

## **An Assessment of the Impact of Community Education On Socio-Economic Development in Rivers State 2001-2008**

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### **Abstract**

*Since 2000 the role of the State in community education has been re-awakened and revived in Nigeria. This paper examined the impact of this education strategy on Socio-Economic development, focusing in Crop production and Employment in Rivers State of Nigeria from 2001 to 2008. It adopted the analytical research design drawing on secondary data from Federal and Rivers State Government sources. The finding is that community education had no impact on socio-economic development focusing on crop production and employment.*

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### **Introduction**

The role of education as an instrument of social change is acknowledged everywhere. In developing countries therefore, it is imperative that nations adopt effective strategies that will help them realize their aspirations. Community education is a relatively new field of study owing to the level of development of its theory and practice. Despite this, it has been long associated with social change in Nigeria. Since 2000 the field has witnessed remarkable changes in Nigeria. Notably the role of the state in the field has re-awakened after several decades of passivity. In Rivers State of Nigeria the response to this has been renewed commitment to using community education strategy to achieve socio-economic transformation in the State.

A popular opinion is that the impact of community education on Socio-Economic development includes improvement in general well being. This involves increase in productivity of agriculture, increase in employment, increase in opportunities for education and training, increased voice in decision-making, and improvement in the quality and quantity of infrastructures. Achievement of these objectives implies reduction in rate of incidence of poverty and inequality. It is against this background that this paper assessed the impact of community education on socio-economic development focusing on crop production and employment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Rivers State is one of the Nigerian states plagued by severe social, economic and environmental challenges, leading to high incidence state of poverty and increase in inequality. Since Rivers State was created in 1967, successive administrations have tried to tackle these challenges using various strategies without success. Recently community

education strategy has been adopted with the hope that it will proffer solution to these problems. The question is what change has occurred in crop production and employment since 2001 to 2008.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study is to assess the impact of community education on socio-economic development between 2001 to 2002. The specific objectives are as follow:

1. To assess changes in crop production?
2. To assess changes in employment?
3. To explain the policy implication for ABE in the globalized economy.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What was the impact of Community Education on crop production?
2. What was the impact of Community Education on employment in Rivers State?
3. What is the policy implication for ABE in the globalized economy?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Clarification**

Community Education has attracted many definitions but none is universally accepted. It has been seen as life long learning, education without walls, adult education, social change and community development. While these concepts are related to community education, they differ markedly in meaning and definition from it. Harris (2009) believed that Community Education offers education and training opportunities and provisions for personal development to all ages in the community. In spite of this, the concept of community education varies with context.

In Nigeria, community education refers to outreach programmes of an organization, outside the organization's premises to reach out to people elsewhere. It does not cover the wide range of educational and personal development activities provided by private and public agencies to those who can afford the cost. Community Education is a part of public service; hence it is mainly funded by government its purpose in Nigeria is promote adult basic education (ABE). Basic education policy in Nigeria incorporated adult basic education. According to the policy FRN (1999) cited in Wordu (2007) ABE offers adults opportunity to acquire basic literacy skills, life skills and vocational education and training.

#### **Socio-Economic Development**

Due to the constraints associated with the market system, developing countries prefer this approach as the means of developing their areas. Socio-Economic development refers to social changes involving mainly social and economic factors, (Thompson, 1981). It requires alterations in output and structure of production and distribution. It also embraces changes in preferences and needs (Cambridge University n.d) Todoru and Smith (2009) noted that it involves agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructures, care for the environment and participation of the poor in decision-making.

Agriculture is the most important indicator of socio-economic development. What happens in the agricultural sector determines whether economic development will be

achieved or not. In developing countries more than 15 percent of populations are engaged in agricultural, particularly in the area of food production (Tudaro and Smithy, 2009) this is mostly engaged in women. Eheazu (1990) viewed Socio-Economic development as a process of change involving economic and social aspects directed at raising the standard of living, quality of life and dignity of rural dwellers. He further stated that it also requires infrastructure and mobilization.

### **Association of Adult Basic Education and Socio-Economic Development**

This is no new idea because it is generally believed that human resources are the most important ingredients for achieving prosperity in any nation of the world. For instance Todarro (1977), cited in Nzeneri (2014) opined that: “*clearly a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the nation economy will not be unable to develop anything else*”.

This requires that people should be given the opportunity to develop their talents and abilities. Thus, they need to be well informed, knowledgeable and skillful. This is partly the condition if they will be able to create their own fortunes and happiness.

Based on this Eheazu (1990) stressed the importance of educating the people, particularly adults. He had this to say:

*“These adults who now constitute the illiterate, unskilled, semi-skilled and semi-professional labour force require some specific functional training/vocational programmes to remedy not only their deficiencies but also to meet the needs of their various occupations whether as farmers, artisans or employees of corporate organizations”.*

Ihejirika (2010) corroborated this, pointing out that many farmers especially in rural areas need to be helped through extension education not only to be assured of food for the family and nutrition but also to produce enough for sale to live improved life

Thus; ABE brings about development of occupations thereby, leading increased production. ABE also enables people access to labour market and employment. This is through the means of vocational education and training (VET) (Brooke, 1972). The new vision of VET however, stretches beyond economic objective to embrace social and human needs (Fiend Wilson, 2009).

### **The Need for Provision of Resources**

The needs for provision of resources have been emphasized by many authors. (Ekpe et al.,2014). This is because it is the means of helping people to utilize the knowledge and skills acquired to improve their conditions. In rural areas which constitute the bulk of the population, a major constraint is the lack of the capacity to exploit opportunities available for improving themselves due to limited resources. Therefore, the actions of government are needed if disadvantaged will have share from society’s resources.

## Changes in Community Education in Rivers State

The vision for the transformation of Rivers State owes its origin to Diете Spiff's administration. Since that time successive governments have adopted several measures to realize the vision without success. Recently there has been renewed commitment to using, community education strategy to tackle this challenge. As a result four to five demonstration centres have been created to facilitate the training and education of the people. Programmes are delivered to participants across the State focusing on crop production, livestock and agro processing. Others include skill areas such as fashion and designing, inasonry, welding and fabrication, plumbing, auto mechanic, electrical and electronics, GSM repairs and maintenance, computer repairs and maintenance etc. Communities are encouraged to form co-operatives as part of the enabling structures needed to facilitate access to services.

## Review of Empirical Literature on the Impact of Community Education focusing on Crop Production and Employment

The impact of community education should be to increase output, in the area of crop production and reduce unemployment by increasing the number of people employed. Patrick (2009) found that skill acquisition programmes in Rivers and Lagos States yielded increased productivity. Oji (2014)'s findings suggest that there was no increase in the productivity of rice increased in Rivers State as a result of Community development efforts of both government and communities. Studies focusing on employment found that unemployment rate increased rather than decreased annually, which means there was no improvement in employment.

## Methodology

This study adopted the analytical research design (Oghenekohwe, n.d). This research design draws mainly on secondary data and involves on critical analysis, clarification and juxtaposition.

## Data Analysis

This section is concerned with data analysis based on the research questions.

**Research Question 1:** What was the impact of community education on Crop Production between 2001 to 2008 in Rivers State?

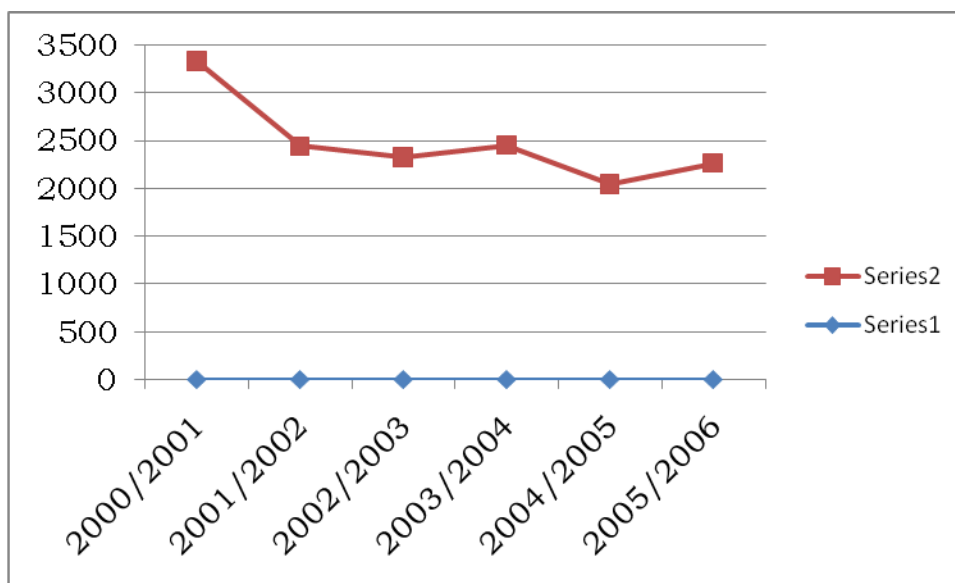
Crop	Years					
	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Groundnut	0.26	0.62	0.13	0.33	0.25	0.30
Beans	0.23	0.21	0.18	0.36	0.21	0.26
Yam	1,066	766	741	802	827	794
Maize	143.78	101.18	90.14	93.99	97.71	103.28
Cassava	1936	1402	1351	1405	962	1251
Rice	-	-	-	-	-	-
Melon	3.74	2.62	2.24	2.31	3.27	3.24

Cocoyam	181.13	161.59	136.94	142.42	145.00	105.56
<b>Total Output</b>	3331.74	2434.21	2321.63	2446.41	2035.44	2257.64

**Table 1: Crop Production (Thousand Metric Tons) by Year: 2001- 2006**

Source: Rivers State Directorate of Budget and Planning

**Fig. 1 Crop Production (Thousand Metric Tons) by Year: 2001-2006**



The data in table 1 (above) showed that yield has been rising and falling between 2000/2001 to 2004/2006. Also shown is that output for groundnut, beans and melon are the lowest while that of cassava, yam and maize are relatively higher. Cocoyam yield has been progressively decreasing up to 2005/2006 farming season.

**Research question two:** What was the impact of Community Education on Employment between 2001 to 2008?

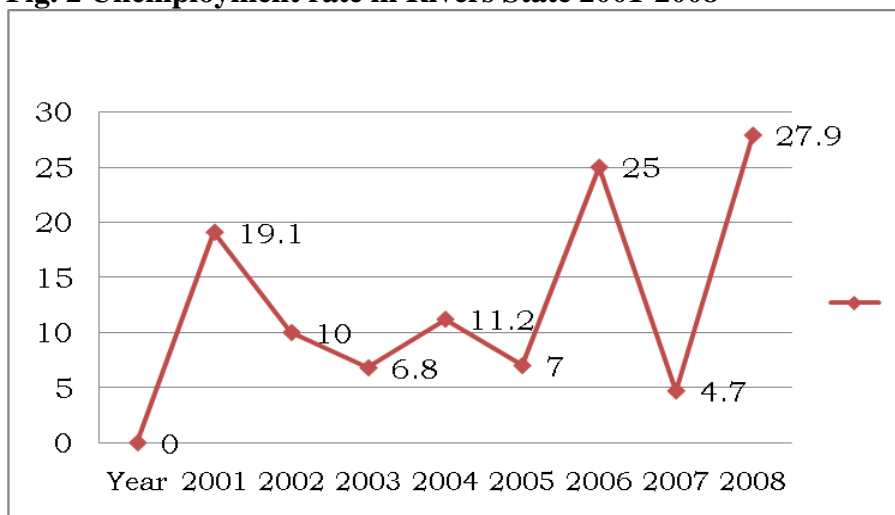
**Table 2: Unemployment in Rivers State 2001-2008**

Year	Unemployment rate
2001	19.1
2002	10.0
2003	6.8
2004	11.2
2005	7.0
2006	25.0
2007	4.7
2008	27.9

Source: Nigerian Bureau of Statistics 2006.

The data in table 2 (above) indicate that unemployment rate rose and fell within an interval of one or two years. For instance unemployment rate fell from 19.1 to 10.0 between 2001 to 2002, and from 10.0 to 6.8 between 2002 to 2003. Unemployment reduction did not recover as there was a sharp rise in 2004 (11.2). It declined again in 2005 but did not recover in 2006. It rose again and declined in 2007, and rose in 2008. These figures indicate that employment did not steadily increase during this period.

**Fig. 2 Unemployment rate in Rivers State 2001-2008**



**Research question 3: Implication for ABE in the globalized economy.**

Although the basic education policy embraced adults as well as children, the implementation processes focus solely on schooling for the children. The global economy with all the emphasis on knowledge economy suggests policy shift in favour of adults in order to achieve growth as well as competitiveness in the global market. This is because adults are the ones that need training and education most for the nation to face the challenges of the globalized economy.

### Discussion of Findings

The finding from research question one is that annual yield of crops cultivated did not increase progressively during the period, rather yield increased and decreased within an interval of one or two years. This finding disagrees with Patrick (2009), that skill acquisition programmes resulted to increased production during this period.

The finding from research question two is that unemployment rate rose and fell within an interval of one or two years. This means there was no progressive change in employment in Rivers State during the period examined. It showed that the number of those employed decreased throughout the period.

The finding from research question one and two are similar. This is shown in figures 1 and 3.

The results are due to lack of financial support. The Obasanjo-led government at the Federal level and Odili-led government at the State level failed to provide funds for programmes/projects implemented in the State. Governor Omehia's tenure in office was too short to make any change regarding funding. This has resulted to many unemployed roaming the streets of our major cities in search of job.

### **Recommendations of the Study**

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Decentralization for policy effectiveness. Funds should be disbursed through local government councils, with supervision of the state and other agencies.
2. Female learners should be attracted to the programme and given attention since they constitute the bulk of rural underprivileged population, otherwise the objectives of the programme may not be achieved.

### **Conclusion**

This finding of this study leads us to conclude that community education is very important for the well being of the society. It is dependent on government funding. The more committed government to community education, the more the impact it will make on employment and crop production or any other Socio-Economic development indicators, and the greater the proportion of self employed in crop production. Lack of commitment to community education is dangerous to the welfare of Rivers State inhabitants. The greater the commitment towards community education, the greater will be the proportion of people engaged in crop production and other activities.

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