

# Perceived Influence of Community Education on Voter Education in Rivers State, Nigeria

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**Abstract** This study examined the Perceived Influence of Community Education on Voter Education in Rivers State. Three research questions and one null hypothesis were developed to elicit information sought in the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study 338 respondents were purposively drawn from the population of 1,127 respondents made up of married and youths in three selected local government areas as the sample size for the study. Data collecting instrument for the study was titled, Perceived Influence of Community Education and Voter Education Questionnaire (PICEVEIQ). The validation of the instrument was done by three validates in the Department of adult and Non-Formal Education using face validity. The reliability coefficient value of .85 was obtained in a trial test using the Cronbach Alpha. Data were analysed using the mean for the research questions and the Pearsons' Product Moment Correlation and t-test statistics for the null hypothesis tested at .05 level of significance. Findings revealed there was a positive perception of community education by the people in Rivers State. The findings further indicated that to a high extent community education has positively influenced voter education. Some of the ways community education has contributed to the promotion of voter education included the sensitisation of community members on the need to exercise their franchise and involvement of facilitators with good knowledge of electoral process in voter education programme. Significant relationship was found between peoples' perception on community education and the extent it has influenced voter education in Rivers State. Some recommendations were recommended; among them was sensitisation to re-awaken the consciousness of community members on the importance of community education in the improvement of their living standard.

**Keywords:** *perceived, community, community education, voter education*

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## 1. Introduction

Long before the advent of early missionaries in Rivers State, communities were involved in the practice of indigenous community education. This education is community-based with the entire community seen as teachers. Sarumi [6] explains that indigenous community education is comprehensive, effective, work-oriented and less expensive. Adeyinka [1] added that in this education, boys and girls are given the kind of education that enabled them to fulfil masculine and feminine responsibility in the community. These individuals are provided with skills capable of making them productive in the community. Thus, indigenous community education encapsulates lifelong process of learning that provides opportunity to both male and female members of a community by enriching them with varying skills in order to effectively contribute to the growth of the community. It further presupposes that this education does not encourage idleness. Throwing more light on this education, Akande

[2] observes that the it is functional, collective, communalistic and largely democratic. He further stated that emphasis is placed on initiation and learning by doing and profitable occupational activities. There was no room for unemployment, under-employment, idleness and bickering on the job.

Consequently, Akande [2] posits that community education is a mechanism through which mass involvement in learning activities can progress. This education is geared at spreading understanding and providing the necessary skills in the areas of agriculture, health, domestic science, rural industries, housing, co-operatives, public amenities, recreation for social, economic, political and cultural development of the community. It is therefore not surprising that Anyanwu [3] stipulates its ultimate goal in terms of developing a process by which members of a community learn to work together to identify problems and seek solutions to these problems. Hence, the objectives of community education are as follows:

1. To educate and imitate the people for self-help
2. To develop responsible leadership among the people

3. To inculcate among the members of a community a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness.
4. To introduce and strengthen democracy at the grassroots level, through the creation and or revitalisation of institutions designed to serve as instrument of local participation.
5. To initiate a self-generative, self-sustaining and enduring process of growth.
6. To establish and maintain cooperative and harmonious relationship in the community.
7. To bring about gradual and self-chosen changes in the life of a community, with a minimum of stress and disruption [3].

In providing information to people on how best to solve problems confronting them, community education is seen as an educational venture for community transformation. As an educational process, the International Community Education Association [5] maintains that community education is based on the needs, peculiarities and aspirations of the community. It demands the involvement of communities in the planning and implementation of programmes for the peoples' growth. The basic level of community education is therefore associated with citizen involvement, sharing of decision-making and total community participation in the education enterprise.

Interestingly, the quest for good governance in Rivers State especially during the 2015 electionary period became a communal interest for peaceful transition and democratically elected government. Thus, the need for voter education. As an education enterprise, voter education makes information available and accessible to all constituents. It is described as the dissemination of information, materials and programmes designed to inform voters about the specifics and mechanics of the voting process for a particular election [8]. The importance of voter education in the restoration of democracy was studied by UNDP [7] in the 2012 presidential election of Kenya. Findings of the study revealed among other things that the elections were ultimately considered to be the freest and fairest, they have ever had. Underlying this fact is the presence of community involvement in the electoral process. Voter education is therefore conceived as a process of imparting knowledge to the community regarding their voting rights, electoral offences and generally matters to do with election. It encourages active participation and involvement of the community in the choice of good governance that would promote peace, social justice and sustainable development.

In achieving these developments, community education initiates the process by which the people work harmoniously for the common good of all through the provision of voter education. Ezimah [4] explains that community education is a process aimed at raising consciousness, spreading understanding and providing the necessary skills, including the human and material resources, for the social, economic, political and cultural development of the community. It is therefore an education for societal survival rather than merely livelihood. Anyanwu [3] stipulates that within the context of developing countries, community education is preoccupied with the growth in a community of a political awareness that will encourage the people to press for educational or social change.

Since elections are highly political, it then implies that adequate sensitisation should be made to the people to better understand the importance of full participation in the political process. Since voter education is disseminated through various methods such as lectures, rallies, workshop (seminars, music, dance, drama, role-plays, networking with stakeholders, use of media, films and documentaries, face to face interaction and printed materials (posters, brochure and banners) [9]. An array of these methodologies requires the collective responsibility of all in the community for the well-being of the people. Informed by the contribution of community education in ensuring democratically elected leaders that will promote community development, attempt is made in this study to critically examine the perceived influence of community education on voter education in Rivers State.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Community education from the background has been conceived by various scholars as a mechanism for bringing about transformation in individuals, communities as well as nations. As a non-formal education, several programmes are designed to bring about these changes in the society, among which is the voter education. Voter education as a programme is directed at imparting the right knowledge to the people for good governance.

In spite of the importance of community education in societal transformation, empirical studies to ascertain its influence on voter education in Rivers State have not been conducted. This has further provided a lacuna which this present study attempts to fill. Consequently, the problem of this study is to examine the perceived influence of community education on voter education in Rivers State.

## 3. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the perceived influence of community education on voter education in Rivers State. The objectives of the study are specifically to determine:

- i. Peoples' perception on community education in Rivers State.
- ii. The extent community education has influenced voter education in Rivers State.
- iii. Ways of promoting voter education using community education in Rivers State.

## 4. Research Questions

The following research questions are posed in the study

1. What is peoples' perception on community education in Rivers State?
2. To what extent has community education influenced voter education in Rivers State?
3. What are the ways voter education can be promoted using community education in Rivers State?

## 5. Hypothesis

The null hypothesis formulated in this study is tested at .05 level of significance.

There is no significant relationship between peoples' perception on community education and the extent it has influenced voter education in Rivers State.

## 6. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design attempts to examine the opinion of respondents regarding perceived influence of community education on voter education in Rivers State. The population for the study was 1,127 respondents, made up of married and single adults in Ogba Egbema Ndoni, Opobo/Nkoro and Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State. A sample of 338 respondents was drawn to respond to the data collecting instrument using the purposive sampling technique.

Data collecting instrument was titled, 'Perceived Influence of Community Education and Voter Education Questionnaire (PICEVEQ). The instrument contains two sections, A and B. Section A elicited information on the demographic data of the respondents. Section B provided information relating to peoples' perception on community education, extent to which it has influenced voter education and ways it can be used to promote voter education. These variables are in clusters of six (6) items each, designed on a 4-point of strongly agree (4-points), agree (3-points), disagree (2-points) and strong disagree (1-point) for cluster 1 and 3, while cluster 2 has very high extent as (4-points), high extent (3-points), low extent (2-points) and very low extent (1-point) respectively. The questionnaire was face validated by three validates from

the Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education in the University of Port Harcourt. The reliability coefficient was value of 0.85 was obtained using the Cronbach Alpha after administering 20 copies of the questionnaire to 20 respondents in Emohua Local Government Area that shares similar characteristics with the study area.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researchers and three trained research assistants. These assistants were trained on the purpose of the study and the need to adequately guide the respondents in filling the instrument. Retrieval of completed copies was also done by the researchers and the research assistants. Out of the 338 copies administered, 321 copies representing 95% were correctly filled and used for the analysis, while the remaining 17 copies representing 5% were wrongly filled and discarded from analysis.

The criterion mean of 2.50 was used to accept an item, as items below 2.50 were rejected. Data were analysed using the mean for the research questions. The Pearsons' Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and t-test statistics were used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance. Meanwhile, positive relationship was found if the r-calculated is greater than the r-critical, but negative if on the contrary. Significant relationship was found if the t-transformation is greater than the t-critical at .05 level of significance, but significant relationship was not found if the t-transformation is less than the t-critical.

## 7. Results

**Table 1. Mean perception of respondents about community education (n=321)**

S/no	Items	X	Decision
1.	Non-formal education	2.53	Agreed
2.	Community involvement in training	2.81	Agreed
3.	The use of local resource for community betterment	2.89	Agreed
4.	Training of community members with different skills	3.06	Agreed
5.	Community training with little or no assistance from external bodies	2.23	Disagreed
6.	Training for quality life of individuals in the community	2.86	Agreed
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>positive</b>

Table 1 shows that the mean scores for items 1 (2.53), 2 (2.81), 3 (2.89), 4 (3.06) and 6 (2.86) are agreed for respondents as against item 5(2.23) that was disagreed.

The cluster mean of 2.73 indicates that peoples' perception about community education was positive.

**Table 2. Mean perception of respondents on the extent community education has influenced voter education (n=321)**

S/no	Items	X	Decision
7.	The right to vote and be voted for by community members	2.90	High extent
8.	Community knowledge on political matters	2.22	Low extent
9.	The presence of election found	2.92	High extent
10.	Campaign on the need to vote candidate of individual's choice	2.88	High extent
11.	Equal opportunities to both genders to participate in politics.	2.79	High extent
12.	Unbias voting of candidates into various offices	2.01	Low extent
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>High extent</b>

Respondents in Table 2 reveal that items 7,9,10 and 11 with mean scores of 2.90, 2.92, 2.88, and 2.29 are rated to a high extent, while items 8 and 12 have the mean scores of low extent (2.22) and (2.01) respectively. The cluster

mean of 2.62 is an indication that to a high extent community education has influenced voter education in Rivers State.

**Table 3. Mean perception of respondents on ways community education can be used in the promotion of voter education (n=321)**

S/no	Items	X	Decision
13.	Sensitisation of members on the need to exercise their political rights	2.84	Agreed
14.	Organising voter education for members of the community	2.81	Agreed
15.	Involving facilitators with good knowledge of electoral process in voter education programme	2.68	Agreed
16.	Engaging community leader in voter education training	2.82	Agreed
17.	Promotion of political will by community leaders on voter education	2.58	Agreed
18.	Encouraging women participation in political matters	3.03	Agreed
<b>Cluster mean</b>		<b>2.79</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Respondents in Table 3 on ways community education can be used to promote voter education show that item 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 have mean scores of 2.84, 2.81, 2.68, 2.82, 2.58 and 3.03 respectively which indicate agreed. The cluster mean of 2.79 shows that sensitisation of members on the need to exercise their political rights, organising voter education for community members,

involvement of facilitators with good knowledge of electoral process in voter education programme, engaging community leaders into voter education training, the promotion of political will and women participation in politics are identified as some of the ways community education can be used to promote voter education in Rivers State.

**Table 4. r analysis of significant relationship between peoples' perception of community education and its influence on voter education**

Variable	X	SD	no of respondents	df	r-cal	r-crit	t-trans	t-decision
Peoples' Perception on community education	2.922	.304	321	319	.769	.195	21.486	1.96
Influence of Peoples' perception of community education on voter education	2.619	.294						

Data on Table 4 show that r-cal (.769) is greater than r-crit (.195), thus, establishing a positive relationship. The table further reveal that the t-trans (21.486) is greater than the t-crit (1.96) at .05 level of significance and df (319), hence the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that significant relationship was found between the peoples' perception on community education and the extent it has influenced voter education in Rivers State.

were identified in the study. Respondents revealed some of the ways to include sensitisation of community members on the need to exercise their political rights and organisation of voter education programme to them. It is not surprising that Anyanwu [3] identifies as one of the objectives of community education on inculcating among members of a community a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness.

The existence of significant relationship between peoples' perception on community education and its influence on voter education is an indication of diverse view on the perception and how its influences voter education in Rivers State.

## 8. Discussion of Results

Findings in research question revealed that peoples' perception on community education in Rivers State was positive. Respondents indicated that as non-formal education, community education provides community members with various skills capable of enhancing their standard of living. The positive perception of community education is not unconnected with the fact that communities are provided with opportunities on how best they can improve their living conditions using their resources. This finding corroborates with the International Community Education Association [5] which stipulates that community education denotes community involvement in the planning and implementation of programme for the peoples' growth.

Findings in research question two indicate that to a high extent, community education has influenced voter education in Rivers State. Respondents admitted that community members are provided with right information to exercise their franchise. This is not surprising as equal opportunities to participate in politics are provided to both genders. In line with this finding, Ezimah [4] posits that community education is geared at raising the consciousness, spreading understanding for political development of the community.

On ways that community education can be used in the promotion of voter education in Rivers State several ways

## 9. Conclusion

In view of the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

Peoples' perception on community education was positive. Hence, serves multiplicity of purposes in enhancing the standard of living of the communities. With regard to voter education in Rivers State, community education has significantly contributed to a high extent through the enhancement of awareness level of both genders on the political matters. In bid to promote voter education, community education employs several strategies, prominent among these strategies are sensitisation of community members on their political rights and engagement of facilitators with good knowledge electoral process in voter education programme.

## 10. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made

1. Sensitisation to re-awaken the consciousness of community members on the importance of community education should be carried out in the community by community leaders.
2. The services facilitators with adequate knowledge of electoral processes should be engaged by community to enlighten community members about their political rights.
3. Community leaders should ensure voter education programme is organised to educate community members on the need to equip themselves in election procedures before the electoral period.
4. Women should be encouraged by community leaders and government to participate in politics to reduce gender disparity.

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