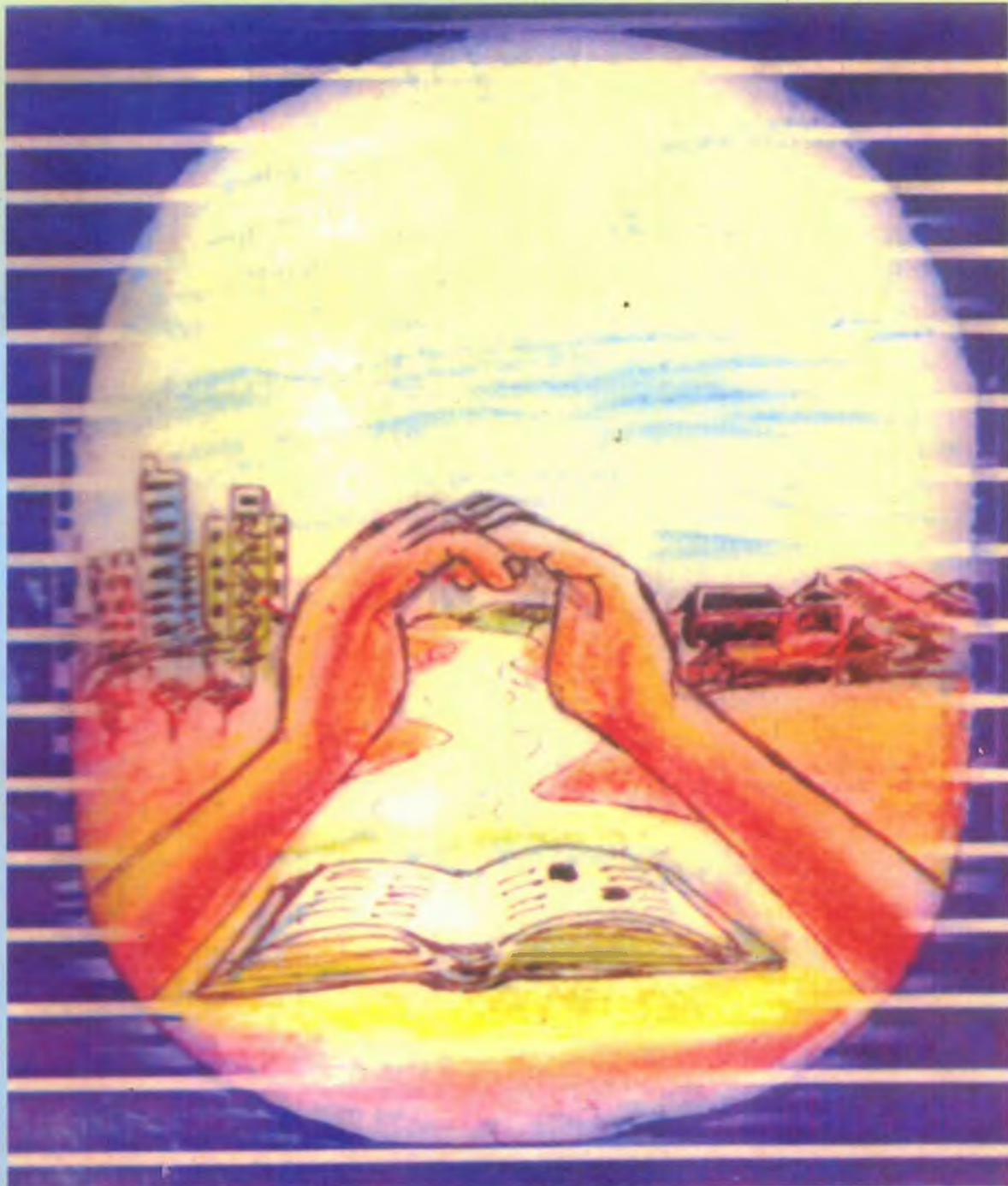




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CONTRIBUTIONS OF ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMMES TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

This Study examined the contributions of adult literacy programme to socio-economic status of women in Kwara State. It specifically examined the, level of women participation in adult literacy programmes women and contributions of adult literacy programmes on socio-economic education status of women in Kwara state. The study adopted ex-post facto research design. The sample of the study was of 380 women adult literacy programmes beneficiaries in the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, Ilorin adult literacy programmes. The samples of women adult literacy beneficiaries were selected through snow ball sampling technique. Instruments for data collection were documents and Adult literacy programmes and women empowerment questionnaire (ALPWEQ) for women adult literacy beneficiaries. The reliability of the instrument (ALPWEQ) using test-retest method and reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. The data collected in this study were subjected to documentary analyses, simple percents, frequency counts and chi-square test. The findings revealed that women actively participated in the adult literacy programmes in terms of enrolment and completion of the programmes. Adult literacy programmes have contributed positively to the socio-economic status of women in Kwara State. Although, certificates from literacy have not earned participants job opportunities. The study recommends among others for legislation for accepting literacy certificates for job seeking and incentives for encouraging women participation in post literacy programme.

Background to Study

It is evidently cleared that women have been abused, marginalized, discriminated against and denied their rights in most spheres of human endeavours. The situation is worse for the rural women who have become mere tools at the hands of their husbands. The rural women work tirelessly from morning till late in evening. They are either working on their farms or doing petty trading in the markets, a large quantity of which is transported to urban areas. Sometimes, these men are thankless of these enormous women's efforts. Rather, they expect the rural women to pay homage to them for keeping them under the roofs. Yet women who have contributed a lot to the development of the nation and constitute 50% of the labour force are till date, subjugated and oppressed (Ebirim, 2008). The 2006 Nigeria Census figure indicates that female constituted 48.7 % of the entire population. Many of them are illiterate, poor, disadvantaged economically, politically, socially and culturally.

In the above direction, Moda (1992) observed that it is very pathetic to note that the various statistics of the most developing countries like Nigeria, women especially those who live in the rural areas constitute the majority of illiterates. Illiteracy as we all know exposes such people to poverty, ignorance and diseases, which limit the possibility of human progress.

Lending credence to this Akomolafe (2008) reported that the level of education of women is low in Nigeria most especially in northern parts of Nigeria. The national literacy rate for female is only 56% compared to 72% for male and in certain states, the female literacy, enrolment and achievement rates are much lower, for example, girls net enrolment in Sokoto is 15% compared to 59% for boys (UNICEF, 2002). However, in Nigeria today, there is progress in woman education. Although Nigerian women still have a long way from achieving quality with their male counterparts.

The implication of the above features for women in Nigeria is that they are bound to be backward compared to their male counterparts. For women to break these barriers they need access to power over economic, social, psychological and cultural situations to enable them have knowledge to transform the world to their advantage. Knowledge gained, if put into profitable use, help in liberating people from the shackle of hunger, poverty and other vices that hinders ones proper existence.

In an effort to attain liberation for women-folk Roseline, Arikpo and Justina (2006) advocate empowering women as a way of boosting their capacity to make choices and to transform the choices made into desired actions and outcomes through education.

In this direction, there is realization that literacy can go a long way to improve the standard of living of people. Literacy has been identified as one of the adult education programmes which will provide the recipients with requisite knowledge and skills for self-reliance. The role of literacy education in the development of any society cannot be overemphasized. It is necessary and indispensable for economic, social, political and technological growth and advancement of any society. This is why UNESCO (1996) in Oladapo (2006) regards it as a human right and an essential ingredient for achieving equality, development and peace. It is a tool that helps and equips one to face his/her problems with a conscious mind. Therefore everybody needs it to be able to function properly in the society

Literacy according to Indabawa (1995) is referred to as the ability to acquire the skills of reading, writing and numeracy in local or foreign language for effective and efficient functioning of individuals in the activities they involve themselves in the society The relevance of this definition comes into picture in this study because literacy is regarded as a powerful tool for the effective functioning of women. Literacy is considered a right, an essential and adds value to a person's life.

The building of a literate society will lead to the development and improvement of women to be able to practice good hygiene, which may lead to the reduction of birth and death rates. Education for women means that they will come to know the importance of taking care of themselves and their

families. Their coming together at literacy classes provides a platform for them to share their experiences as women. Rural women, who were socially excluded, although they form the larger part of the population of Nigeria, will be able to take their rightful positions in societies through their engagement in literacy programmes. The country can hardly grow economically if the status of women is still low. It is therefore crucial that women be provided with quality education.

Women can benefit more economically if they are literate. Literacy opens up women to economic opportunities. Clearly, economic empowerment through literacy would make it possible for women to have choice of ways in which to support themselves and their families. Educated women according to Tsaku (2005) are more likely to enter the paid job. They are also more receptive to new ideas regarding strategies and methods.

Accordingly, National Literacy Mission in India (2001) reported that the participation of women in the national literacy campaign has opened several opportunities for new literate women to step out of households and involve themselves in some enterprise or a new vocation. The above scenario demonstrates how literacy can promote entrepreneurship among participants.

Literacy can enhance women's capacity to contribute to economic progress. Educated women can contribute their quota to the labour force when involved in the paid jobs, hence, nation's growth in the economy. A literate woman is a better businesswoman. She can manage her business properly. Literacy can help improve women skills in business connection and transaction. This can bring her more profits and in turn improves the economic status of the society. When more profit is made, business expands; it is an advantage to the proprietor on one hand and to the society on the other hand. This is because, expansion of business increases the proprietors' wealth and worth and job opportunities for youth and adults of their society.

While reporting on achievement of Better Life Programme in Nigeria Odi (1993) agrees that literacy skills empowered the women because the skills gave the women a new pair of eyes with which they used to see their plight, their lives and how to improve on their present plight. Literacy skills empowered the women to organize themselves to fight for their rights and privileges (Ebirim, 2008). Literacy programme helped women change their attitudes, behaviours and styles of communication. They have become efficient, confident and actively participate in various public activities.

A literate woman stands better chance in personal and family health attention. There is evidence that a mother's literacy level has positive effects on her child's development health and mortality rate. An educated woman is known to be less at risk since she is more likely to seek health care and improve her living conditions. In addition, she is aware of most of societal ills that affect her age group by virtue of her ability to, read and write (Umar, 1997).

There is a belief that a woman who is educated will typically be healthier, have fewer children and have more opportunities to increase household income. Her children, in turn will experience lower mortality rates, better nutrition and better overall health. From this we can see the importance of educating our illiterate women.

This is no doubt that educating women has greater advantages, hence the need to give literacy skills to our women. The realization of this fact has motivated governments and non-governmental organizations to subscribe for adult literacy. With the establishment of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, Ilorin Adult Literacy Programmes of different kinds; basic and post literacy have been mounted to improve the living standard of Kwarans.

Statement of the Problem

Considering the introduction of adult literacy programmes in the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, it would be interesting to understand whether there is improvement in socio-economic status of adults since improvement of socio-economic status of participants forms one of the important objectives of literacy programme has been met. It is on the basis of this that this study examined the contributions of adult literacy programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education on socio-economic status of women in Kwara State.

Objectives of the Study

- (i) To determine the level of women participation in adult literacy programmes in Kwara State.
- (ii) To identify the contributions of adult literacy programmes on socio-economic status of women in Kwara State.

Research Question

- (i) What is the level of women participation in adult literacy programmes in Kwara State?
- (ii) What are the contributions of adult literacy programmes on socio-economic status of women in Kwara State?

Methodology

The research adopted ex-post Facto design to examine the impact of adult literacy programmes on political empowerment of women in Kwara State. The design was adopted in view of the fact that, the research explored not only what adult literacy programmes constituted to the women participants but also considered the consequences on their socio-economic empowerment in Kwara State. The population for this study comprised of all the 40,400 women beneficiaries in the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education Adult Literacy Programmes (Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, 2009). The sample size of this study comprised of 380 Adult literacy women beneficiaries in the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education Adult literacy programmes. This study employed snowballing (network sampling) procedure in selecting the sample women adult literacy beneficiaries across Kwara State. In this procedure, each participant to be included in the study is nominated by a preceding woman adult literacy beneficiary as appropriate for the study. To choose the women adult literacy programme, the researcher contacted the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, Ilorin's staff who linked the researcher to the known literacy beneficiaries. The researcher in turn asked the known subjects to refer other beneficiaries. These beneficiaries were then followed up and the procedure was repeated until the sample size was completed. The research instrument used for the study document on women participation in basic and post literacy programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, Ilorin and Adult Literacy Programme and Women Socio-economic

Empowerment Questionnaire (ALPWSEQ) designed for women adult literacy beneficiaries. The questionnaire contains questions of which all are one four-point scale of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree. These questions seek details on the contributions of the programmes on women socio-economic status. The researchers explored both content and face validity by giving the draft questionnaires to the experts in the Department of Adult Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto for vetting, its reliability was determined using test-re-test method and a coefficient of 0.83 was obtained.

The questionnaire for the women adult literacy beneficiaries was administered on the respondents by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. The respondents (Women Adult Literacy Beneficiaries) were contacted at their various locations in Kwara State which took the researcher and the research assistants five weeks before getting the questionnaire administered to the respondents. All the administered questionnaires were returned and used for the analysis. Data was analyzed using, tabulation percents and chi-square test.

Results

Research Question One

What is the level of women participation in adult literacy programme women in Kwara State? This research question was answered using a documentary analysis and the results are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1 Level of Women Participation in Adult Literacy Programmes in Kwara State

Programmes	Enrolment Rate	Drop out	%	Retention	%
Basic Literacy	37,270	2,073	5.6	35,197	94.4
Post Literacy	3,130	629	20.1	2501	79.9

Source: Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, 2009

Interpretation

Table 1 above shows the level of women participation in basic and post literacy programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education between 2000 and 2008. The table reveals that 37,270 participants enrolled for basic literacy while 2,073 participants which constitute 5.6% dropped out of the programme within the year under consideration (2000-2008). The retention rate is highly encouraged as 35,197 which constitute 94.4% stayed in the programme till the end of the programme. In the same vein, 3,130 participants enrolled for post literacy programme while 20.1% (629) dropped out of the programme. The retention rate is 79.9% (2501).

Research Question Two

What are the contributions of Adult Literacy Programmes on socio-economic status of women in Kwara State? This research question was answered using simple percents and non-parametric statistic of Chi-Square. The result is presented in the table 4. 6

Table 2 Simple Percents and Chi-square summary of Adult Literacy Beneficiaries on the perceived Contributions of Adult Literacy programmes on their Socio-economic Status

S/ N	Questionnaire Items	Responses				Total
		SA/A	%	SD/D	%	
1	Adult literacy programme has enabled me to secure job.	207	54.5	173	45.5	380
2.	Adult literacy programme has enabled me to increase my income	320	84.2	60	15.8	380
3.	Adult literacy programme has improved my professional skills	335	88.2	45	11.8	380
4.	Adult literacy programme has improved my productivity	340	89.5	40	10.5	380
5.	Adult literacy programme has improved my standard of living	312	82.1	68	17.9	380
6.	Adult literacy programme has enabled to me to accept that I have a say in my family affairs.	351	92.4	29	7.6	380
7.	Adult literacy programme has improved my human relation	342	90	38	10	380
8.	Adult literacy programme has developed in me self-confidence	357	94	23	6.1	380
9.	Adult literacy programme has enabled my family to embrace the idea off family planning	360	94.7	20	5.3	380
10.	Adult literacy programme has enabled me to reject the idea of self-medication	325	85.5	55	14.5	380
11.	Adult literacy programme has enabled my personal hygiene	348	91.6	32	8.4	380
	Grand Total	3597		583		

$\chi^2=198.6$, p-value = 0.0000, Significant at 0.0

Interpretation

Table 2 shows the perceived impact of adult literacy programmes on socio-economic status of women in Kwara State. 54.5% (271) of beneficiaries agreed that the programme has enabled them to secure job while 45.5% (1973) of them disregarded the opinion. 84.2% of the respondents perceived that literacy programme has enabled them to increase their income while 15.8% disregarded the view. 88.2% of the beneficiaries of the literacy programmes indicated that the programme has improved their professional skills but 11.8% of the respondents disregarded the view. A further look at table 2 shows that 82.1% of the beneficiaries consented to the view that adult literacy programme has improved their standard of living. More so, 92.4% of the literacy beneficiaries agreed that the programmes have improved their human relation. 94% of them agreed that literacy programmes have developed in them self-confidence. About 95 of the literacy participants perceived that adult literacy programmes have enabled them to embrace the idea of family planning. Also 91.6% of the respondents perceived that literacy programmes have improved personal hygiene while 8.4% of them disagreed with the opinion.

Table 2 which equally shows the Chi-square test results indicated that there is a significant difference in the expressed opinions of the women adult literacy programmes beneficiaries with regarded to the impact of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education's adult literacy programmes on socio-economic empowerment of women in Kwara state ($\chi^2 = 198.6$, $p = 0.0000$, $\alpha 0.05$). On the average 86.1% (i.e 327) respondents agreed that the adult literacy programmes impacted positively on their socio-economic well-being while 13.9% (i.e 53) of the respondent are of the opinion that the programmes had no impact on their socio-economic well-being

Discussion of the Study

The findings on research question one revealed that the women participation in Basic literacy programme was encouraged. In fact large number of the beneficiaries of the programme stayed till completion of the programme. This is a good participation as the drop out was so insignificant. In the post literacy programme what is noticeable from the findings is that large number of women beneficiaries stayed till the end of the programme and examined. Although, looking at the table 1 critically reveals that the participants are not many especially when they are compared with the participants of the basic literacy programme. The implication of this is that, many of the participants of the basic literacy programme who are expected to move to the post literacy were not responding positively and this will deny them of consolidating their learnt literacy skills. This result is in line with the observation of Umar (2003) who confirmed that where female adult learners in more favourable circumstances have managed to acquire elementary literacy skills, the sustenance of literacy is even more difficult for them than men. This is because women have less access to reading materials and less time.

The results on research question two show that a greater proportion of the women adult literacy programmes beneficiaries (at least 80.8%) perceived that adult literacy programmes have given them opportunity to increase their income, diversify their sources of income, improve their productivity and increase their standard of living. They also perceived adult literacy as useful for: development

of self – confidence and good human relation; personal hygiene and idea of family planning. The respondents also agreed that adult literacy programmes have given them opportunity to have says in their family affairs they also consent to the fact that literacy has made them to embrace the idea of consulting medical personnel when sick rather than self-medication.

The above responses from the literacy beneficiaries indicated that they appreciate how literacy programmes have contributed to their socio-economic development. These expressions certainly indicate their joy of being literate. The results corroborate with the views of Hopfer (1999) that women who participated in a non-formal and adult education programme such as adult literacy programmes were able to be creative and take initiatives thereby influencing their socio-economic condition positively. However, item by item analysis indicates that adult literacy programmes have not have much impact on beneficiaries' job seeking efforts. This might be as a result of not accepting literacy certificates for job seeking by many organizations in the State.

Conclusion

This study examined the contributions of the Adult literacy programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education on the socio-economic status of women in Kwara State. The finding reveals that women participation in basic and post literacy programmes were encouraged though, the transition from basic literacy to post literacy was not encouraged. From the findings it is apparent that the adult literacy programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education have equally contributed positively on the socio-economic development of the women beneficiaries in Kwara State. Although, the study indicated that much is still needed to be done especially in the area of making adult literacy certificates means of securing job and encouraging women to patronize post literacy programme.

Recommendations

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

1. The participation of women in post-literacy programme should be encouraged. There should be incentive for the completers of basic literacy programme that transit into post-literacy programme. This will improve the transition of women from basic literacy to the post-literacy programme.
2. There should be legislation by the Kwara State House of Assembly that will make Adult Literacy programmes certificates acceptable for job seeking both by the government and non-governmental agencies. This can make the literacy beneficiaries fell the impact of adult literacy on job seeking.

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