

"Assessing the impact of Adult Literacy Programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education on the lives of the participants in Kwara State Nigeria"

Assessing the impact of Adult Literacy Programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education on the lives of the participants in Kwara State Nigeria

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Abstract

Adult literacy education is an imperative for development of adults in the community. It is a foundation for lifelong learning and a gateway to fuller participation in social, cultural, political and economic life. This study investigated the impact of Adult Literacy Programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education on the lives of the participants in Kwara State Nigeria. The population for the study comprises all adult learners, adult literacy facilitators and adult literacy coordinators in the basic adult literacy programme of Kwara State Agency for Mass Education in Kwara State. The sample size consists of 300 adult literacy learners, 30 literacy facilitators and coordinators making a total 330 participants. The sample for the study was selected using multistage sampling technique. At first, simple random sampling was employed to select five Local Government Areas where the study was conducted. At the second stage, Snowballing sampling technique was utilized to select the participants within the selected local Government areas. Data were collected with the use of self-designed questionnaire. The instrument was subjected to scrutiny by experts and has a reliability coefficient of 0.78. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The research showed

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that the enrolment, completion and success on basic literacy programme of Kwara State Agency for Mass Education in Ilorin Emirate were encouraging and successful while failure was minimal. The study recommended that basic literacy programme of the Agency should be more committed to meeting the basic education needs of the participants so as to allow more learners stay till the end of the programme.

Introduction

The concept of literacy means the acquisition of the skills of reading, writing and numeracy. It is equally viewed as an important programme in non-formal education which focuses basically on assisting people to acquire relevant knowledge and skills needed for professional development in the contemporary society so as to improve efficiency and productivity.

It is important to note that the most interesting phenomena among which contemporary literature has addressed are the issue of improving/developing the adults in the community and the various programmes that have, been initiated in the world and Nigeria in particular are geared towards addressing this. Such programmes according to Osunde and Ethe (2005) include extension education services, rural engineering and technology, education for rural women, community bank, and adult literacy among others. Among these programmes, adult literacy is believed to have capacity to serve the purpose of empowerment and social development, with its capacity to reach adult and youth who missed formal schooling opportunities. Besides, adult literacy education programmes do play key role in conflict and post conflict situation as well as nation building.

The acquisition of literacy skills is so important since they are required for effective functioning in everyday life. It is suggested that the functional and empowering types of literacy are more likely to promote development, especially in developing countries, including Nigeria (Indabawa, 1996 cited in Haladu, 2002). Therefore, literacy in its functional context is a potent instrument for facilitating socio-economic development of any nation in the modern world, it is seen as the means through which ideas, and information, knowledge and wisdom are expressed and exchange.

Haladu (2002) equally noted that illiteracy, which is the opposite of literacy, is closely related to poverty, disease, high infant mortality, low economic productivity, social immobility and helplessness. The implication of the above features of illiteracy for Nigeria and Ilorin Emirate is that gender equality, reduction in maternal mortality rate, women empowerment, education for all (EFA), improved environmental sanitation and a whole lots of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) being pursued by the country and Ilorin Emirate would be a mirage without adequate and functional adult literacy programmes. Imperatively, the importance of literacy education in the development of any society cannot be over-emphasised. It is necessary and indispensable for economic, social, political and technological growth and advancement of any nation.

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This is the reason why UNESCO (1996) and UNIFEM (2000) refer to literacy as a human right and an essential ingredient for achieving equality, development and peace. It is an instrument that assists and fortifies an individual to face his/her problems with a conscious mind; It facilitates taking position or making decision from an informed position. Therefore, it is an imperative need to be able to function properly in the society. In recognition of the above submission, government, at all levels, federal, states and local have always been taking one decision or the other to provide functional literacy programmes for teeming adult illiterates in the country. Kwara State is not an exception of this.

The commitments of government in providing adult literacy for Nigerian adults are seen in the area of a number of mass literacy campaigns launched during colonial time and after independence, establishment of administrative structures and Universal Basic Education Programme. The establishment of the National Mass Literacy Adult and Non-formal Education Commission and Mass Agency for Mass Education in each state of the federation is important milestone in the effort of providing functional literacy in the country and by extension in Ilorin Emirate. The observation showed that vocational literacy programmes are also part of the programme run by the agency. Many centres are dedicated to vocational training in carpentry, tailoring, typing, and photography, chalk-making to mention but a few. Alade (1997) reported that with the intervention of European Economic Commission- Federal Government/Middle Belt in the literacy programme in Kwara State gave impetus to the development and promotion of adult literacy programme in Kwara State. He further explained that many Kwarans became literate and empowered through the intervention of the EEC-FGN Middle Belt literacy project. Many religious groups such as Ansarul-deen Society of Nigeria and Nigerian Baptist Convention are also part of the promoters of Adult Literacy in Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

Illiteracy, which is the opposite of literacy, is closely related to poverty, disease, high infant mortality, low economic productivity, social immobility and helplessness. The implication of the above features of illiteracy for Nigeria and Ilorin Emirate is that gender equality, reduction in maternal mortality rate, women empowerment, education for all (EFA), improved environmental sanitation and a whole lot of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) being pursued by the country and Ilorin Emirate would be a mirage without adequate and functional adult literacy programmes. With realization that a large number of people in Ilorin Emirate are illiterate motivated the newly created Kwara State Agency for Mass Education then to seek for ways of curtailing adult illiteracy in the Emirate in particular and Kwara State at large. The awareness of the importance of Adult Literacy Programmes has led to embracing of adult literacy programmes in Kwara State

The objectives of the study:

- i. Determine the level of people's participation in the Adult Literacy programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education in Kwara State.
- ii. Find out the impact of the adult literacy programme of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education on the socio-economic life of Literacy participants in Kwara State
- iii. Identify hindrances to the Adult Literacy programmes in Kwara State.

Research Questions

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1. What is the level of people participation in the basic literacy programme of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education Programme in Ilorin Emirate?
2. What are the impact of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education in Adult Literacy Programme on socio-economic well-being of its clients in Ilorin Emirate?
3. What are the obstacles to effective implementation of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education Adult literacy programme in Ilorin Emirate?

Literature Review

Literacy is a relative term, that is, the particular community or culture determines who can be called literate or at what level he must be proficient in the use of the skills. Generally, various levels of modern civilization or technological development or urbanization determine the standard of literacy needed by an individual to function.

Literacy is seen here as part of the process by which illiterate people become aware of their personal situation, and learn to do something about improving it. In this process, learning to read, write and count becomes steps towards achieving political, economic, cultural human rights. This, in turn, enables people who acquired literacy to play a role in making their world a better place to live in. However, this is not to conclude that literacy constitutes the only route to happiness, wealth or success but to a large extent, it can enhance fulfilling and satisfactory life.

This will often imply the creation of preconditions for learning through awareness raising and empowerment. Literacy is also a catalyst for participation in social, cultural, political and economic activities and for learning throughout life. The skills of reading and writing, i.e. literacy are the most basic and most important programme in adult education. Without literacy, people cannot learn houseful information needed for survival and happiness throughout life. When a literacy programme is mixed with the teaching of another skill, which is useful either to the individual or the society, it is known as functional literacy (Bown 2019). Most of the time, the additional programme develops marketable skills in the individual. In such cases, the programme gets the name of work-oriented functional literacy. Next in importance is the programme of numeracy. Under this programme, the individual learns simple arithmetical functions like counting, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Both literacy and numeracy are easy to learn if they are taught by properly trained instructors. Trained instructors motivate their students and adjust the programme of learning to the needs of their pupils. But where instructors are not available or in short supply, these basic courses can be taught by programmed instruction. This involves the teaching of several groups of similar background in a step-by-step method. In a situation like that, however, the students should be determined and highly motivated. Once a student has mastered a basic programme in literacy, he is prepared to take a higher programme, either through a teacher or through the mass media. Some programmes need a background in numeracy as well. After the successful completion of a programme in literacy and numeracy, the student is ready to take courses according to his aptitude and intelligence.

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Aderinoye (2017) itemized the followings as some of the literacy activities:

- i. Traditional Literacy: Traditional literacy, has only one intrinsic objective, namely, the teaching of reading and writing, accompanied in most cases by elementary Arithmetic. It is thus an isolated, extra-curricular activity, which is self-justifying and an end in itself, in most cases. It is also transmitted through the traditional methods.
- ii. Cultural Literacy: Cultural literacy is radical. It means pride in the learners' culture. It means active enjoyment of culture and active participation in the cultural activities of the society. It means the continuous rebirth of indigenous culture in the lives of the people. It is highly advocated by Paulo Freire, the Brazilian-born world adult educator, who strongly advocates for cultural transformation of the society through literacy and literacy through conscientization.
- iii. Civic literacy: Civic literacy is literacy for good citizenship. Citizenship involves both duties and rights. Some civic literacy programmes emphasize duties and peoples' rights, while, at a deeper level, civic literacy means a shared-understanding of the approach to life of a group of people
- iv. Women literacy: Women literacy is literacy for the women-folk. It leads to the empowerment of women. It emphasizes women's duties and rights.
- v. Functional Literacy: At a UNESCO conference in Teheran in Iran 1965 functional literacy was tied directly and rightly to economic functions. Functional literacy was based on the psychology of an adult at work. The teaching of reading and of economic skills was to be integrated. The integration was to be so good that the learners would experience the two teachings as one learning. In one of the UNESCO definitions of literacy, "programme without calculation and work component is not functional in context and outlook" (Hunter 1989). But functional literacy is gradually losing ground to empowerment in recent years. The idea in vogue now is the act of empowering people, not merely making them more useful to their employers but also making them more functional within the economy. Thus, the current trend is self-empowerment before generalization.
- vi. Critical Literacy: This is referred to as education for critical consciousness. The purpose is to empower the people, to help them reclaim their rights, culture and civilization. It aims to make people masters of their destiny. Critical literacy enables people to become critical of what they see, of what they hear, of what they get and of what they're asked to give. In other words, they become critical of the social, political and economic relationships in which they function. Critical literacy is embedded in political education. Critical literacy wants people to do something with the literacy skills they have just acquired.

Impact of Literacy on Socio-economic Development of People

Development of any country is determined by the literacy level of the country Education and literacy have been confirmed by several studies are the most potent instrument for the

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emancipation of any group of people it is also a known fact that the mental freedom that surpasses all other freedoms can only be guaranteed by an effective literacy programme. This view was rightly reiterated by Okeke (1995) when she observed that literacy is a sure pathway to liberation of mind and improvement of the socio-economic status of people. This implies that literacy is very critical for personal and societal development.

While considering the benefits of education for women and girls Mangvwat and Abama (1999) established that there is a symbolic relationship between national economic development and women's literacy rate. She further argued that illiteracy, particularly among women is a great hindrance to the promotion of socio-economic and political transformation. It impedes efforts geared towards quickening the tempo of development. Literacy is therefore, one of the indicators that can be used to measure the level of social development. In fact, it is the only social index which is closely related with most of the demographic variables such as fertility, mortality, mother and childcare, population growth rate, acceptance of family planning.

Literacy and education generally is regarded as a great tool for overcoming socio-economic dependence and exploitation; for enhancing socio-economic status for knowing of one's rights, privileges and responsibilities; for improving homes and for molding the character of children during the most impressionable years of life. Adult Literacy education in addition contributes to economic development through its positive effect on family income. It is a tool for economic survival and it increases the effectiveness of all transaction made by the individual in his/her economic environment, in the use of land and tools in dealing with financial institutions. Regarding the environmental benefits The World Bank's 1992 World Development Report on the environment concluded that investment in literacy is one of the highest investments in environmental protection that developing countries can make (World Bank, 1992).

Similarly, National Literacy Mission in India (2008) reports that social awareness, increased in school enrolment, increase in self-confidence and personality development, gender equity and women empowerment are parts of the benefits of Adult Literacy Programme in the country. The implication of the above review is that participants of Adult Literacy Programme have a lot to benefit from attending literacy programme despite of their tight schedule.

While reporting the benefits of Adult Literacy Programme to the participants, National Literacy Mission India (2008) attests that participation of women in literacy campaigns has opened several opportunities for neo-literate women to step out of the households and involve themselves in some enterprise or a new vocation which has opens more economic opportunities for them. Literacy campaigns in this district have also enhanced knowledge and skills for better management of expenditure and improving earning capacities. The campaigns have equally helped to spread knowledge about health care and nutrition, thereby enabling mothers to keep their family in better health and to care better for their children.

If it is agreed that adult literacy has the potential to impact all of the above benefits on the lives of the participants then, provision of relevant and useful literacy skills on our people cannot be over-emphasized.

Methodology

This study adopted ex-post facto design to assess the effectiveness of adult literacy programme delivery of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education with a view to determining its impact on the lives of the participants in Ilorin Emirate of Kwara State. The population for the study comprises of all adult learners, adult literacy facilitators and adult literacy coordinators in the basic adult literacy programme of Kwara State Agency for Mass Education in Kwara State.

The sample of adult literacy learners was selected through snowballing sampling technique within the 5 local governments in Kwara state. This technique allows the group to be included in the study to be nominated by a proceeding group as appropriate for the study. The choice of this technique is based on the fact that once a participant who benefits from the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education Adult Literacy Programme is identified he/she was able to identify another participant and the trend continued. Simple random sample technique was used to select the literacy facilitators across 5 local governments in the state in the adult literacy centers, the whole of 15 adult literacy coordinators were used for the study.

The questionnaire titled “Assessment of Adult Literacy Questionnaire” (AALQ) was given to adult literacy learners and literacy facilitators. AALQ consists of three (3) sets of items thus: Items indicating people’s participation in adult literacy programmes; Items indicating impact of Adult Literacy Programmes on the lives of the participants and items indicating the problems confronting adult literacy programme. The response on questionnaire was based on three-point scale of Agreed, Disagree and No Response. The responses are scored as follows Agree (3) Disagree (2) No response (1). The data was analyzed by using frequency counts and percentages

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of people participation in the basic literacy programme of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education Programme in Ilorin Emirate?

This research question was answered using simple frequency count and the results are presented in table 1

Level of people's participation in Adult Literacy Programme as perceived by Adult Learners and Facilitators

Level of participation	Agreed		Disagreed		No response		Mean	Decision
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Both men and women are participating actively in the programme	124	37.6	128	38.8	78	23.6	2.14	High
Only women and youth are participating actively in the programme	128	38.8	124	37.6	78	23.6	2.15	High
Participants are not committed to completing the programme	78	23.6	252	76.4	0	0.0	2.24	High

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Average	110	33.33	168	76.4	52	15.73	2.18	High
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The analysis in the table 1 indicated that 37.6% of the respondents were in the opinion that both men and women participated actively in the Adult Literacy Programme. 38.8% disagreed on that but supported the fact that only women and youths were participating actively in the programme. The table also shows that 78 people representing about 23.6% believed that participants are not committed to completing the programme while 76.4% of the respondents disagreed with the opinion that people are not participating actively in the programme. In all the average mean score of 2.18 showed that level of people participation in the basic literacy programme of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education Programme in Ilorin Emirate was high.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education in Adult Literacy Programme on socio-economic well-being of its clients in Ilorin Emirate?

Table 2: Impact of Adult Literacy Programme as Perceived by Literacy Learners and Facilitators

Impact	Agreed		Disagreed		No response		Mean	Decision
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Promote level of social interaction	300	90.0	23	7	3	2.1	2.89	Agreed
Promote women skills in domestic management	200	60.6	103	31.2	27	8.2	2.52	Agreed
Promote economic well-being of the participants	302	91.5	18	5.5	10	3.0	2.88	Agreed
Promote access to formal education for school drop-outs	306	92.7	17	5.2	7	2.1	2.91	Agreed
Average	277	83.70	40	12.23	13	3.85	2.80	Agreed

The analysis on the table above shows that adult literacy programme has great impact on the life of the participants. The analysis shows that 90.9%, 60.6%, 91.5% and 92.7% of the respondents were of the opinion that adult literacy programme promotes their level of social interaction, promoted women skills in domestic management, promoted their economic well-being and promoted access to formal education for school drop outs respectively. In all, majority of the respondents with a mean score of 2.80 agreed that adult literacy programmes has positively impact the socio-economic condition of participants in the study area.

Research Question 3: What are the obstacles to effective implementation of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education Adult literacy programme in Ilorin Emirate?

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Table 3: Obstacles to Adult Literacy Programme perceived by Literacy Learners and Facilitators

Obstacles	Agreed		Disagreed		No response		Mean	Decision
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Lack of adequate facilitators	229	69.4	71	21.5	30	9.1	2.60	Agreed
Lack of adequate facilities and equipment	240	72.7	63	19.1	27	8.2	2.65	Agreed
Lack of adequate classes	201	60.9	72	21.8	57	17.3	2.44	Agreed
Inadequate public awareness	203	61.5	77	23.3	48	15.2	2.46	Agreed
Average	218	66.13	71	23.3	41	15.2	2.54	Agreed

Table 3 showed the obstacles to Adult Literacy Programme perceived by Literacy Learners and Facilitators in Ilorin Emirate. Obstacles to adult literacy programme were found by learners to be lack of adequate facilitators (2.60), lack of adequate facilities and equipment (2.65), lack of adequate classes (2.44) and inadequate public awareness (2.46).

Discussion

Finding revealed that the level of people participation in the basic literacy programme of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education Programme in Ilorin Emirate was high. This showed that the enrolment, completion and success of the basic literacy programme of Kwara State Agency for Mass Education in Ilorin Emirate were encouraging and successful while failure was not significant. The research also showed that both men and women participated actively in the adult literacy programmed of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education. This finding is a confirmation of Bown (2019) position that literacy is also a catalyst for participation in social, cultural, political and economic activities and for learning throughout life. The skills of reading and writing, i.e. literacy is the most basic and most important programme in adult education. Without literacy, people cannot learn houseful information needed for survival and happiness throughout life. When a literacy programme is mixed with the teaching of another skill, which is useful either to the individual or the society, it is known as functional literacy.

It was further showed that adult literacy programme of Kwara State Agency for Mass Education has promoted the level of social interaction of the participants. It has also promoted women skills in domestic management and general economic well-being of the participants. This corroborated the position of National Literacy Mission in India (2008) reports that social awareness, increased in school enrolment, increase in self-confidence and personality development, gender equity and women empowerment are parts of the benefits of Adult Literacy Programme in the country

The research revealed that major problems of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education in the literacy programme in Ilorin Emirate include: lack of adequate facilitators, lack of required facilities and equipment, lack of adequate classes and inadequate public awareness

Conclusion

This research has assessed the impact of adult literacy programme of the Kwara State agency for Mass Education in Ilorin Emirate, Kwara State. The findings show that the basic literacy programme of the Agency focuses on provision of literacy skills for adults and youths that missed initial formal education opportunity. The people participation of both men and women were encouraged. The programme has positively influenced the lives of the participants in terms of promotion of participants' social interaction, economic development and educational advantages. These impacts were limited by a number of factors which constitute barriers to literacy programme in Ilorin Emirate. The problems are lack of adequate facilitators, lack of adequate facilities and equipment, lack of adequate classes and inadequate public awareness. These problems were compounded by lack of adequate attention given to adult education by government.

Recommendations

- i. Basic literacy programme of the Agency should be more committed to meeting the basic education needs of the participants so as to allow more learners stay till the end of the programme. The completers of the basic literacy programme should equally be motivated and encouraged to attend post literacy in order to sustain the literacy skills learnt.
- ii. Effort should be intensified by the Agency for Mass Education to improve on people participation in basic literacy programme in the Emirate. This is because the number of people who enrolled in the programme was small compared to the large number of illiterate adults in the area of study. Equally, people interest must be sustained in the programme. The peculiarities of women should be considered in literacy delivery to encourage women participation.
- iii. Effort should be made to sustain and improve on the impact of basic literacy in the area of through encouraging the completers of the programme to enroll in post literacy programme.
- iv. The Kwara State Government should be made to realize the importance of funding adult and non-formal education programmes. Provision of adequate fund could help in provision of more literacy classes and maintenance of the centres including making necessary equipment available for use for effective and efficient literacy programme. Awareness creation for literacy programmes should be intensified by the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education in Ilorin Emirate as such effort could help improve enrolment for illiterate adults in the area of study. Traditional rulers, NGOs, religious and occupational leaders could be collaborated with to mobilise people for literacy programme. Effort must be made by Kwara State Agency for Mass Education to help the participants of basic literacy programme to sustain the skills learnt. This could be achieved by encouraging the completers of basic literacy to enrol for post literacy as such could help utilize and build upon the basic literacy skills acquired.

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