

## **ADULT EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.**

*Okafor Ikechukwu M.*

Department of Foundation, Arts and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

**Email:**

ikechukwuokafor81@yahoo.com/08033290270

**Abstract**

The paper focuses on the importance of adult education in promoting sustainable community development in Nigeria. It discusses the concept of adult education, sustainable community development in Nigeria and adult education as a veritable means of enhancing sustainable community development in the rural communities. The study employed secondary source of methodology and stated that adult education as a lifelong education is a very good tool for development. Findings reveal that education and most especially adult education plays a significant role in community sustainable development such as reduction in illiteracy, acquisition of skills, knowledge and information, enhancement of social activities and mobility, identification of common needs, partake in decision making and implementation, healthcare and reduction in rural-urban migration amongst others. The situation can equally be improved through adequate provision of quality adult education centres, and mobilization, conscientization and sensitization of community members on the need for community engagement, participation and involvement which will not only propel development but will enhance sustainable community development in Nigeria.

**Keyword:** Adult education, Development, Community Development, Sustainable Community Development.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is a fundamental human development pillar encompassing various activities and processes to acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. It is a lifelong journey of learning that begins from the moment a person is born and continues to the end of the life. Education is not only designed for formal institutions such as schools and universities; it

extends to informal settings, (adult education), personal experiences and interactions within the world around us. It is therefore a process of gaining or imparting knowledge that aids in building a proficient personality, ultimately improving the quality of life and enhances sustainable development and community wellbeing (Owede, 2022). Education is a mechanism that is directed to nation building and

development. Okafor and Teibowei (2023) as cited in Egbezor agreed that non-formal education plays an important role in sustainable development of any society.

It is in this vein that sustainable development is believed to be a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (Ugwu & Ijah 2011). Okafor and Onukwu (2020) were of the opinion that sustainable community development addresses the issue of the current needs without trading off the future needs of the community. The concept of sustainability is that education is crucial in shaping personal and collective knowledge, skills, Needs, values and attitudes to enable individuals move along the pathway towards sustainable community development and a catalyst for development itself (Okafor & Onukwu, 2020). Consequently, education according to Dimkpa (2023) is the vehicle for social mobilization, freedom from poverty and slavery, sustainable community and economic development which make it imperative for adult populace to be exposed to some basic education that will enable them not only communicate in the environment but contribute effectively in sustainable community development.

It is in this instance that Asojo (2017) insists that adult education enables individuals to become more useful to their community socially, economically, morally and politically. It is all embracing as it brings about changes in information, knowledge, understanding, skills, appreciation and attitude (Emeya, 2022). Its importance cannot be overemphasized mostly at this era of global competence and competitiveness. It tests the ability of a nation's educational system to produce competent labour force which is nationally and globally relevant. In this circumstance, adult education programmes should be able to produce

adults who are self-reliant and possess the necessary employable skills for effective national and community development. Emeya (2022) emphasizes that adult education is any form of education (formal, informal and non-formal) for adults based on their felt social, economic, political and cultural needs to enable them adjust fully to life changes, partake in decision making and be able to proffer solutions. As one of the components of education, adult education offers opportunities that help adult learners to acquire relevant skills including attitudinal changes for immediate application to address prevailing human and community development problems.

Adult education is a branch of education which embraces adults and young adults alike and is saddled with the responsibility of solving socio-economic, cultural, political and educational problems. Adult education offers opportunities that help adults' recipients to acquire relevant knowledge, skills and information and attitudinal change to address and participate in community development activities. Adult education can be used as a veritable instrument for transmitting knowledge, skills and information that promote inclusiveness of adult citizens in community development activities. Adult education as an emerging field for sustainable development is the nucleus of this paper (Owede, 2022).

### **Adult Education**

Adult education has been defined by several authors and scholars and each definition is based on the philosophical perspective of the authors or the scholars. According to Zuofa (2023) adult education and learning entails systematic, ongoing learning activities that adults engage in to acquire new skills and information. This is an example of how human sustainable development is used to frame adult education and learning. However, adult education encompasses all aspect of the formal, informal and

non- formal learning process through which people who are considered adults by their community enhance and expand their capacity to live better and work in their own interests as well as their societies' organizations', and communities' interest, (UNESCO,2016). This definition captures adult education as a core component of lifelong learning that involves all forms of education and learning aimed at ensuring that all adults participate in their community development is a means by which the basic amenities required Government or private initiatives provide services for a certain community, ultimately fostering advancement and development (Dimkpa, 2023).

Okafor and Onukwu (2023) as cited Fasokun stated that adult education is concerned not only with preparing people for life, but rather, with helping or assisting people to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their communities and contribute meaningfully to the development of those communities. In another development, Onyenemezu and Aduvo (2014) agree with the idea that adult education helps and promotes individual vision for a superior and enhanced future for themselves, families and the societies at large. It is a system where adults develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge and take to the new order of sustainable community development (Onyenemezu & Aduvo, 2024). Adult education is a process of conscientization with emphasis on making a man to be himself, be aware of his existential reality and to work towards recreating any situation to his advantage.

Okafor and Onukwu (2023) opt that adult education can be relied upon for sensitizing people to analytically assess the impact of government's economic, political, social, and environmental and general policies such as sustainable community development amongst others. It is the utilitarian benefits of adult education that Okafor and Arikawei

(2020) postulate 'adult education as part time or full-time education for men and women of all ages either organized by themselves or provided by schools, learning centres, or other agencies which enable them to improve their general or professional knowledge, skills and abilities by either continuing their education or resuming their initial or incomplete education of previous years'. Consequently, Okafor and Arikawei (2020) in Rogers stated that 'adult education comprises all planned and purposeful learning opportunities offered to those who are recognized and recognize themselves as adults in their own community and who left the formal (initial education system or who have passed beyond the possible state of initial education if they were not in it), whether such learning opportunities treat the learners as adults in decision making, use of appropriate adult learning methodology and style and purpose and to meet their own needs'(Okafor & Arikawei 2020).

Hassan and Oyebamiji (2012) allied themselves that adult education embraces all forms of educative experiences needed by men and women according to their varying interests and requirements in their different levels of comprehension and ability and in their changing roles and responsibilities throughout life. In furtherance, Anyanwu, Ononeze, and Chukwuji (2019) recognized the importance of adult education and stated that the general purpose of adult education is to assist adults to increase competence in order to adapt to their society through the acquisition of regular practical skills, knowledge, attitude, and values that will enable them to solve personal problems. It is equally for adults who need to make up for what they lost in the formal school system or for those who desire to use their leisure more meaningful or people who need to acquire new and improved skill in order to adjust to changes and challenges in technology and or occupation (Okafor & Onukwu 2023). This implies therefore that it is the

adults of today who hold the development and the destiny of their nation in their hands and not the children.

In spite of all definitions by different scholars, a more comprehensive and inclusive one from Seya (2014) states that adult education is 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 education inadequacies of mature people or equipping them with the knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfillment and active participation and engagement in the social, economic and political life of the society. This agrees with the basic roles of adult education as an engine filling the lapses caused by lack or inadequate early education system. It also supports the idea that education is a pathway to enlightenment, a key player in skill acquisitions, knowledge, positive change in attitude and behavior, and improves the functional role of individuals in community development projects.

### **Sustainable Community Development in Nigeria**

Community is a place where people live, practice their culture and custom, strive to train their children, maintain good livelihood and co-habit with others. A community is equally a group of people who share the same vision and ideas. Okafor (2022) stated that a community is a group of people with diverse characters, knowledge and ability linked by cultural affinity and social ties share a common perspective and engage in joint action within geographical locations and setting for the purpose of their wellbeing and the development of their community. In furtherance, Okafor (2022) as cited in Ogili stated that community is a territorially bounded social system within which people live in harmony, love, and intimacy and share common social, economic and cultural characteristics. The concept of a community is about a people living within legally

established city limits where the citizen has some social and economic features in common which enable them to pursue common goals, aspirations and enhance sustainable community development principles.

Community however, is made up of men and women and development could not be possible without the active involvement, engagement and participation of community members. It is a pretense, according to Emeh, Eluwa and Ukah (2012) that sustainable development could occur in a community without the active participation of the people, particularly the large number of adults who reside in the community, Obeta and Charity (2012) state that substantial participation and sustained interest could only be achieved through community development efforts of the people and in direct consonance with the people's social cultural educational and religious values. This entail that self-sustained development is important to the participating communities' economic, education, healthcare and social amenities which promote sustainable development.

Therefore, to enhance community participation in sustainable development, a systematic policy of mobilization of the community and people in the development outlook is imperative. Hence, development is a conscious effort made or designed by individual, organizations or state authorities to facilitate the gradual growth, advancement and improved wellbeing of man and the community (Okafor, 2022). In this circumstance therefore, development becomes human advancement rather than infrastructure. This view is shared by Okafor (2024) when he stated that the emphasis of development should be on the people not on infrastructure because they (people) are thought to appreciate what constitutes change.

It is the knowledge of the developmental change of community development that made it a mutual understanding and cooperation within and among

people of the same community or society to work harmoniously. Frank and Smith (2013) agreed that it is a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems within the society. Chukwuezi cited in Okafor (2022) sees it as a process whereby the efforts of the community people are combined with the efforts of the governmental authorities to improve the living conditions of the citizens, thereby encouraging the development of various human potentials within the community. Community development is a vehicular process whereby people are taught to improve themselves not only by doing things together but also by planning together with a view to promoting sustainable community development.

The primary objective in community development is sustainability and that is why the citizens are conscientized, sensitized and participate actively towards promoting and maintaining sustainable community development.

### **Adult Education: Means for sustainable community Development in Nigeria**

Education is a mechanism that is inextricably linked to nation building and development. It is because of its utility that governments commit immense resources to ensure the provision of education for the citizens irrespective of age, sex, tribe, social lining and at the same time make it affordable and accessible to the generality of their citizens through different outlets. It is in this circumstance therefore, that adult education assumes a definite role in producing and promoting better attitude knowledge, information and abilities that enhance better engagements and quality participations which propel community and national developmental sustainability (Okafor & Onukwu, 2020)

It is the need to achieve and maintain sustainable development that community dwellers should be conscientized to participate in all adult education

programmes which ignite socio-economic, political, and cultural development. In order to achieve sustainable community development, the mass of the citizens should be empowered, have access to quality adult learning centres where they could acquire new skills, knowledge, information and ability so as to sustain community development principles and programmes. Onyenemezu and Aduvo (2014) see adult education programmes as only the means for sustainable community development in Nigeria. In this circumstance, adult education becomes a vehicle for social change and social mobility which are vital tools for a more equitable distribution of power and resources in any society which will in turn enhance community development, (Ememe,2011). Social change and mobility will reduce inequality; promote social justice among the adulthood. This is because it is only the educated mind that knows and determines what development means and therefore works towards sustaining its principles. They further stated that Nigeria is rich in human and material resources, yet it is classified among countries with high level of poverty because of poor participation in adult learning and programmes. In conclusion therefore they stated emphatically that adult citizens must embrace adult education because it is the only veritable means for achieving sustainable national/ community development (Onyenemezu and Oduvo, 2014).

Dimkpa (2023) opts that adult education is a core component of lifelong learning which involves all forms of education and learning aimed at ensuring that all adults participate in their community development as a means by which the basic amenities required government or private initiatives provide services for a community development and wellbeing. This will foster advancement, knowledge, participation and development. Roumell (2018) emphasized that a community's ability to come together, identify needs and learn in a participative



and collaborative manner weaves and reinforces a social fabric that increases the general welfare and sense of belonging of the community members. This helps to maintain and sustain community development as it propels all-inclusiveness.

The quality of education a nation provides is what puts such a nation in the globalization race for development. According to World Bank (2014), empowerment is a process of increasing the capacity of individuals or group to make choices, take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and transferring those choices and decisions into desired actions that lead to development. If that is so, then Nigeria must be prepared to join the process through its education, characterized by its quality adult learning process, learning centres accessibility, adult participation, knowledge and information acquisition, vocational skills and ability to partake in decision making of the community. It is these utilitarian benefits that Liego (2021) affirms that education (adult education inclusive) helps to forge connections between individuals and groups, which can result in greater communication and coordination that aid sustainable community development. One of the sterling characteristics of a community shows that it is a process based on the sharing of power, skills, information, and experience. Therefore, community development through adult education programmes and activities are thought to entail the active involvement of the people in the issues that affect their lives and wellbeing (Usman, Abdullahi, Katako & Abubakar, 2022). Adult education becomes a very vital education and plays a useful role in community development and unites the recipients to become development vanguards.

In any developmental process, adults are veritable organs that could not be toyed with by any society that aims to develop. Due to the fact that adults are 'subjects' not 'objects' of development as Bariko

cited in Okafor and Onukwu (2020) believes that people (adults) so affected by any development must be active doers, not Passive recipients of development. In order to make adult active recipients of development, Asiyai (2015) believes that obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development as it is only quality education that can sharpen the minds of individual and help transform the society's economic growth, equip adults with skills which improve their livelihoods and help them participate in the development of the community. Hussain (2013) states that adult education programmes confirm increased levels of self-esteem and high level of knowledge and skills which encourage positive and active involvement and engagement of people in their own development and wellbeing. It is in this premise that development cannot be delivered to people but must come from within the people in order to change their living conditions and enhance their active participation and engagements. Esuefieni (2020) insists that if there is no participation or engagement there is hardly any development.

The main principle in adult education is its flexibility in learning which distinguished it from the former education. The unique learning enhances skill acquisitions, human development, information and participation in community development sustainability. Obidiegwu and Obiozor (2014) stated emphatically that adult education enhances one's choice and capabilities without limitation for the whole life span through the different programmes it offers which build lives and destinies and enhance active participation in community development of one's community. Obidiegwu and Obiozor argued that adult education is used to mobilize men and women to enable them understand development constraints such as poverty, illiteracy, ignorant diseases and exploitation and then work toward

eliminating them for community development and its sustainability. In this instance, community leaders as major stakeholders and agents for mobilization must institute adult education programmes. It is on this premise that Adirika (2013) opts that the wheel of development of any nation or community lies on the shoulders of their leaders. It is the leaders who will galvanize the citizens, ensure people's involvement and engagement towards adult education programmes which are geared towards providing essential competencies necessary to improve citizens' lives as individuals and help them participate in community programmes and activities. Leadership factor is a key variable for sustainable community development in Nigeria. Leadership is a process consisting of transactions between the leader and the followers in which case an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Ogunmilade, Nwoko and Akhigbe (2017) are of the opinion that leadership is the capacity of a person to inspire confidence and thereby regard for himself to guide and govern the followers in order to achieve a set developmental goal. Adult education in this circumstance is inevitable as it will equip the local leaders with the prerequisite skills, knowledge, information and method to galvanize confidence to the people. Egwu (2012) stated that Nigeria is currently undergoing rapid changes economically, politically, culturally and educationally and to meet the challenges in the fast-changing world, adult education becomes vital instrument for community/society development and change. At this stage adults will develop leadership skills, participate in decision making and actively involved in sustainable community development.

The most significant ingredient for community development and participation is health. It is one of the cardinals required basic social needs of the rural communities. This is because health services have been the driving force for community development.

That is why Osain (2011) believes that adults should be educated on such areas as patent education, hygiene, nutrition, disease prevention and death during child birth amongst others. In view of the importance of community health and sustainable development, Ibama and Dennis (2016) argued that community health and natural development are inextricably tied together, in which the evaluation of national development cannot be complete without the community health component. Zuofa (2008) as cited in Amatari and Iqvesi (2023) stated that adult education encourages individuals of all ages to improve on their abilities and potentials through the available varieties of modes of non-formal, informal and formal education that enable adult learners to meet the challenges of the global world. It is therefore the responsibilities of the government especially at the local levels to provide adult learning centres and equally conscientize citizens on the benefits of active involvement and participation in sustainable community development.

### **Conclusion**

According to the discourse, adult education programmes and activities should be channeled to mobilizing and involving adult citizens so that they could participate actively in community development activities in Nigeria. Adult education programmes and activities should be tailored towards strengthening and integrating community development programmes. Adult education and community development should include grassroots involvement and human capacity building and engagement in order to enhance sustainable community development. This will imply that communities will witness educational, cultural, economic, political, and social transformation as adult education activities become more accessible to adults and equally meet their needs. The easy accessibility will help adults acquire the requisite information and skills necessary for active

participation and thus, sustainable community development. This will increase widespread community development programmes that will transform communities to semi-urban and reduce urban-migration syndrome. Adult education as a component of lifelong education will not only help adults engage in community development but will help maintain sustainable community development and improve self-reliance among individuals.

### **Suggestions**

The following suggestions are made based on the outcome of this paper.

1. Government at all levels should organize sensitization programmes for rural dwellers where citizens are enlightened and educated on the need to participate in community development. This will increase all-inclusiveness of community members and will enhance active participations of the rural citizens
2. The community leaders should mobilize the people towards involving and engaging in the development activities. This is with a view to enlightening them on the benefits of community development and its sustainability. The merits will help reduce project abandonment due to citizens' apathy and enhance sustainable project development
3. Adequate training on adult education and community development programmes should be carried out at the grassroots level to help improve their skills and awareness. It will curtail rural-urban migration and stabilize the people.

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