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Exploring the Efficacy of Functional Literacy in Adult Literacy Centres in Kano State, Nigeria

By

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## ABSTRACT

*The study aimed at exploring the economic benefit of adult literacy to the adult learners in Kano State, Nigeria. The study followed qualitative procedure, by using case study. Therefore, the sample of the study was confined to one adult literacy centre. Also, purposeful sampling technique was used to select and interview six adult learners. The study based on the Psychological Incentive Theory of Human Motivation and had raised one research question that is, whether or not if there is an economic benefit for the learners if they attend Adult Literacy Education Programme ALEP? Alongside, 10 semi-structured open-ended interview questions that were developed and sent to experts to ascertain validity of the instrument. The data analysis involved transcription and coding. The research found that, although some of the adult learners had benefitted from the programme, yet, the inadequacy of the educational facilities has constituted a barrier to effective implementation of the functional adult literacy education programme in Kano State, Nigeria, that seek to be redress. In order to enhance the socio-economic prospects aspired by the adult learners that are attending the programme and to boost the socio-economic development of the country.*

**Key words:** Adult, Functional Literacy; Socio-Economic; Prospect

## INTRODUCTION

The industrial and technological development of a country depends on literacy as a requirement for its success, especially when a literate member of society engages in an active and effective role in the development process. There is no doubt that combining the skills of improving income generation with knowledge of sustainable development will assist mankind to improve his material condition of living through the use of resources available to him.

In fact, it was asserted that financial literacy that is blended with knowledge, skill and sound moral values is essential for individual to attain financial well being. Hence, building the financial literacy of citizens will reduce poverty and improve personal financial management and welfare of the adult learner and the community (Refera, Dhaliwal, & Kaur, 2016).

## MEANING OF FUNCTIONAL ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION

Literacy is viewed as the integration of reading and writing skills to impact positively on the lives of people (Kadriye, 2015). Therefore, functional adult literacy denotes that, Adult Literacy Education should be related with a tool that can help the individual to improve himself intellectually, economically and make himself socially and politically relevant to the society s/he belongs. Thus, it should be seen as a continuous process that requires regular and sustained functional adult literacy that can result to life long learning (Okoye & Juweto, 2015).

Therefore, functional adult literacy is another form of literacy education program that is associated with the livelihood of the society with the aim of assisting adults to overcome their daily life problems (Suleyman, 2013).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Incentive theory was established in the 1940s and 1950s, by psychologists such as Clark Hull, who upheld the views that, the anticipation of reward by learners can influence positive performance which can lead to persistence in learning and achieving a high-grade score. While, the anticipation for punishment may result to withdrawal, less participation and less success reckoned in learning by the same learner who is disposed to two different situations of reward and punishment (Kendra, 2018). It is on the basis of the Incentive Theory, that the study was set to explore the economic benefit of adult literacy to the adult learners in Kano State, Nigeria. To identify how such benefits affects their persistence to learning, positively or otherwise.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Over view of Functional Adult Literacy Practice**

#### ***Socio-Economic Prospect of Adult Literacy Education***

The human capital theory perceives education and learning activities as an investment in people to increase the productivity of goods and services, but this opinion has an unfavourable effect especially when linked with the matters concerning learning values and receiving training in education (Marginson, 2017). Hence, the participation of adult in adult education and continuing education offers the prospect to enrich their life (Kil, Motschilnig, & Thone-geyer, 2013).

However, evidence from the literature has proven that, there are issues of low enrolment and high drop out rate among the adult learners who participated in the Functional adult literacy globally, which are mostly due to lack of Incentive Motivation.

To instantiate, in the United States of America, Spivey (2016) conducted a study to Examine Barriers to Retention of Adult Learners in Rural Education Programme in Georgia, the U.S. The study employed a qualitative design which was a case study. Out of all the adult literacy centres within the 12 counties, 12 informants were selected using stratified sampling. The research examined instructors' and students' perceived and experienced barriers, motivations, and recommendations for better strategies of education within the rural area. Findings of the study revealed that situational hardships were perceived barriers to retention that were facilitated by personal commitments.

Also, in Africa, Sywelem (2015), Examined Literacy and Adult Education in Egypt: Achievements and Challenges. That study follows a quantitative method and found that, Egypt suffers from low enrollment rates with almost 20% of young adults who had never attended any form of schooling and also with alarming rates of dropout from schooling, due to poverty, which is often linked to illiteracy. That the countries with socio-economic problems, can gain solution through improving the quality and practice in adult literacy education for a vibrant and dynamic socio-economic and political transformation.

Similarly, in Nigeria, in a study by Adelore and Itasanmi (2016), who carried out a study on the use of two ICT tools in adult literacy programmes: lessons learned in Oyo State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that, provision of support by stakeholders is required for effective utilization of ICT tools, in order to realize the potency of the programme.

Alongside, a research was conducted in Rivers State, Nigeria by Adekola and Kumbe (2016), on the Effects of Women Education (Literacy and Vocational) on their Participation in Community Development in Ogoni land, Rivers State, Nigeria. The Descriptive Survey Design research was employed, that had a reliability index of 0.76 and the hypotheses were test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that the ability of women to acquire literacy and vocational education has a great impact on their personal lives and the entire community.

Similarly, in Kano State, Nigeria, a study was conducted by Idris and Mbudai (2017), on Technical and Vocational Education: To explore the Challenges towards Youths Empowerment in Kano State, Nigeria. The study employed the qualitative method. The findings unveil that, the absence of the resources lacking in the educational setting constitutes a challenge to the technical and vocational education which needs to be overcome.

### ***The Components of Functional Adult Literacy in Kano State, Nigeria***

According to the provision of the Agency for Mass Literacy in Kano State, Nigeria, the Adult Literacy Education Programme is charged with the following responsibilities:

- a) Adult Basic Literacy and post Literacy Education through learning Reading Writing and Numeracy skills to prepare adults to promote targeted and constructive activities to meet the objective for establishing the agency;
- b) Training on vocational skills and general knowledge such as nutrition and hygiene, functional literacy, entrepreneurial skills at their disposal to improve their living condition and state of wellbeing;
- c) Training on innovative and creative skills geared towards transformation of the adults localities in Kano State and the society at large; and
- d) Training on localised and technological resources centre with training facilities
- e) Artisan, Craft, Carpentry, Plumbing, Building, Motor, Mechanic, Electrical Fittings, Photography, Tailoring, Weaving, Knitting, Copy Typing and Cookery (NMEC, 2015).

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The present study aimed to explore the socio-economic benefits attained by the adult learners of the literacy centres in Kano State, Nigeria. To gather a corresponding data, one research question was developed, that is, What are the socio-economic benefit of adult literacy to the adult learners?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this study, a qualitative approach was chosen as the research method. A qualitative approach was considered more relevant to undertake this research as it allowed greater capacity to gain more depth and meaning, based on the adult learners' opinion about their experiences on the functional literacy skills that they learnt (Merriam, 1998). As opposed to a quantitative approach which is broader in scale, more structured, and more numerically based.

The face-face Semi-structured interviews were used to conduct the research. This is because, interview is the most suitable approach for studying complex and sensitive parts, as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare an informant before asking sensitive questions and to explain complex ones to them in person (Kumar, 2005). Again, the researcher used a

purposive sampling method to choose six adult learners. Purposive sampling is an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling (Bryman, 2004).

Moreover, the credibility of the data collected was ascertained by ensuring conformability to reduce biasness in the data collection and analysis. Conformability is referred to the extent of neutrality or the level at which the data of the research has aligned with the responses of the six informants and not attained due to the researchers' bias or influence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, the researcher who has purposefully selected six informants that can provide rich data, had also considered gender balance by selecting three females and three males informants to enhance triangulation of opinion of the gender who participated in the study.

The data collection procedure involved semi-structured interviews that was administered face to face, directly by the researcher through audio-recording of the information that was gathered from all the informants.

The data analysis include transcription which helped the researcher to identify main ideas that emerged from the data for ease of interpretation. Concomitantly, the researcher ensured credibility through conformability from the responses of the informants that shows there was no gender disparity in the information provided. Also, the use of structural codes had aid greatly in this regard.

Structural codes are important and used to present the analysis and the discussion of the findings of the study. To guide the reader of this research, in order to understand 'who' says 'what' and the frequencies of occurrence of utterances on similar idea that was mentioned by the informants during the interviews. Therefore, all the informants were referred in the research by pseudonyms, for reasons of confidentiality.

Hence, the codes assigned to the six informants are: Informant 1, Informant 2; Informant 3; Informant 4, Informant 5 and Informant 6 respectively. Concurrently, the frequency of occurrence of the utterances that emerged from the transcript of each informant, is written in numerical order by indicating the number of the Discourse Units (DU) with similar idea on the transcript of a particular informant. For example, 'Informant 1/DUX7' Is a 'code' that was used to explain that, the interviewee 1, has repeated a synonymous opinion in seven discourse units. Also, to rule out biaseness the information from the three male informants were compared with that of their three females counterparts who were assigned odd numbers, for example, although, Informant 1, is a female and had two female counterparts who were Informant 3 and Informant 5. But, her utterances were compared with the opinion of the male informant 2 who shared common opinion from the data gathered.

This procedure was done vice-versa and was followed to report the responses by all the six informants, in the analysis and discussion on findings of the research. The structural codes of the informants are summarized in Table 1.1.

**Table 1:** Structural Codes for Participants of the Study

Interview Transcripts				
Participant	Gender		Pseudonyms	Frequency (X) of Discourse Units (DU)
	Male	Female		
Facilitators		✓	Informant 1	1-7
	✓		Informant 2	1-7

Interview Transcripts				
		✓	Informant 3	1-3
	✓		Informant 4	1-2
		✓	Informant 5	1-4
	✓		Informant 6	1-6
Total =	3 Males	3 Females	6 Informants	29 Discourse Units

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analysed and discussed in line with the one research question of the study. To explore the economic benefit of adult literacy to the adult learners.

### *Economic Benefit to the Adult Learners*

To the human capital theorists, adult learning is associated with investment in humans to increase the production of commodities (Vater, Kellner, & Jütte, 2011). Thus, socio-economic development considers the extent of human participation in civil society and the impact of the emergent global trade on humans (Olukayode & Urhie, 2014). This has made Education to become subservient to economic strategies that focused on increasing national GDPs, testing students instead of educating them, with less attention paid to learning outcomes (Robinson, 2016) and (Tom, 2018).

Therefore, participation in education should be considered as a process that can enable the adult to acquire the knowledge and vocational skills that will equip the recipient and could make them employable and useful to enrich one's self and the society (Okoye & Juweto, 2015).

By conformity, when asked whether or not if there is an economic benefit for the learners if they attend ALEP. Informant 1, and Informant 2, opined that, at the beginning of attending the ALEP, when the equipment and teaching materials are available, they had acquired the vocational skills, that can make them contribute to their financial well-being, engage other people to participate and reduce poverty by the sustainable development of thier society.

Hence, it is alleged by Informant 1, that, she had benefitted a lot from learning the vocational skills, that is provided to her by the ALEP. Especially, at the initial stage when there seem to be adequate educational facilities, they make a profit she and the retailers of the soap she produces which she learnt from attending the ALEP. She said,

“Certainly, at the first impression, the facilities that are in used when I started the programme. This helps me a lot... Because, women from neighborhood buy the locally made soap that I make, in wholesales and they sell at retail prices to make a profit...” (Informant 1/DUX7).

Furthermore, Informant 2, admits that the vocational skills taught by the ALEP, such as the wood working skill applied to furniture he makes, has assisted him to generate and grow a business, having a positive effect on himself and others in his community. He said,

“I can make furniture ...for my friends and relatives to purchase and I train some apprentice in my workshop” (Informant 2/DUX7).

However, Informant 3, and Informant 4, irrespective of their gender disparity opined that learning the 3Rs from the ALEP can lead them to an metaphorical greener pasture for

their personal development, despite the inadequacy of the challenges of the inadequate educational facilities that they were facing in the literacy centre.

Hence, Informant 3, had learnt reading and writing, hoping that she could be employed as a junior staff in a clinic. she said, "...I am determined to learn how to read and write in English. Because I am hoping to be employed as a card issuer in the nearby hospital..." (Informant 3/DUX3).

Similarly, Informant 4, said he is devoted to learning reading and writing skills that can enable him to get employment at the neighbourhood Company. He said, "I can read and write my name, some words in Hausa and in the English language".

"...When I can read and write very well, I will apply for a job vacancy in any of those companies surrounding Kano State. ...I am challenged by the lack of sufficient teaching materials in the centre...you know we buy...books..." (Informant 4/DUX2).

Importantly, out of the six informants, is the views of the two adult learners who could not explain the benefit they achieved by attending the programme. Yet, they complained that the inadequacy of teaching facilities has inflated the drop-out rate among the adult learners at the ALEP in Kano State, Nigeria. For instance, Informant 5, believed that the 'Inadequacy of the Education Facility, due to lack of the adequate teaching materials, had caused her siblings to drop-out from the ALEP'.

"the teaching materials for sewing, are at most times not available to train us.

Also, the dilapidated condition of the teaching facilities is worrisome... My siblings told me that the non-availability of the teaching facilities had caused them to drop out from the literacy centre" (Informant 5/ DUX4).

Correspondingly, Informant 6, agrees with Informant 5, regardless of their gender differences, he claims that his friends had drop-out from the ALEP, due to the inadequacy of the teaching facilities in the literacy centre that he attended.

"..the empty seats you see in the class where vacated by some of my friends who confessed to me that, due to the lack of teaching facilities to train us and the demand from our teachers to pay the cost of schooling, which is beyond their effort that is why most of them dropped-out" (Informant 6/DUX6).

Therefore, most of the adult learners believed that the lack of equipment in the literacy centre inflates the drop-out rate from the ALEP. This has established the views of (Okoye & Juweto, 2015) and Olojede (2017) who opined that the situation of inadequacies of facilities and equipment that facilitators will use to support adult learning activities and practice is peculiar to most of the adult literacy centres in Nigeria, which is noticeable, inflates the drop-out rate of the adult learners.

## DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

Overall, the informants said that they consider the accomplishment as a means of income generation, that is capable of giving them a means to a livelihood, which can lead to sustainable development that can reduce the poverty rate in the society. This has confirmed the opinion of Hussain and Haladu (2013) and Tom (2018) that, growth will not reduce poverty unless poor people are able to actively participate in the creation of wealth, which can be achieved through meaningful participation in the adult literacy education programme.

Generally, all the six informants agreed that by attending the ALEP, they had benefitted from learning the 3Rs and Vocational skills. However, two of them believed that

when teaching facilities are available they can learn more about the vocational skills that would enable them to participate in the wealth creation for the benefit of themselves and others. While, the other two informants believed that, their ability to effectively communicate through reading and writing, would assist them to gain employment opportunities. The remaining two informants could not express any benefit they achieved. But, they, lamented seriously on the inadequacies of the teaching resources in the centre.

Thus, the findings of this study are similar to previous research conducted on the adult literacy centres in Nigeria. Whereby, it is gathered that the instructional materials both printed and non-printed are available while electronic teaching aids are inadequate and in most cases not available in the adult literacy education centres that are expected to deliver effectively (Okoye & Juweto, 2015).

Therefore, in line with the Psychological Incentive Theory of Human Motivation (Kendra, 2018), the adult learners should be motivated to participate in active learning through the provision of adequate facilities in the literacy centres that can make them functional literates and impact positively on their wellbeing (Refera, Dhaliwal, & Kaur, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

Indeed, a proper implementation of functional adult literacy education that would assist to empower the adult learners in Kano State, Nigeria, requires an incentive motivation through the provision of technical and vocational education facilities that can enhance the enrolment and retention rate of the adult learners in the Adult Literacy Education Programme.

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