

# Education And Community Development in Ebonyi State: A Case Study of Oshiri Community

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## **Abstract**

*Education is a fundamental driver of community development, fostering economic growth, social progress, and sustainable livelihoods. In Ebonyi State, Nigeria, rural communities like Oshiri face significant educational challenges that hinder their overall development. This study examines the interplay between education and community development in Oshiri, analyzing the current state of education, its impact on socio-economic growth, and the interventions by government and non-governmental organizations. The research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative interviews with community stakeholders and quantitative data from schools and government reports. Findings reveal infrastructural deficits, inadequate teacher staffing, and cultural barriers as major impediments to educational advancement. However, evidence also shows that where education thrives, it leads to improved healthcare, reduced poverty, and stronger community participation in development initiatives. The study concludes with policy recommendations to enhance educational access and quality in Oshiri, emphasizing community engagement, government accountability, and private sector involvement.*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Studies indicate that the world is not progressing sufficiently to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Effective strategies for reaching these goals must be based on existing capabilities and tailored to local needs (Roesch and Rahmaty, 2020). However, with less than five years remaining, many communities still lack a clear understanding of the SDGs, as governments—particularly in developing nations—often adopt top-down approaches (Marcus, 2015). One key method for disseminating the 2030 agenda at local levels, such as cities and grassroots communities, is through education and community development initiatives.

According to Izunna (2024) Community Development is a process that aims to improve the quality of life and well-being of individual within a specific community.

Developing nations, in particular, grapple with severe sustainability issues such as extreme poverty, hunger, environmental damage, water scarcity, disease outbreaks, corruption, political unrest, and violence (Al-Dahir and Bisley, 2009). These remain critical global concerns as Oshiri community is not left out. Over 75% of people in these regions live in more unequal societies than in the 1990s, and tragically, more than a billion still survive on less than \$1.25 per day (Clark, 2015). There is indeed a global attention on education as a veritable instrument for economic growth, increased value of productivity, poverty reduction, enhancement of individual, social, political, and national development (Rowell 2020).

Ebonyi State, located in southeastern Nigeria, has made strides in education, yet rural communities like Oshiri in Onicha Local Government Area still grapple with systemic challenges.

Education is the intellectual and moral enlightenment of individual, equipping them with an understanding of life's core principles and guiding the cultivation of skills for better or worse, within their chosen paths.

**Education Participation:**

1. What is the educational representation of Oshirians?
2. What percentage of Oshirians have completed:
  - Primary school
  - Secondary school
  - Technical/vocational training
  - University education

**Education and Business Success:**

3. Has your education or knowledge contributed to your business achievements?
4. How many Oshirians own thriving businesses?

**Education Funding:**

5. Who supported your education/training financially? (family, scholarships, self-funded, etc.)

**Path to Success:**

6. How did you attain your current position? Through:
  - Missionary schools
  - Private education
  - Public schooling
  - Informal/non-traditional learning

**Future Security:**

7. Have you made provisions for your future? (e.g., life insurance coverage)

**Professional Connections:**

8. Do you actively build and maintain professional networks?

Education is a critical tool for poverty alleviation, gender equality, and sustainable development (UNDP, 2020). In Oshiri, where subsistence farming dominates, education could serve as a catalyst for economic diversification and youth empowerment.

According to Akoh C.(2014) Education is a means to prosperity and an informed person is an educated person. Formal education is obtained from public and private universities, technical and other institutions of higher learning- usually comes with a degree, diploma or a certificate. Informal education does not involve structured classroom institutions but can come in the form of learning a trade, learning something from your parents, colleagues, peers, house helper, your employee, your mistake, or from simple observation.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite government efforts like the free education policy, Oshiri's educational system suffers from dilapidated infrastructure, teacher shortages, and high dropout rates—particularly among girls. This study investigates how these challenges affect community development and explores solutions for sustainable improvement.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To assess the state of education in Oshiri Community.
2. To examine the relationship between education and socio-economic development.
3. To evaluate government and NGO interventions in Oshiri's education sector.
4. To propose actionable recommendations for enhancing education and community development.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What is the current state of education in Oshiri Community?
2. How does education influence community development in Oshiri?
3. What are the major challenges facing education in Oshiri?
4. What policies and interventions can improve education and development in Oshiri?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual Framework: Education and Development**

Education is widely recognized as a key factor in human capital development (Schultz, 1961). In developing nations, it enhances productivity, reduces inequality, and promotes democratic governance (World Bank, 2018). To understand education's role in national development, Imhabekhai and Onyeozu (cited in Erinsakin et al., 2019) argue that "for any nation to achieve rapid progress in social, economic, political, and technological spheres, it must provide functional education for its citizens" (p.27). In other words, national advancement across all key sectors fundamentally depends on substantial investment in education that equips citizens to contribute meaningfully to society.

At the global level, education is recognized as a vital tool for maintaining peace, eliminating poverty, and achieving sustainable development (Erinsakin et al., 2019). Smith (2015) defines education as "the thoughtful, optimistic, and respectful nurturing of learning opportunities, based on the principle that everyone deserves access to knowledge and personal growth.

Education is a deliberate process of imparting valuable knowledge, skills, and principles to learners, fostering their potential for both personal growth and societal progress (Uyang et al., 2017).

Community development is a process that aims to improve the quality of life and well-being of individuals within a specific community (Izunna 2024).

To Akoh C. (2014), community service means giving back to the community where you grew up, where you live and worship, where you got your education, and where you work. It can be in the form of helping aged seniors buy something from the market, taking someone to the hospital, visiting a sick person, volunteering to help clean the road side of debris, volunteering to serve as an Officer in your village or Umunna meetings, age grade, local branch of NPU in your city, organizing a fund raising event, medical services, having a business in town that employs our people, helping some people achieve their dreams, organizing extra mural and extra-curricular activities to keep our young ones out of trouble. Through community service you make friends, network, learn from each other, give back to community, serve God, and have self and inner peace that you are a responsible citizen of Nanka. You can help shape the development of Nanka and her future. You contribute your talent, intellectual capability, time, and sometimes money, to uplift your community.

Education: Education is a means to prosperity. An informed person is an educated person. Nanka citizens can be justifiably proud of the number of educated indigenes but that is not enough or should we say, do awe gainfully utilize the education? My parents did not have a formal education but they knew the value of education and trained their first daughter, Pauline Eyisi nee Akoh) at the time when sending girls to school was not a cool thing to do. The result was that her children and the Akoh family now enjoy the fruits of our parents' vision. Education in various forms is needed to help us as follows:

- Develop mental, moral, physical, economic, healthy, and citizenship power
- Educated Nankarian is an informed and empowered citizen
- Education means everything, is key to success very important in early childhood development

- Education opens up unlimited opportunities
- Learning process-can be learning a trade or a formal education
- Education helps reduce criminal tendencies
- Makes us responsible citizens
- Allows one to be able to travel worldwide
- Helps us to engage in civil discourse and politics
- Improve standard of living

Formal education - gives us the ability to go places, meet people all over the world, contribute initially to society.

Informal education- allows us to learn a trade or have a successful business

Education both formal and informal means: enables one to possess knowledge, money, to contribute to Nanka development, donate to a course, charity, have personal pride, and be self-sufficient.

Education will set you free-free mind, free thinking, free from economic bondage, etc.

Community development, on the other hand, refers to collective efforts by community members to address shared challenges. Scholars and practitioners have interpreted this concept in various ways (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 6). For example, in the U.S. and elsewhere, it is sometimes called Community Organization or Locality Development, a key aspect of social work (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 6). Another definition describes it as a voluntary, cooperative process where residents work together to enhance their social, economic, and physical well-being (Chavis and Florin, 1990, p. 2).

The U.S. International Cooperative Administration offers a broader definition, framing community development as a social action process where people organize themselves, identify common needs, and implement solutions—primarily using local resources while also seeking external support when necessary (Udu and Onwe, 2016). This perspective highlights two key elements:

1. Holistic improvement focusing on all aspects of community life.
2. Active participation ensuring members are involved in decision-making and execution.

Ultimately, community development is a collaborative effort to raise living standards by tackling socio-economic issues such as poverty, illiteracy, disease, and food insecurity—either minimizing or eliminating them entirely.

Additionally, Bhattacharyya (2004, p. 10) conceptualizes community development as fostering solidarity and agency. Here, solidarity reflects a shared identity and collective values, while agency empowers communities to drive their own progress. These two principles underpin most scholarly definitions of the term.

## **2.2 Education in Rural Nigeria**

Rural communities in Nigeria, including Ebonyi State, face disparities in educational access due to poverty, cultural biases, and poor infrastructure (NBS, 2022). Oshiri mirrors these challenges, with many children engaging in farming instead of schooling.

## **2.3 Community Development Theories**

- A. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964): Education increases individual productivity, leading to economic growth.
- B. Community Participation Theory: Sustainable development requires active involvement of local stakeholders (Pretty, 1995).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A mixed-method approach was adopted, combining:

- A. Quantitative Data: School enrollment records, dropout rates, and literacy statistics.
- B. Qualitative Data: Interviews with teachers, parents, community leaders, and government officials.

#### **3.2 Sampling Technique**

Purposive sampling was used to select key informants, while random sampling was applied for household surveys.

#### **3.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

- A. Primary data: Questionnaires, focus group discussions.
- B. Secondary data: Government reports, academic journals.
- C. Data analysis: Thematic analysis for qualitative data; descriptive statistics for quantitative data.

### **4. Findings and Discussion**

#### **4.1 State of Education in Oshiri**

- A. Infrastructure: Many schools lack classrooms, libraries, and electricity.
- B. Teacher Shortage: Low teacher-student ratio (1:60 in some schools).
- C. Dropout Rates: High, especially among girls due to early marriages and economic pressures.

#### **4.2 Impact of Education on Community Development**

Economic Growth: Educated youths engage in skilled labor and entrepreneurship

Health Awareness: Educated families adopt better healthcare practices

Social Cohesion: Schools serve as hubs for community meetings and civic engagement.

Accountability: Transparent administration of funds and fairness

Vision: must have vision and know where you are leading to

Good listener: Listen to your constituents and members of your organization

Integrity: Your personal integrity is important, how you comport yourself and company you keep

Honestly: your Word must mean something and be trustworthy

Delegate: Share the work load and do not micromanage everything.

#### **4.3 Government and NGO Interventions**

- A. Ebonyi State Free Education Policy: Increased enrollment but faced implementation gaps.
  - B. NGO Contributions: Organizations like UNICEF and local NGOs provide learning materials and teacher training.
  - C. Postgraduate education can explore the internet for gaining admission to foreign countries through SAT/TOEFL, GMAT, GRE, PCAT, MCAT, exams.
5. Challenges Facing Education in Oshiri
- A. Poverty: Many families prioritize farming over schooling.
  - B. Cultural Factors: Gender bias limits girls' education.
  - C. Poor Policy Implementation: Government programs often lack monitoring.
  - D. Empowerment: If Oshirian can invest on others by sharing of information, knowledge and opportunities this will enhance economic power, improved social status.

- E. Health Education: knowledge is power. Some says that ‘we are what we eat’ Oshirian die needlessly because they do not take care of their health.

### **Recommendations**

1. Infrastructure Development: Government should renovate schools and provide learning materials such as books, pen, pencil, chalk board, uniforms etc., and Establish a Computer Lab or ICT Center (AI).
2. Teacher Motivation: Better salaries and training to retain qualified educators.
3. Community Awareness Campaigns: Sensitize parents on the value of education.
4. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Encourage private sector investment in schools.
5. Scholarships for Girls and undergraduate: Incentivize female education to reduce dropout rates and among male dropout.
6. Equip library and laboratories also computer classes and facilities should be made available in schools and civic center.

### **Conclusion**

Education remains a vital tool for transforming Oshiri Community. While challenges persist, strategic interventions involving government, NGOs, and community stakeholders can significantly improve educational outcomes and, by extension, socio-economic development. A collaborative approach is essential for sustainable progress in Oshiri and similar rural communities in Ebonyi State.

For Oshirian to prosper and make progress we must all agree to do the following Akoh (2014).

1. Encourage/establish giving back to the community initiative
2. Volunteerism - Reward excellence service by instituting annual "Best Volunteer Award"
3. Learn from past leaders and past mistakes and volunteer for service
4. Networking and Information Sharing - very valuable
5. Change of attitude

Encourage Oshirian to volunteer for things that will benefit the community

6. Positive thinking / energy and contribution
7. Have intelligent discussion of issues on the Web, Oshiri Forum, or Annual meetings
8. Be part of the solution and know your facts before you write or complain (Web)
9. Refrain from using the internet/mass email to settle your individual differences
10. People helping people - with ideas, networking, employment, money, problem solving  
Neighbors, friends, families, and Oshirian helping one another.



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