

EVALUATION OF AGE GRADE INVOLVEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH CARE FACILITIES PROJECTS IN BOKI AND IKOM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study is on evaluation of age grade involvement in the implementation of educational and health care facilities projects in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Evaluation design was adopted for the study. The sample in the study was 620 from a population of 800 obtained from stepwise sampling procedure. A 12-item questionnaire tagged "Involvement in Educational and Health Care Facilities Projects Questionnaire" (IEHCFPQ) with reliability of 0.71 was employed for data collection. Findings revealed that the involvement of age grade members in Boki and Ikom local government areas of Cross River State is low to a large extent in terms of education and health care facilities projects. It was therefore recommended among others that community development agency in partnership with the department of continuing education and development studies should organize community education for age grade association on their involvement in the implementation of community development project.

Key word: Age grade, Educational facility, Healthcare facility, Age grade involvement

Introduction

The community is made up of various groups of individuals who operate at various levels, but collectively achieve desired results that may not be achieved individually. Community can attain any desired development objectives through the involvement of various groups formed to implement the objectives. One of these groups is the age grade organization. Age grade organizations (Age grade organizations) are social groups in which people of a particular age bracket in a given community organize themselves, plan and take actions towards development. They execute their plans with maximum reliance upon community resources and supplement these resources with services and materials from outside. However, age grade organizations approach to self-help involves the fullest participation of all members in the decision making, planning and implementation process. The participation in age grade organizations activities is an act involving every indigenous member of that community whether resident in that community or outside. In most communities, it is mandatory that all sons and daughters of a community must actively participate in a project which requires a democratic approach.

Other organization which are involve in the provision of services for community development in Boki and Ikom local government areas include: Women organizations, council of chiefs/elders organizations, men organization, youth organizations, secret society organizations, vigilante groups organizations, Esusu groups organizations, cooperative groups organizations, ex-service men organization, single girls organizations, married women organizations, market women organizations, cassava women organization and business men organization And for a service to be provided, the people must come together and identify a problem before drawing plans on how to implement the project.

Through these various agents, community development has recorded huge success at the Local, State and National levels. The rehabilitation of most of the uncompleted projects such as culverts, roads repair and creating of gutters are all such activities carried by age grade organizations. The belief is that all members make their contributions in decision that affect them, people are more likely to be committed to a rural project, if they are involved in its decision making and planning they are more likely to identify themselves with it, use it and regard it as their project (Ugal, 1992). It is therefore observed that most projects undertaken by age grade organizations are always successful especially as most members would not like to be associated with failure.

Over the years both the government and non-governmental organization has made several attempt to carryout development projects in Boki and Ikom Local government areas. These projects include construction of roads, culverts, bridges, health centres. The government has also made frantic effort to provide infrastructures and other social amenities such as school, rural electrification and rural water supply, all these effort seem not to have yielded positive result, due to the fact that the projects do not involve the direct beneficiaries. Other factors that contribute to poor or non-implementation of these community development projects include poor/lack of supervision by the government, and most times the contracts for these projects are awarded to non-indigenes who end up doing haphazard work or even abandon the project half way especially when there is change in government/ leadership. It is based on the above premise that age grade organizations and many other organizations in various communities developed the initiatives to participate in the implementation of community development project (CDP) to improve their standard of living.

The idea of cooperation towards common good is an age long phenomenon, government in developing nations are aware of this but gave little or no attention to it (Abegubde, 2004). The former approach towards development by government has always been the polarization of economic activities. This has resulted to many cities lagging behind or being left to fend for themselves (Chan & Tavallion, 2004). According to Oniborkur (1972), between 1991 and 1996 Sokoto State government designed programmes for community development activities and increased budgetary allocation from N450, 000 in 1991 to N2.5 million in 1996.

In other parts of the world like Tanzania, India and Venezuela, some age grade organizations have been taken over by political parties (Naraya, 2000). In Venezuela the political parties appear particularly powerful in the life of age grade organizations. It is on this basis that this study is undertaken to investigate the extent to which activities of age grade organizations in the implementation of community development projects in Boki and Ikom local government areas of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Literature review

Age grade involvement in the implementation of educational facilities projects

Education is an appropriate tool for individual's self-improvement and that of the nation; UNESCO (2002) confirmed that literacy is the predictors of better livelihood and for better employment. It is also the life wire of a nation for growth and development. This is why the transformation of the people in the community is crucial because a nation with a

multitude of ignorant and illiterate populace remains a liability to their families, communities and nation, since it is very likely that their contributions (if any) may not facilitate or sustain development now and in future. In a bid to analyze the usefulness of education, Asor (2014) noted that education influences both the number and quality of the labour force required for the meaningful participation of the individuals in development process. Therefore those individuals who will both contribute to and consume the proceeds of development require that their skills, knowledge and capabilities be developed. Hence, the need for community involvement in provision of educational facilities.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is an educational programme designed by the Federal Government of Nigeria for the primary school system and the junior secondary level. The programme is to provide free and compulsory education to all children of school age (Chukwubuikem, 2008). This Universal Basic Education was launched in 1999 with the aim of achieving 100 percent of transition from primary to junior secondary schools. This is in consonance with the revised 1999 constitution which says that there shall be a free and compulsory continuous 9-years basic education in Nigeria. To implement the programme smoothly the Nigerian government shall provide funds for capital and recurrent expenditure which include equipment, infrastructure, instructional/teaching materials etc. Infrastructure refers to building, housing, classrooms, laboratories, workshops, administrative blocks with appropriate furniture and workbenches. Equipment includes laboratories/workshops equipped for various forms of practical's consumable and non-consumable materials for skills development etc, learning resources include well-equipped library with textbooks and current journals.

Akpoiroro (2004) conducted a study in the early United State schools to determine the effect of infrastructural facilities on academic achievement in universities. Using a survey methodology, data were gathered from practical-oriented and grammar/non practical oriented institutions in the Washington Dc experimental schools. The finding showed that students, as well as graduates from practical-oriented schools excelled tremendously in community services than their counterparts in the grammar school, this cause the district government to introduce more workshops, laboratories and learning facilities materials in schools to improve general/citizenship education in United State schools. Ikwuazom (2000) conducted a survey of higher institutions to determine the extent to which learning was being completed by learning facilities, with particular reference to university education. Teachers, students and inhabitants of community in which the school was

located were used as the respondents for the study. Students were required to report exactly the extent and frequency with which they were engaged in tutorial activities, in laboratory and workshop practice community members were required to report changes in their immediate environment and lifestyle by virtue of the activities of graduates from the university. The result revealed that they had utilized the allocated time for practical studies effectively (90% of them were reported to have used 100% allocated practical time). For community natives (70% of those interviewed) agreed that there had been remarkable changes in terms of presence of community development projects such as construction of roads, run-ways, provision of pipe-borne water, mechanical grinders, cutter-filler, kitchen blenders, electrical wares, etc. The researcher concluded that instructional facilities influenced to a large extent the academic performance of students in a technical oriented institution.

Anyabolu (2002) also pointed out that learning should take place where the learner would feel most comfortable. He advocates that the laboratories, libraries, classrooms etc. should be spacious enough with good seats and most importantly with necessary equipments, books and good light since some learners may have problems with their eyesight. Furthermore, the researcher believes that an ideal learning situation develops when there is a combination of “talk and chalk” and learning aids. In another related study, Nkanu (2000) carried out a research on availability and utilization of instructional materials and students' academic performance in universities in Cameroon. The study was guided by three hypotheses and tested at .05 level of significance. The result of the findings showed that all hypotheses formulated were significant. The researcher therefore recommended that instructional materials, be made available during lessons as their presence stimulated the interest of students and equally facilitated teaching-learning process.

Ebuta (2000) opined that for effective take off of the UBE programme, parents, ethnic groups, organizations, parent/teachers association (PTA), supervisors of schools, chairmen of local government and philanthropists should complement government's effort by volunteering to donate some basic infrastructure such as classrooms blocks desks, chalk, instructional materials, computers, equipment for laboratories, library books to add to what the government provides. With the provision of adequate classrooms and space, the expected massive intake of pupils will be catered for. With these educational facilities, class will be appropriate. Pupils in the school could be maintained at thirty – thirty five (30 – 35). This will create an effective and favourable atmosphere for

teaching/learning. Individualized attention becomes possible and class management is ensured and remediation given immediately.

Provision of educational aids at homes by parents: research has demonstrated that children who are exposed to such educational aids as radio, television, personal computers, books, newspaper, magazines, journals and picture illustrations at home have advantage in learning due to the opportunities provided (Broomback, 1971, Dubey, 1979). Parent should take advantage of the Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP) and improve on their conditions so that they can adequately provide for their children's school needs. In spite of other competing needs, priority should be given to the provision of educational resource materials.

It is heartwarming that living wage in the country is currently undergoing an upward review. Parents are encouraged to plough the surplus into the provision of simple and sophisticated gadgets in the home that are indispensable for learning. It should not be mentioned that a Nigerian child in the 21st century hears of the words “Television” “Book” or “Newspaper” for the first time in school. The child should be encouraged to manipulate and interact with these materials at home before going to school (Etim, 2000).

Age grade involvement in the implementation of health care facilities projects

The achievement of good health is critical to enhancing human development. Good health is a powerful instrument for realization of a developed nation. It increases economic efficiency and overall productivity of the labour force. Alakija (1992) maintained that good health is not just a right but a pre-requisite for rapid socio-economic development a healthy population. World health organization (2001) admitted good health as a dispensable tool for the exercise of other human right.

Numerous complementary approaches have been implemented for the achievement of healthy nation. One of which is the provision of health facilities which is not just the responsibility of the government but other bodies (WBR, 2000). Age grade organizations improve the productive ability of host communities by providing primary health care to the people. Kimalu (2002) confirmed that when primary health is put in place, the welfare of the community is skyrocketed and stands better chance for development. He further explained that while care remains an investment commodity, it enhances the quality of human capital by improving and increases the number of days available for productive activities.

Improving quality of life requires having access to health care, food, water, housing, sanitation and other basic needs. Leverages it funding, organizational capacities, technology and personnel to aid communities (Tumbo-ori, 2001) stated age grade organizations established mobile clinics to provide health services to villagers. In 2009, age grade organizations provide a structure of a permanent clinic was inaugurated to enable the villagers receive services. This investment by age grade organizations stabilizes local condition to improve operating environment and foster economic development.

In Africa, HIV/AIDs disproportionately affect women, increasing the risks of mother-to-child transmission. Through investment in Global Fund in Nigeria, Age grade organizations has helped more than 5,000 HIV-infected pregnant women receive a complete course of antiretroviral treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission (PNL Report, 2010). Age grade organizations mostly work with some non-governmental organizations to stem the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis and malaria (Adenika, 1992). Awareness programmes and training are always carried out to enlighten the adults of these killer diseases. Pamphlets and brochures are distributed to staff and adults in the communities. Achalu (2008) therefore stated that health care is preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, services maintenance of palliative care, medical services, procedure or promotion, treatment of disease or symptoms, maintenance of an individual's physical, mental and behaviour condition. Health care as the provision of services that helps individual achieve an optional state of well-being has been one of the major activity of the age grade organizations communities.

Age grade organizations integrate health services at the community level with all the elements necessary to impact on health status of the people. They take into account the fundamental human health necessary to improve living conditions of individuals, families and the development of different communities and funds are provided by age grade organizations for training and staffing of medical workers. Tuodolo (2007) identified that when medical personnel are trained on regular basis, knowledge increased and health is promoted. More so, training manuals are adopted for specific cadre and also laboratory workers are trained in the process.

When diseases are allowed to spread, it has profound negative effects on the health of the population, eroding the social and economic gains which would have been achieved. The age grade organization based on this mobilizes resources to combat disease like HIV/AIDs, cancer, hypertension and other killer diseases (UNDP, Report, 2004). This is

very necessary because these diseases rob the entire society of its human resources. Watt (2004) expressed that as skilled personnel dies, training cost increases, the cost of health care increases and cost of insurance and support for relations are demanded.

Aoyama (2001) observed that age grade organizations work specifically on some socio-economic factors that promote conditions in which people can live a healthy life, and extend to the underlying life and health. Egwu (2000) also supported that they offer protective, promote, restorative and rehabilitative services to an increasing proportion of the population living in the community. Kiimalu (2002) also admitted that despite all efforts to improve health care, 80% of the doctors and nurses resides in urban areas were only 40% of the population live. This has had adverse effect on health care provision as personnel constitute an important input in delivery of health services.

Statement of the problem

The government of cross river state over the years has made concerted effort to carryout community development projects in Boki and Ikom local government areas, most of these projects carried out by the government in the area of study include: Construction of roads, bridges, culverts, building of schools, hospitals and provision of other social amenities such as pot holes, pipe borne water and electricity. It has been however observed that most of these projects are not completed while others are abandoned at the early stages or poorly executed. The reason for the abandonment or poorly executed projects could be attributed to lack of effective supervision by government official, lack of effective participation by the local people, poor funding and non-involvement of relevant groups/organization at the planning, decision making and execution stages of the projects. It could also have been on felt-needs.

This unhealthy situation has created development imbalance in areas of infrastructure and social services in Boki and Ikom local government areas. This service imbalance has resulted in unemployment, poverty and it attendant problem such as arm robbery, rural urban migration or exodus, poor medical care, lack of social amenities such as electricity and pipe borne water. It is therefore hope that if the age grade is involve or take active participation in implementation of these community development projects abandonment, uncompleted and poorly executed project could be reduced to the barest minimum. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the activities of the age grade in the implementation of community development projects in Boki and Ikom local government of Cross River State.

Research questions

1. To what extent are the age grades involved in the provision of educational facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State?
2. To what extent are the age grades involved in the provision of health care facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State?

Research Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was input evaluation design. The population of this study was made up of eight hundred (800) adult male and female of various age grades membership resident in Boki and Ikom local government areas of Cross River State from 20 years and above. This age range was considered appropriate for the study because of their maturity. The sampling technique for the study is stepwise sampling technique. This will involve three sampling stages. The first stage was a stratification of the political wards into Boki and Ikom local government areas. The second one was a simple random sampling technique in which 80% of the wards in each LGAs were selected for the study, sixteen (16) political wards from the twenty-two (22) political wards and also 16 communities were selected from the study area. The third stage was the accidental sampling techniques of the age grade members on their meeting days. The sample for this study was 80% of the age grade members in the sixteen communities. The sample size was 640 age grade members in the selected communities.

The instrument for the data collection is the questionnaire constructed by the researcher with reliability of 0.71. The instrument has two sections. Section A contains items seeking information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents while section B contains items seeking information on the variables of the study. There are 12 items in the inventory seeking information on the involvement of age grade organizations in the community.

In order to validate the instrument, the instrument was given to three experts in measurement and evaluation for vetting. To determine the reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire), a trial testing was carried out using 50 age grade member drawn from the study area, which was not included in the main study. Cronbach alpha reliability estimate was used to determine the reliability estimate of the instrument. The researcher personally visited the study area with some research assistants. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents after the permission from the age grade leaders with the help of the research assistants. At the end of the exercise out of a total of

640 copies of the questionnaire administered to the subjects, only 620 copies were successfully retrieved and were used as sample for the study. Data was analysed using frequency counts and simple percentage.

Results

Research question 1

To what extent are the age grade involved in the provision of educational facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State?

Table 1

Response of the respondents on whether age grade involved in the provision of educational facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State (N=620)

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES				
		A		D		Total %
		f	%	f	%	
1	Age grade organization in my community build schools	370	59.68	250	40.32	620 100
2	The educational programmes of age grade organizations have produced skilled labour in my community.	400	64.52	220	35.48	620 100
3	My community has not benefited from the age grade organization on free educational programmes.	366	59.03	254	40.97	620 100
4	There are still many children roaming about in my community looking for opportunities for schooling.	355	57.26	265	42.74	620 100
5	Age grade organization provides facilities like desk, books and classrooms blocks, to schools in my community.	409	65.97	211	34.03	620 100
6	Age grade organizations donate laboratory equipment to schools in my community.	420	67.74	200	32.26	620 100

From Table 1, it can be observed that 370 representing 59.68% of the total respondents agreed that Age grade organization in their community build schools, while 250 (40.32%) disagreed. Also, 400 (64.52%) agreed that the educational programmes of age grade organizations have produced skilled labour in their community, while 220 (35.48%) disagreed. Again, 366 (59.03%) agreed that their community has not benefited from the age grade organization on free educational programmes; 254 (40.97%) disagreed. Also, 355 (57.26%) agreed that there are still many children roaming about in my community looking for opportunities for schooling; while 265 (42.74%) disagreed. Again, 409 (65.97%) agreed that Age grade organization provides facilities like desk, books and classrooms blocks, to schools in their community, while 211 (34.03%) do not. Finally, 4200 (67.74%) agreed that Age grade organizations donate laboratory equipment to schools in their community, while 200 (32.26%) do not.

The results of the analysis indicate that the percentage of agreement for all the six items are higher than 50. This implies that age grade involved in the provision of educational facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State.

Research question two

To what extent are the age grade involved in the provision of health care facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State?

Table 2

Results of responses of the respondents on whether age grade involved in the provision of health care facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State(N=620)

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES				
		A		D		Total %
		f	%	F	%	
7	My age grade organisation provides equipment and other facilities in health centres in my community.	433	69.84	187	30.16	620 100
8	My age grade supply free drugs to combat malaria.	399	64.35	221	35.65	620 100
9	My age grade supply mosquito treated net to combat malaria.	365	58.87	255	41.13	620 100
10	Age grade organizations does not supply those living positively with HIV/AIDS with anti - retroviral drugs.	240	38.71	380	61.29	620 100
11	My age grade provide ante -natal and post -natal health care services.	385	62.10	235	37.90	620 100
12	My age grade does not provide free medical services for mothers and children in my community.	409	65.97	211	34.03	620 100

The result in Table 2 shows that 433 (69.84%) of the total respondents agreed that their age grade organization provides equipment and other facilities in health centres in their community, while 187 (30.16%) do not. Also, 399 (64.35%) agreed that their age grade supply free drugs to combat malaria, while 221 (35.65%) disagree. Also, 365 (58.87%) agreed that their age grade supply mosquito treated net to combat malaria; while 255 (41.13%) do not. Also, 240 (38.71%) agreed that Age grade organizations does not supply those living positively with HIV/AIDS with anti-retroviral drugs; while 380 (61.29%) do not. Again, 385 (62.10%) agreed that their age grade provide ante-natal and post-natal health care services; while 235 (37.90%) do not. Finally, 409 (65.97%) agreed that their age grade does not provide free medical services for mothers and children in my community, while 211 (34.03%) do not.

The result of the analysis, indicate that the percentage of agreement for all the five items are higher than 50. This result therefore signifies that age grade involved in the provision of health care facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State.

Discussion of findings

The result of the first research questions revealed that age grade involved in the provision of educational facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State. The findings revealed that much efforts still demanded by the community members and particularly the age grade associations towards supporting the educational development in Boki and Ikom local government considering the enormous benefit the society stand to gain in educational development. The findings supported the study of Omoruyi and Osunde (2001) who observed that most communities in Nigeria do not adequately support educational development of public schools. This was attributed to the shift in the interest of the community members to private schools. Some attribute the non-involvement to economic hardship in the nation. Effort should therefore be geared towards encouraging adequate community involvement in educational projects by community members and particularly the age grades which are the formal agents of community development for better service in the education sector in the study area.

The result of the second research questions revealed that age grade involved in the provision of health care facilities in Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas of Cross River State. The findings revealed that much effort is still demanded by the community members and particularly the age grade associations towards supporting the health care facilities in Boki and Ikom local government considering the enormous benefit the society stands to gain from good health care facilities. The findings supported the study of Kimalu (2009) who observed that most communities in the study area do not adequately support health care facilities. But explained that the participation of the community members in provision of good primary health care ensures quality leaving and this can translate to high standard productivity in human endeavor. Community health care facilities have improved as a result of access to primary health care facilities but the effort was majorly that of the government.

Conclusion

It is no gain saying that the government of Nigeria and of the Cross River State is working hard towards the overall development of the society. But the government's efforts alone is not enough to accomplish the rapid development expected and demanded in most communities in Cross River State and particularly in Boki and Ikom local government areas. This then calls for a clarion call from members of the society particularly the age grade that are strong and civil organization that can support in the expected rapid community development through their involvement in the various community projects.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the ministry of information in collaboration with the mass media agencies should intensify efforts on mass public enlightenment on the need and significance of age grade participation in community development.

Also, all government ministries and parastatals should involve age grade organizations adequately in their planning and implementation of the various community projects.

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