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Utilization of Indigenous Communication and Promotion of Learning in Rural Communities a Case Study, Nsukka

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Abstract:

Some African governments, development partners and adults education facilitators have been trying to bring education and development to the doorsteps of many rural dwellers, in a bid to promote learning. It has been observed that this civic responsibility of government has been implemented with modern communication strategies that tend to erode the cultural practices, values and indigenous knowledge of the rural dwellers. This study, attempt to examine the extent to which indigenous communications are utilized in promoting learning in terms of literacy and environmental education. A survey was carried out in Nsukka education zone, making use of 19 adult education facilitators. Questionnaire was the instrument used in collecting data to address the four research questions raised in this study. The findings revealed that adult education facilitators make use of indigenous communication to a high extent in teaching literacy and environmental education to the rural dwellers. These indigenous communication strategies were found to impact on the enthusiasm of adult learners. In addition, adult learners to some extent accepted the integration of modern media and traditional strategies in teaching. Some of the problems that militate against effective use of indigenous strategies among others include inadequate trained facilitators, language barrier, and facilitators' non-familiarity with indigenous knowledge of rural dwellers. The study recommends, among others, a multimedia approach (modern and traditional) be adopted, while facilitators should be adequately trained in the use of indigenous communication and modern media, for the purpose of promoting lifelong learning amongst rural dwellers in Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The current discourse on globalization and technological advancement has implications in some African countries' socioeconomic and political development (Mushengyezi 2003). Many African governments therefore, have been preoccupied with the dissemination and provision of information through education and training to her citizens in order to enable them catch-up with the pace of development. This function of government has been predominantly carried out through the modern mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, the internet and e-mail, particularly for the educated in the urban settings. On the other hand, the indigenous communication media (drums, folklores, popular theatre, proverbs, etc) used by the non-literate in local communities have been largely overlooked. Indigenous Communication Strategies are local media existing within rural communities and are used in communication before the emergence of modern media. These strategies have a link with indigenous knowledge of the local people and are still very functional amongst the rural people in Nigeria today.

The consequences of globalization and information technology call for lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is considered as all purposeful learning activities, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence (Bittner 2001). Lifelong learning is for the children, youths and adults in both the urban and rural societies. Fasokun (2001) stated that lifelong learning focuses on assisting people to be fully aware of their environment, understand it, interact with it meaningfully, modify it if necessary in line with co-survival morality and utilize it for development. Education is an indispensable tool for the empowerment of the masses. There is, therefore, a need for effective and appropriate communication process and channels for information provision and dissemination. Mbakogu (2004) described communication as an indispensable socio-cultural tool for dispensing information that would boost the political, social, economic, cultural, scientific, educational, technological and agricultural development of any nation.

To achieve the above, effective communication process and channels become necessary. Among rural dwellers, indigenous communication strategies could be used for purposes ranging from imparting knowledge about fundamental rights and responsibilities (civil education) to imparting skills (vocational education), providing preventive health care information and for several such items

pertaining to acquiring a better standard of living. It forms a very useful tool for transmission of education and values to even the remotest parts of communities for eliminating illiteracy and boosting environmental and health education among others.

Be that as it may, it is important that adult educators and facilitators be accustomed with indigenous knowledge and indigenous communication strategies since the majority of their task and clientele are based in rural communities. However, World Bank (1997) is of the view that today many indigenous knowledge systems are at a risk of becoming extinct because of rapidly changing natural environments and fast pacing economic, political and cultural changes on a global scale. It argued further, that practices vanish as they become inappropriate for new challenges or because they adapt too slowly. On the other hand, they disappear, only because of the intrusion of foreign technologies or development concepts that promise short-term gains or solutions to problems without being capable of sustaining them.

Therefore, revisiting indigenous communication strategies is of utmost importance to enable local people be engaged in finding solutions to their immediate problem. Within the global discourse on globalization and its implications, the emphasis in utilizing indigenous channels in promoting lifelong learning is an important strand, since the urban section of Nigerian society has some access to contemporary forms of communication while the predominantly rural community still relies on communicating among themselves. More worrisome, Nabudere (1995) stated that the predominance of new information and communication technologies – ICT in the urban centres has resulted in the marginalization and social exclusion of vast numbers of the world's poor communities particularly in the rural areas. Nsukka rural communities of Enugu State, with a population of predominantly farmers and petty-traders might have been witnessing marginalization and exclusion from today's knowledge based society as a result of underdevelopment, illiteracy and non-availability of modern communication technologies. It is doubtful if adult education facilitators in Nsukka are conversant with indigenous communication strategies. Even if they are, it is equally doubtful whether they utilize it in teaching adults in rural communities given the increasing domination of modern information technologies in knowledge acquisition in the 21st century. The concern of this study therefore is to assess the extent to which indigenous communication strategies are used in teaching literacy and environmental education and assess the extent these strategies can be integrated with the technologies in educating adult learners in Nsukka rural communities.

2. Indigenous Communication Strategies and Lifelong Learning

Indigenous Communication strategies have been in existence in communicating (for education and training) at local levels, though research in this area has been neglected (Mbakogu 2004). Indigenous communication strategies include, among others, folklore, proverbs, drama, drums, town criers, folk music and sign languages. According to Nadia (2001), the world is witnessing great sequence of changes that affect the surrounding environment and these changes have made the world different for men and for societies. These imposed changes in contemporary societies, regardless of their standard of progress, society. These imposed changes in contemporary societies, regardless of their standard of progress, forced them to try ensuring education for everybody, whether young or old, in the urban or rural areas. Nadia therefore argued that lifelong learning has become essential.

The concept of lifelong learning signifies that education is a continuous process and is never completed. It touches on all aspects of human life, both within the school and out-of-school. Knoll (2004) affirmed that lifelong learning should be seen as all purposeful learning activities undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment related perspective.

The basic component of the rural dwellers lifelong education is derived from their indigenous knowledge. World Bank (1997), stated that it encompasses the skills, experiences and insights of people, applied to maintain or improve their livelihood. These aspects of indigenous knowledge are effectively made use of in various sectors such as: agriculture, medicine, primary health care; community development, poverty alleviation, etc. Warren (1991) supported the view that indigenous knowledge is the basis for local level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management and a host of other activities in rural communities. Indigenous knowledge indeed is part of the lives of the rural poor and their livelihood depends almost entirely on specific skills and knowledge essential for their survival. Literacy skills can help empower and reduce the development gap between urban and rural dwellers. It is foundations that can aid rural people develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitude, motivations and commitment to work individually and collectively towards solutions or current problems and the prevention of new ones.

The need to create a lifelong learning culture based on African ways of life cannot be over-emphasized. Fasokun (2001) posited that Africans cherish their cultures, traditions, languages, values, beliefs, customs, idea, folkways, music, and so on. It is therefore, important that African countries should be assisted to undertake comprehensive efforts to reconceive and restructures their educational systems consistent with the ways of life described above as frame works for lifelong learning.

Most indigenous strategies could be used to promote lifelong learning and there are some basic elements that make indigenous communication strategies so attractive in sending messages for development at grassroots. Messages disseminated through indigenous media are entertaining, memorable, attractive and more in tune with our cultural ideals. Messages disseminated through indigenous media are so attractive and entertaining that people unconsciously find themselves adopting new ideas related to farming techniques, family planning, health, literacy and environmental education, etc. without losing meaning to the message. Indigenous communication strategies are so undistruptive, easily accessible, affordable and flexible that message recipient can be engaged in more than one activity at a time. For instance, a farmer could be working on his farm and still receiving instruction on new rice cultivation methods.

On the other hand, given the characteristics of rural dwellers, it is arguable whether the modern information communication technologies can adequately enhance the required participation in development processes in the rural settings and at the same time

sustain new ideas and knowledge. More, importantly, the issue of cost, inadequate infrastructure (electricity) illiteracy and high resistance to foreign ideas might constitute a problem for lifelong education among rural dwellers. While Mundy and Loyd-Laney (1992) argued that indigenous communication is being replaced by external systems and the survival of much valuable information and of the culture itself is in danger. Ziphora (2005) is of the view that concentration of modern media for solutions of globalization often produced inadequate results.

This might be why Nadia (2001) supported the idea that for lifelong learning to thrive in spite of globalization and its current related circumstances and cultural diversity, the cultural identity of each society should be preserved, emphasized and protected. For Warren (1995), they commended indigenous communication strategies for being ever-present and having high continuance of development programmes. They offer opportunities for participation and if ignored can result in inappropriate development efforts.

However, most authors like Fasokun (2001) and UNESCO (2001) have suggested that harnessing modern and indigenous communication media will enhance inclusiveness and enable lifelong learning to be a transformative aspect of building knowledge societies.

3. Purpose of the Study

- To assess the extent of the utilization of indigenous communication strategies in the promotion of lifelong learning in terms of literacy and environmental education.
- To determine whether the use of indigenous communication strategies have positive influence on the enthusiasm of adult learners in Nsukka.
- To ascertain the extent of acceptability of integrating modern and indigenous media in the implementation of lifelong learning programmes.
- To identify factors militating against the effective utilization of indigenous communication strategies in promoting lifelong learning.

4. Research Questions

- To what extent do adult education facilitators make use of indigenous communication strategies in promoting lifelong learning in terms of literacy and environmental education?
- What is the level of influence of indigenous communication strategies on the enthusiasm of adult learners in Nsukka?
- To what extent do adult learners accept the integration of modern media and indigenous strategies in promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Nsukka?
- What factors militate against the effective use of indigenous communication strategies in promoting lifelong learning amongst adult learners in Nsukka?

5. Methodology

The study used a survey design to establish the extent adult education facilitators utilize indigenous communication strategies in implementing two lifelong education programmes (Literacy and Environmental Education). The area of study was Nsukka education zone of Enugu State. The population of the study consists of all 19 adult education facilitators in the study area. Sampling and sampling techniques were not utilized since the whole population was used because of the easy management of the number.

A four-point rating questionnaire was used for data collection. The research questions were analyzed using mean scores. Table 1 below presents the range of mean scores, their qualitative interpretations and their abbreviations of interpretations.

6. Results

Range of Mean Scores	Qualitative Interpretation	Abbreviation of Interpretation
0.01 – 0.99	Low Extent or Level or Importance	LE or LL or LI
1.00 – 1.99	Moderate extent or Level or Importance	ME or ML or MI
2.00 – 2.99	High Extent or Level or Importance	HE or HL or HI
3.00 – 4.00	Very High Extent or Level or Importance	VHE or VHL or VHI

Table 1: Range of Mean Scores, their Interpretation and Abbreviations of Interpretation

For the SA – SD response pattern, 2.50 has been set for the limit of accepting an item and below it as constituting a problem.

7. Results and Discussion

S/No.	Items (Literacy)	Mean Score	Decision
1	I make use of songs for teaching reading	2.78	High Extent
2	I make use of drama for teaching new words.	2.89	High Extent
3	I make use of proverbs for illustrating	3.11	Very High Extent
4	I make use of folklores for teaching arithmetic	2.50	High Extent
5	I make use of drumming for teaching writing	1.83	Moderate Extent
6	I make use of popular theatre for teaching sentence d	1.94	Moderate Extent
	Average Mean & Overall Level of Extent	2.51	High Extent
S/No	Environmental Education	Mean Score	Decision
7	I make use of songs to create awareness on maintaining clean environment	3.56	Very High Extent
8	I make use of folklores to encourage tree planting	2.50	High Extent
9	I make use of drama to develop skills for learning about environment observation and preservation	3.17	Very High Extent
10	I make use of proverbs to create awareness on the dangers of pesticides.	3.11	Very High Extent
11	I make use of folklores in combating environmental problems.	2.61	High Extent
12	I make use of idioms to discourage bush burning.	2.50	High Extent
	Average Mean & Overall Level of Extent	2.291	High Extent

Table 2

Table 2 showed that on the average, with a mean score of 2.51 the facilitators make use of indigenous communication strategies for teaching literacy to a high extent. The data on the table further revealed that facilitators make use of proverbs in teaching literacy to a very high extent, drama and songs with mean scores of 2.89 and 2.78 respectively are made use of to a high extent while popular theater and drumming are made use of only to a moderate extent. Similarly, the table showed that on the average, with a mean score of 2.91 facilitators make use of indigenous communication strategies for teaching environmental education to a high extent. Items 7, 9 and 10, songs, drama and proverbs respectively are made use of to a very high extent in teaching environmental education while folklores and idioms with mean scores of 2.61 and 2.50 respectively are made use of to a high extent.

S/N o.	Items (Literacy)	Mean Score	Decision
13	Learners' are always willing to learn when songs are used in teaching.	2.78	Very High Impact
14	Learners' participate better when drama is used in teaching.	2.89	Very High Impact
15	Learners' are motivated when folklores are used in teaching.	3.11	Very High Extent
16	Learners' experiences are shared when folk media are used in teaching.	2.50	Very High Impact
17	Learners' cooperation in class is at best when proverbs are used in teaching.	1.83	Very High Impact
18	Knowledge and skills are better sustained when all indigenous media are used.	3.39	Very High Impact
	Average Mean & Overall Level of Impact	3.29	Very High Impact

Table 3

Table 3 revealed that there was an average mean of 3.29 and these strategies made an overall high influence on the enthusiasm of learners. This shows that indigenous communication strategies have the potential of enhancing participation and motivating learners in any learning process or environment.

S/N o.	Items (Literacy)	Mean Score	Decision
19	Learners' accept the use of radio and dram in teaching	2.28	High Extent
20	Learners accept the use of television and songs for teaching	3.11	Very High Extent
21	Learners' accept the teaching of reading using newspapers and drumming	1.83	Moderate Extent
22	Learners' accept the teaching of new concepts using the internet and proverbs.	1.56	Moderate Extent
23	Learners' accept the teaching of arithmetic using films and popular theatre.	2.56	High Extent
Average Mean & Overall Level of Impact		2.27	High Extent

Table 4

Table 4 revealed that with an average mean of 2.27, adult learners welcome to a high extent the integration of modern media with indigenous strategies. Only item 20 with a mean score of 3.11 were accepted by adult learners to a very high extent while item 21 and 22 were accepted to a moderate extent.

S/No	Items (Literacy)	Mean Score	Decision
24	Inadequate trained facilitators	3.61	Accept
25	Facilitators non-familiarity with indigenous knowledge	3.67	Accept
26	Language barrier, hence the use of interpreters	3.72	Accept
27	Interference of modern media (radio, TV, etc)	2.44	Reject
28	Cultural and religious barriers.	3.00	Accept
Average Mean & Overall Level of Impact		3.29	Accept

Table 5

Table 5 above showed that all the items except item 27 were accepted and constituting problems for, the effective utilization of indigenous strategies amongst rural dwellers. There was also an average mean of 3.29 indicating that these were serious problems hindering effective utilization of indigenous strategies in promoting lifelong learning among rural dwellers.

8. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that indigenous communication strategies are indeed veritable tools for promoting lifelong learning amongst rural dwellers. The ultimate goal of human development is to equip the individual with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable him lives a meaningful life in the society. Communication as a tool and process is greatly required both for urban/rural dwellers and for the literate and non-literate communities.

This study has revealed that facilitators of adult learners make use of indigenous strategies to a high extent. Among these strategies, drama, songs and proverbs are popular strategies used. This could be as a result of their attractive and entrancing qualities which Mbakogu (2004) identified that people unconsciously adopt new ideas when they are used. These three strategies (drama, songs and proverbs) were made use of both in literacy and environmental education to a very high extent.

When strategies that project conform, to a peoples' culture and indigenous knowledge are used, there tend to be very positive response. This fact was revealed in Table 3, where it was found out that the indigenous communication strategies really influenced the enthusiasms of adult learners. From this, there is no doubt that the required audience participation and motivation in knowledge acquisition was not lacking among rural dwellers. This view collaborated Mundy (1993) which states that development activities that try to impose an outside communication technology without considering what local people know and do cannot enhance participation. On the issue of integrating modern communication strategies with indigenous strategies in teaching adult learners, the study revealed that it is acceptable and possible. This will create a better opportunity to reach a wider population in the Community. However, caution needs to be applied in harnessing both media to avoid making rural dwellers wary of change agents and thus generate negative sentiments.

Furthermore, the findings in Table 5 indicate that facilitators encounter problems such as language, inadequate training among others in utilizing indigenous strategies. However, the interference of modern technologies does not constitute a problem. The result in Table 4 confirms that modern communication technologies do not indeed constitutes any problem. This then means that, in the present technological advancement, efforts should be made by adult educators in introducing, blending and utilizing a variety of recent Information Communication Technologies (ICT) as to encourage rural dwellers embrace development as practiced in other countries.

9. Conclusion and Recommendation

Indigenous communication strategies, though unrefined have been used to convey and promote learning successfully among rural dwellers. With the growing concern about increasing access to knowledge and information in the present information age, it is not unrealistic to conceive of harnessing indigenous and modern infrastructures to become practical tools for the promotion of lifelong learning in Nigerian rural communities without eroding their cultural heritage.

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