Evaluating access to adult basic literacy skills as determinant of sustainable development in selected rural communities in Oyo and Ondo states, Nigeria

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Accepted 17 February, 2013

The need to expand adult learning for economic growth and sustainable development has made the issues of access to literacy skills germane in contemporary researches in literacy. This study, therefore, examines the factors enhancing access to literacy programmes for enhancement of sustainable development in the rural areas of Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research method. The sample consisted of 1,310 adult learners selected through multi stage sampling techniques and 12 local adult education officers selected through purposive techniques. 14 item questionnaires, observation of records and Focus Group Discussion were used to gather the data for the study. The findings showed that Oyo and Ondo governments provided access opportunities through the establishment of the agencies for adult and non-formal education; employment of literacy facilitators; establishment and cited the literacy centres close to learners' residence and provision of free learning materials. To sustain the literacy programme, the study recommended that organizers of adult literacy programmes need to expand more access routes to literacy skills; NGOs should be encouraged to support the creation of more centres for adult literacy and there should be collaboration among government parastatals in developing curriculum that meets adult needs for literacy sustainability.

Key words: Access, literacy skills, rural communities, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of people's ability to read and write has made literacy one of the fundamental requirements of modern civilization (Chediel et al., 2000). Various research reports such as Basic Education Coalition BEC (2004), Amartya (2003), UNESCO (2002), FAO (2002) and Deng (1999) have all agreed that the greater the percentage of a functional literate people in a country, the much better are the chances for rapid political, social, economic, technology and cultural development. Though, while literacy alone is not sufficient to generate development, it is a major factor in the ultimate effectiveness of a country's investments (Amopere, 1984). In fact, no country has achieved or sustained economic growth without retaining near Universal Basic Education (UBE), the goals of which was to universalize access to basic education, engender a conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in the country within the shortest possible time (Omolewa, 1983).

UBE is designed to provide educational opportunities irrespective of capabilities. An educated populace is more likely to enjoy higher agricultural productivity, longer life expectancies, lower infant mortality rates and greater political stability (UBE, 1999). Therefore, where the right to education is guaranteed, people’s access to and enjoyment of other rights are enhanced (Colclough et al, 2003). Also, the people are better equipped to protect themselves from various diseases particularly HIV/AIDS (BEC, 2004).

Nigeria with an estimated population of about 140 million people is a relatively wealthy nation, if compared with other countries in Africa within the realm of natural,
material and human resources (NPC, 2006; Oyinlola, 2004; UNESCO, 2003). However, like any other developing nations, problems like rapidly increasing population, slow growing economy and many unschooled adults are facing Nigerians as a country (Omolewa, 1981). Hence, basic education in Nigeria (at the formal education level) has been hampered by many social, political, economic and cultural factors such as insufficient number and quality of physical infrastructures such as school buildings. Other problems include inadequate school furniture and equipment, lack of books, writing materials and teaching supplies, insufficient number of qualified teachers, considerable number of drop outs and repetition of grades at the primary and middle levels (Olojede and Dairo, 2008). Schooling provides little preparation for work; curricula are often outdated, continuous strikes by the teachers, low community participation in education, low managerial skills, and lack of funds, causing low participation, and so on (Anyaejbu, 2003).

As a result of aforementioned problems associated with the inadequate provision of literacy programmes, many youth and adults could not participate effectively in the development of their communities and at the same time do not know what their rights are or how to defend these rights. Although, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania in his speech while introducing the First Development Plan for his country, maintained as quoted by Bhola (1984) that we must educate our adults. Nyerere says further “Our children will not have an impact on our economic development for five, ten, or even twenty years. The attitudes of the adults on the other hand, have an impact now”. Many people still believed that educating the adult is not necessary as illiterate adults would soon wither away; therefore emphasize education of the youth at the expense of the adult parents that would take care of the education of youth.

As stated earlier on, basic education is the foundation for sustainable life-long learning. It provides opportunity to reading, writing and numeracy skill. It comprises a wide variety of formal and non-formal education activities and programmes that enable learners to acquire functional literacy (Ondo AANFE, 2007). In the Nigerian context, basic education includes primary, junior secondary and nomadic education as well as adult literacy. Nigeria as a member of the Group of E-9 nations is committed to the total eradication of illiteracy. In spite of this, the nation’s literacy rate is presently estimated to be 53% of the 140 million populations (Aderinoye, 1997; NPC, 2006). Formal education statistics for 1996 and upward review shows that only 14.1 million children are enrolled in primary schools out of the 21 million children of school age. The completion rate was 64% while the rate of transition to Junior Secondary school was 43.5%, there is overwhelming evidence that these vital literacy indicators have not improved (UBEC, 1999).

In Nigeria, the Federal Government through the National Policy on Education (2004) made provision for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (MLANFE) in its policy as the first accessibility provision. The policy states among others that MLANFE shall be provided free to the beneficiaries through the establishments of literacy centres by agencies of mass literacy at states and local government areas of the federation.

Understandably, the consequences of adult literacy first appear in the individual learner by way of new cognitive behaviours and ways of understanding reality, which engender in the individual a new self-concept that is accompanied by greater self-confidence and self-esteem. The ability to read will enable an individual to start swimming in the fast evolving culture of print. Some new literates may be satisfied with reading the scriptures, while other may want to read folk tales and the ancient epics of their culture. Some may want to read the newspaper to find out what is going on in their immediate or wider surroundings. Utilitarian uses of literacy by individuals may include generating income for better livelihood or making one’s voice heard in situations where social and political decisions are made.

However, despite phenomenal growth of the formal educational systems and the interest shown to non-formal education in the past decades, the vast majority of the population has still remained illiterate. Why do we still have illiterate people in Nigeria? Who are these illiterates? Where are these illiterates located in the community? Are there not enough provision of avenue to access the opportunity of reading and writing? If there are access opportunities, what are they? Anybody who has interest of development in mind would want to enquire the provision of literacy programmes to the illiterates especially the rural poor. This paper is therefore addressed to show access opportunities provided by the two states in literacy education.

Statement of the problem

Nigeria has been involved in various educational activities aimed at increasing access to literacy development, in an attempt at reducing to the barest minimum, the level of illiteracy in the country. She has actually been privy to some of the global interventions programmes through UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF among others to broaden access and improve quality in education. Oyo and Ondo states happened to have benefited from free primary education of late Obafemi Awolowo as far back as 1955 (Aderinoye, 2005). In spite of these developments, nationally about 14.1 million children are enrolled in primary schools out of the 21 million children of school-going age, thereby increasing the number of out of school children and youth. There is no relevant data to establish why many adults and out of schools youths have still not been able to benefit from literacy provision in the two states as about 30% of the
population in the states are illiterate especially in the rural areas (NPC, 2006). Not only this, an empirical study into assessment of adequacy of access to literacy skills have not been conducted as far as my consultation with existing literature is concerned particularly in the two states. This study therefore attempts to examine the extent to which adult basic literacy skills are accessible to the people in the selected communities of Oyo and Ondo States.

**Research questions**

i.) What opportunities do people in the selected rural communities in the two states have to access basic adult literacy skills at state centers?

ii.) What challenges exist in accessing literacy skills at state centers?

iii.) How can we address these challenges to provide access for all people?

**Operational definition of terms**

**Literacy education**

The first stage of the adult learning activity that comprises the 3Rs: reading, writing and arithmetic.

**Sustainable development**

Sustainable development as far as this study is concerned stands for the use of literacy skills by an individual for his personal (self-reliance) and community development in such a way that there is a better quality and improved of life for him now and for generations to come.

**Access**

Educational opportunity and availability of learning facilities to those who are willing to acquire knowledge, skills and attitude. Access in the context of this study involves adult learners getting enrolled in centres, maintaining regular attendance, availability of learning materials – primers, facilitators, location of centres near learner’s residence, completion of the prescribed number of years of literacy and the successful learning achievement.

**METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. A total of 1,310 adult learners were used for the study in 127 literacy centres from 12 local governments from the two states as shown in Table 1.

**Instrument**

Questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), observation and assessment of official records were used. Simple frequency counts and percentage were used in the analysis of data.

**FGD guides**

The FGD sessions covered such issues as:

i.) The existence of the learning centre.

ii.) The distance of residence to learning centres.

iii.) Provision for learning materials like primers, writing books, pencils, and so on by the organizer of the programme.

iv.) The attitude of the facilitator to learners.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Accessibility of adult basic literacy skills to the people in the selected rural communities of Oyo and Ondo States.

The establishments of Ondo and Oyo State agency for Adult and Non-formal Education (AANFE) proved that the governments provided access towards the attainment of the provision of basic literacy to the non-literate adults in the two states. It should be stated clearly here that while AANFE in Oyo State operates under the Ministry of Education, AANFE in Ondo State operates as a full ministry of adult and vocational education, this facts clearly shows level of commitment on the part of the governments in the two states in creating accessibility to adult learners willing to become literate.

Apart from the management cadre at the head offices, field officers were also employed apart from facilitators who handle the teaching of the learners. In Oyo state, these field officers are called Local Adult Education Officers (LAEOs) whereas in Ondo state they are called Area Mass Literacy Officers (AMLs). Official records and documents from the two states showed that learning materials like primers, policy in support of access, teaching aids, chalkboards, are provided by the two state governments through the agencies for adult and non-formal education.

Responding to the issue of accessibility to the literacy centres, 1099 (83.2%) constituting the majority of the 1310 respondents agreed that the literacy learning centre is centrally located, thus it was easier for them to attend, while only 211 (16.1%) said the location of the literacy centres was far from their residence and therefore attend by hiring an Okada vehicle (bike) to travel to the centre. This finding was confirmed by some of the facilitators picked for the study who also hire an Okada vehicle to travel. 849 (64.8%) respondents strongly agreed that closeness and distance of the centre to their houses made the literacy programme accessible to them and
Table 1. Distribution of learners selected for the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Senatorial Districts</th>
<th>No of Local Govt.</th>
<th>L.G/Rural Communities</th>
<th>Literacy Centres</th>
<th>Population (40% of Population)</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ondo</td>
<td>Ondo South</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1. IleOluji/Oke-Igbo</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Ilaje</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>98</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Akure N.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>104</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Ifedore</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Akoko SW</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>109</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Ose</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Ido</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyo</td>
<td>Oyo South</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2. Ibarapa N.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Egbeda</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Akinyele</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>125</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Saki W.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Itesiwaju</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>111</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Distribution of respondents’ responses on access facilities to literacy skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The literacy learning centre is centrally located for all to attend.</td>
<td>468 (35.7%)</td>
<td>631 (48.2%)</td>
<td>115 (8.8%)</td>
<td>96 (7.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The distance of the centre to my house is Okay.</td>
<td>646 (49.3%)</td>
<td>203 (15.5%)</td>
<td>366 (27.9%)</td>
<td>95 (7.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The time for lessons is in line with learners’ interest and need.</td>
<td>596 (45.5%)</td>
<td>643 (49.1%)</td>
<td>40 (3.1%)</td>
<td>31 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Days fixed for classes are not in conflict with learners’ personal programmes.</td>
<td>459 (35.0%)</td>
<td>430 (32.8%)</td>
<td>295 (22.5%)</td>
<td>126 (9.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The centres are acceptable to learners.</td>
<td>596 (45.5%)</td>
<td>646 (49.3%)</td>
<td>48 (3.70%)</td>
<td>20 (1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The venues and time allocated for lessons are suitable for learning.</td>
<td>517 (39.5%)</td>
<td>667 (50.9%)</td>
<td>86 (6.6%)</td>
<td>40 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I do not pay any fee to attend the literacy class.</td>
<td>612 (46.7%)</td>
<td>451 (34.4%)</td>
<td>119 (9.1%)</td>
<td>128 (9.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The learning instrument or materials are adequate for learners.</td>
<td>430 (32.8%)</td>
<td>676 (51.6%)</td>
<td>126 (9.6%)</td>
<td>78 (6.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The primers are provided freely and relevant to learners’ needs.</td>
<td>459 (35.0%)</td>
<td>617 (47.1%)</td>
<td>169 (12.9%)</td>
<td>65 (5.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The teaching of the facilitator is always very interesting.</td>
<td>596 (45.5%)</td>
<td>646 (49.3%)</td>
<td>48 (3.70%)</td>
<td>20 (1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The facilitator is friendly and accommodating to us all.</td>
<td>572 (43.7%)</td>
<td>643 (49.1%)</td>
<td>40 (3.1%)</td>
<td>55 (4.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The facilitators make use of the Learner Generated Materials to facilitate effective teaching activities.</td>
<td>140 (10.7%)</td>
<td>247 (18.9%)</td>
<td>386 (29.5%)</td>
<td>537 (40.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>There are adequate chairs and tables at the literacy centres.</td>
<td>282 (21.5%)</td>
<td>486 (37.1%)</td>
<td>322 (24.6%)</td>
<td>220 (16.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Members of my immediate family who are literate are source of inspiration that enabled me to register for literacy programme.</td>
<td>113 (8.6%)</td>
<td>204 (15.6%)</td>
<td>350 (26.7%)</td>
<td>643 (49.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

encourage their participation. Majority of the respondents 1184 (90.4%) out of the 1310 also agreed that the venue, duration and timing of the literacy classes are favourable to them thus confirming that access was made easier for the learners to acquire the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy in their communities. Respondents (68%) from Ondo picked for FGD agreed with this fact that the literacy centres were not far from their residence (Table 2). One of the FGD participants said:
Our centre was located in the market place near the Kabiyesi's palace for anybody to access any time. Distance to the centre was never our problem.

Another group from Oyo state responded this way: We all agreed to be having our class here so that nobody will be seen to be more favoured. This is the school that all our children come to learn and it belongs to us all, hence, nobody complain.

Along with the opinion expressed in the FGD, 1106 (84.4%) of the beneficiaries that responded to the questionnaire agreed that there was provision of free learning materials to them. The entire FGD participants from both states agreed on the provision of learning materials like primers, writing books, pencils. They chorused that: We have books in which we write, we took our primers home. All the materials are free.

Moreover, 65% of the FGDs agreed that access to other reading materials like newspapers was also found to be significant in the provision of literacy programmes but were not significantly available. 1242 (94.8%) respondents agreed that the teaching of the facilitator was always interesting and stimulating, while 1215 (92.7%) agreed that their facilitators were friendly and accommodating.

All the 54 participants used for the FGDs in the two states agreed with those items as designed by the questionnaire which all confirmed previous study on the issue of access to literacy skills among the adults (Kalman, 2005; Veeman, 2004). In other words, responses of the FGDs confirmed that distance between the learning centre and learners residence, relationship between the facilitators, availability of learning materials, learners family literacy involvement and so on play crucial role in the participation of the learners in literacy activities.

However, the opinions of the facilitators were divided on the suitability of the primers as being adequate to meet the needs of the learners. While majority of the facilitators (76%) were of the opinion that the primer should change to include modern technology and the demand of the learners, some still believe that nothing was wrong with the existing primers. The facilitators also agreed that the agencies provided primers as the major instrument of teaching materials with which they facilitate teaching activities. However, the quantity of materials provided by the two states is not the same as the availability of the programmes were subject to resources at the disposal of the agencies in the two states.

90% of the respondents agreed that the daily schedule were not in conflict with their social and economic activities. Availability of trained and competent facilitators as a factor of access played a significant role in the outcome of this study. This is in line with the findings of Ifeyinwa (2006) and Kalman (2005) in separate studies that show that adequate provision of qualified facilitators who really understand the various characters of adult learners constitutes an aspect that help in access to literacy education. Establishing the fact that when facilitators are friendly and accommodating to learners, it will endear participation and enhance successful completion in adult literacy programmes is confirmed by Fingeret and Drennon (1997). All the participants from the two states appraised the efforts of their facilitators. They said:

“Our facilitators are trying. They are very friendly resourceful and time conscious.

Some participants added that:

Our facilitator is teaching us well. She allowed us to contribute and we asked as many questions as we desire. She always encouraged us not to feel shy.”

This study revealed that other learning materials like newspaper and adequate chairs and tables were not sufficiently available to the learners in the centres used for the study especially in Oyo state. This is as a result of the fact that most of the school chairs and tables used by the adult learners are designed for the use of school children, hence, not suitable for the adult learners. These defects were against the (UNESCO 2003) declaration at the launching of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) which states that policies must provide a framework for local participation in literacy. UNLD states further that national policy environments must link literacy promotion with strategies of poverty reduction and with programmes in agriculture, health, HIV/AIDS prevention, conflict resolution and other social concerns. Thus for any nation to have an interest in tackling illiteracy effectively, strong government policy that adequately take care of the interest of the learners must be put in place.

Majority of the respondents (81.1%) agreed that they did not pay any fee to attend the classes from the two states. Another important factor of access to literacy is the recognition for certification. 86.2% of the respondents agreed that their interest and participation was as a result of the hope to have a certificate to show for their participation which enhanced their status at work. However, while certificates are awarded to learners every year during the yearly International Literacy Day on 8th September in Ondo state, it was not the case in Oyo state as respondents from Oyo State complained of non-issuance of certificate.

Responses from the FGD session showed that information about the existence of the centre came through the awareness campaign conducted by the officials of the agencies, leadership of the communities concerned, friends, associate and radio announcement. 65% of the FGD group in Oyo state heard of the literacy centres through their friends and associates whereas apart from getting information from friends and associate, almost 90% of the FGDs in Ondo agreed that radio announcement, yearly literacy day celebration and the current UNESCO sponsored Literacy by Radio which the
state benefits from are other means through which the people in Ondo heard of the literacy programmes. This shows that much more needs to be done in terms of the publicity of literacy promotion in Oyo state than in Ondo state. In fact the enthusiasm at which the people of Ondo State welcome the programme lend credence to how regular classes are attended and how well the literacy activities flourish in Ondo than Oyo state. However, the two states need to make use of more regular radio jingles, towncriers and poster to help them in mobilizing learners for their literacy programme. The annual graduation programme of the agency in Ondo which is always televised had been a major source of motivation.

20 out of the 36 members of the FGD from the local governments of study in Oyo state learned of the programme through facilitators as there were no sensitization or graduation programmes as well as radio jingles.

The valued scale range on the possibility that the learners are satisfied with the learning centres arrangement confirmed Boshier’s theory (1973) as cited in Chiu, 1993 that the proper matching of adults to educational environments was important. The Boshier’s theory postulates that motivation for learning was a function of the interaction between internal psychological factors and external environmental variables, or at least the participant’s perception and interpretation of environmental factors. If the learners’ total current environment requires or encourages further learning, one will perceive adult education as having, at least potentially, high personal value or utility. If learners can achieve their expectations, they will persist in attending the courses. Other factors that influence learners’ attendance rate at the learning centres as maintained by majority of the respondents during the FGD are family commitments, change of jobs for working class, change in working hours, market days/timing and, health factors.

The adult education programme that was predominantly available in the two states was basic literacy. Observation of the researcher showed that adult literacy programme is repeated most often every year to the same set of adult learners. 68% of the respondents used for the study claimed that inability of the organizer of the programme to initiate something that could extend their literacy to the advance class is a problem, hence, lowering their access to education. In some of the learning centres, the distance learners have to travel is far and about 38% of the respondents used for the FGD are of the opinion that limitation posed by the distance they have to travel to reach their learning centres inhibit their access of the learning opportunities and this fact is coupled with the fact that learners require enough time, enough learning materials, and the facilities provided by the organiser before adequate personal needs is met.

Primers as the major instruments for learning in most of the learning centres need to be reviewed with the participation of the learners so as to meet the new development in the literacy programmes. This is in line with what Aderinoye (1997) said about the use of real materials available in the environment as opposed to the use of primers designed and prepared by experts without the involvement or participation of adult learners. Thus, there is a need to improve the Real Literacy Materials and Learner Generated Materials and facilitators should encourage the learners in the collection of real literacy materials that will be used to teach them.

Another problem discovered was the issue of usual sudden and tele-guided international intervention. Most of the interventions are always given to the state when least expected and thus affects the planning and the use of such assistance. There are not enough advocacies on the part and expected role of local government councils, social philanthropists and various non-governmental organizations that should be mobilized to assist the government in literacy provision. An official from one of the AANFE during the interview praised the assistance rendered by the international donours but cautioned:

Most of the assistance from International Organisations is always sudden with little time for preparation. Apart from this, these organizations always teleguide us of what to use the fund they provide for. One the part of the government, adult literacy programme is not always given the attention it deserved. Fund is released when other programmes to be executed have been catered for. Even some Ministry of Education officials see nothing good in the adult education. Their thinking is based on the fact that adult education caters for adult alone. We have to re-educate them that youths who dropped out and those that missed formal education one way or the other are part of clients of our agency.

There was also a problem with the inadequate use of the media, regular jingles and announcements and opportunity that was to be tapped with the use of press releases. Inadequate funding of the programmes is also a problem identified in the study. Despite her achievements in Ondo State, the former Executive Secretary of Ondo AANFE believe that if her proposals were accepted and released as expected, more success would have been recorded. Reports from Oyo AANFE indicate that for years, budget proposals are only approved on papers but nothing is released for any serious business to take place. This is against the UNESCO agreement that 6% of the allocated fund to education be given to the non-formal education. Lastly, the certificate awarded at the end of the literacy programme is not fully recognized, even from the government that is supposed to do so and this does not encourage those who have come forward to embrace the literacy programmes. However, an official from Ondo State said:

We are putting forward opportunity to our adult education products to mainstream into the formal education. This we believe will increase participants and recognition given to adult literacy programme in the state.
Conclusion and recommendations

The major concluding remark from the study is that government from the two states covered in this study have provided enabling environments through the provision of access to basic literacy programmes in all the local governments area in the states. Ondo State has a full Ministry in charge of adult literacy whereas AANFE in Oyo State operates under the Ministry of Education. The two states have put in place structures that can hasten accessibility of adult literacy education in the communities used for the study, however, the study revealed that regular funding which is the major determinants of any success of literacy activities is affecting the development of literacy in the two states, and this constitute a danger of not meeting up with the EFA and MDGs goals, International Benchmark on literacy in Nigeria, hence, the critical role of public opinion in defending basic education as a right and a key to escaping the trap of poverty must be enjoined.

The study also shows that the two states have contributed immensely to improve literacy. The participants acknowledged the fact that the skill acquired have enabled them to function effectively in their communities. Creation of access to literacy programmes by the government has encouraged the adult illiterate to participate in literacy activities. The participants agreed that their participation have also enabled them to increase civic participation in community activities, trade unions and local politics. Social benefits for the learners increased with better knowledge of healthcare, family planning, HIV/AIDS prevention and a higher chance of parents educating and assisting their children with their education. The conclusion derived in the study establishes the fact that there is a return on investment in adult literacy programmes as comparable to those in primary level education.

In the Southwestern part of Nigeria, ensuring equal opportunity for access to formal education has remained a major challenge in achieving UBE enrolment, thus, the economic and socio-cultural conditions strongly influence adults participating in literacy activities and parental decisions on whether to send their children to school at all (Aderinoye, 2004). It was discovered that many adult learning centers are located in schools because of the need for tables and chairs to be used for learning. Despite this fact, the distance between schools and the students/learners’ home constitutes a serious problem for access to study in the rural areas. Living at a certain distance away from the adult literacy centre creates a barrier to enrolment.

Sometimes, the physical accessibility is not a problem for people living within a 2 kilometer radius of the literacy centre but, economic and/or socio-cultural problems. Many parents from these isolated rural areas, because of distance/inaccessibility to a school, refuse to send their children to school, thus aggravating the literacy problem in the country.

It is therefore recommended that there is the need to expand learning programmes to all the nook and cranny of the federation and the learning centres must be placed close to learners’ residence so as to encourage regular participation by all. Government should see adult literacy programmes as essential to national development and accord recognition to it as done to the formal education system and therefore should pump money into adult literacy programme. If possible, a Ministry should be created specifically to oversee the affairs of literacy activities throughout the federation. NGOs should be encouraged to support the creation of more centres for adult literacy and International donours should give enough time for the agencies to draw plans on how and what the intervention funds will be used for. Involvement of opinion and community leaders as agent of sensitization need to be fully addressed, while recognition be given to the adult literacy certificate as a way of encouraging participation and discouraging withdrawal from the programmes. Efforts should also be made by the organizers of literacy programmes to identify the needs of the learners at the beginning of literacy programmes so as to motivate the learners to achieve the desired skills.

REFERENCES


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