor Local Government Area’s of Rivers State.

S/N	Statements	Responses						
		SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Remark
14	Adequate funding of adult education helps to encourage the promotion of community development in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs	276 (1104)	1310 (3930)	155 (310)	29 (29)	1770 (5373)	3.04	Agreed
15	Availability of qualified personnel in adult education programmes also helps to foster community development in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs	254 (1016)	1313 (3939)	149 (388)	34 (34)	1770 (5327)	3.01	Agreed
16	The organization of workshops and conferences by adult education department helps the people of Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs to be aware that they have vital roles to play towards promoting community development in their various communities	254 (1016)	1338 (4014)	149 (298)	29 (29)	1770 (5357)		Agreed
17	The provision of empowerment programmes through adult education helps the people of Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGAs to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to be functional members of their various communities and contribute to community development in their localities.	235 (940)	1309 (3927)	195 (390)	31 (31)	1770 (5288)	2.99	Agreed
18	Functional adult education will encourage people in these areas of study to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to be gainfully employed in order to get money which will help them to contribute to community development in their communities	288 (1152)	1310 (3930)	147 (294)	25 (25)	1770 (5401)	3.05	Agreed
	Grand mean						3.02	Agreed

The data in Table 2.2 show that all the items got positive responses from the respondents The grand mean of 3.02 confirmed this as indicated in Table 43 The data in Table 2.2 reveal that based on the criterion weighted mean value of 2.5 and above, functional adult education will help people in the areas of the study to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to be

gainfully employed in order to get money which will help them to contribute to community development in their communities in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State attracted the highest mean score of 3.05 and was identified as the most important factor which facilitate the provision of adult education to community development in Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGA

### **VIII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings of this study reveal that adult education foster the development of these communities through its contribution towards improving people's living condition, through functional literacy and vocational education which have enable them to acquired skills, knowledge that have help these community members engage in various employment, as well as enabling them understand the urgent need for peace in their communities and come together to established projects that will generate income in the various communities in other to promote community development. Adult education has socioeconomic and political context in different countries, and it is not influenced only by structures and development of adult education but also choices of research scopes, topics and perspectives. In general, adult education is one of the fields of academic endeavor that is saddled with the responsibility of solving socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental problems (Hussain, 2013).

The finding of the study also indicated strong convictions that adult education contributes immensely to community development in both Oyigbo and Obio-Akpor LGA. This is in agreement with the findings of others both in Nigeria and outside Nigeria (Cavaye, 2001; Lee, 2006; Oyenemezu, 2012; Hussain, 2013). To this end, Fasokun (as cited in Oyenemezi, 2012) asserted that adult education is concerned not with preparing people for life, but rather with helping/assisting people (adults) to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies. There are several factors that have contributed to the development of adult education in Nigeria. The findings in this study are not far-fetched from what other researchers have reported (Duman, 2002; Hussain, 2013). the result obtained from this study, which highlighted adequate funding is key to the success of adult education programmes, which in turn, helps to contribute to promoting of community development in Nigeria. Also of importance is the availability of qualified personnel in adult education programmes also helps to contribute to community development. Also, the issue of well- structured curriculum with adequate funding from the three tiers of government will go a long way in ensuring the continuous growth and awareness among the adults on need for continuous adult education programme in Nigeria. Onyenemezu (2012) outline some fundamental requirement for education in this 21st century, he submitted that as laudable as those requirements are, adult education has not succeeded in achieving its key and Abraham (in Onyenemezu and Aduvo, 2014) outlined some factors that promote adult education and sustainable development, to include equity, social development, inclusive approach, human-environment, harmony and Co-operation Hence, adult education should be re-positioned to excessively launch the present adults into the orbit where they can respond to the challenges of the 21St century and make meaningful contributions to national development (Onyenemezu, 2012).

The problems that militate against adult education are numerous. Hussain (2013) reported that some of these problems to include accessibility, inadequate funding, lack of mobilization, and lack of or inadequate number of literacy instructors or personnel who posses Information and Communication Technology skills in Nigeria. This is in agreement with the findings of this study where inadequate funds and corruption top the chart Oyenemezu (2012) urges the government to provide funds which is critical to the growth of adult education in Nigeria, and noted due to the numerous challenges especially in this 21st century, overhauling of adult education is inevitable In the vein, Osuji (2011) affirmed that it is necessary for Nigeria to heighten efforts towards adult education in order to enable the citizens achieve self-fulfillment and fullness during the twenty-first century.

### **IX. CONCLUSION**

This study discussed the contributions of adult education in the promotion of community development thereby improving the living condition of the people in the studied area by increasing their skills, knowledge, awareness so that they can actively participate in the developmental process of their communities Adult education, though taken by the Nigerian society to be a low-cost area of educational system, but from the point of view of return on investment, it is the most productive and profitable area of Nigerian educational system because of its immediate application for the growth of national economy. It is the adults that can transform the nations not children The development of any nation depends on the quality of adults that the nation has Adult education brings a great sense of dignity and self-esteem, enhanced respect of others, an ability to take control of one's life and a greater desire to participate in society It should be vigorously pursued as through it there would be an all-round development

Therefore adult education is necessary to ensure an enlightened government and citizenry, whose insights, activities and decisions are very vital to the cause of education and the achievement of national goals and the overall developmental of our society.

#### X. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study it is imperative to make the following recommendations:

1. Adequate funding: since adult education is central to the individual's survival and contributions to community development in particular and the state and nation in general; it should be adequately funded by the government.
2. Policy documents like the National Policy of Education (NPE) and Nigerian Constitution should be clear as to what specific roles the different levels of government; Federal, State and Local Governments should play in the implementation of specific programmes with regards to adult education. This becomes imperative in order to avoid duplication of functions and to know which of the tiers of the government that is responsible for effective implementation of adult education.
3. Available and reliable data is needed for proper planning and implementation of adult education programme that will help in the promotion of community development in area of the study. Data on the needs of learners, the number of those out of school, the required classrooms and needed instructors.

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