

**FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROMOTING WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMMES IN KWARA STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the factors that can promote women participation in adult literacy programmes in Kwara State. It specifically examined the level of women participation in basic literacy programme and post literacy in Kwara State and factors that can promote women participation in literacy programme in Kwara State. The study adopted survey research design. The sample of 275 women adult literacy beneficiaries were selected through simple random sampling technique. Data was collected through Factors for Promoting Women Participation in Adult Literacy Programmes Questionnaire (FPWPALPQ) and documentary analysis. The questionnaire was validated by the adult literacy experts and its reliability was determined through test-retest method and 0.72 co-efficient of reliability was obtained. The data was subjected to documentary analysis; mean scores statistics and simple tabulation. The findings of the study revealed that women participation in basic and post literacy programme was encouraged in terms of those who enrolled and completed the programmes, although, the transition from basic literacy to post literacy was not encouraged as very few completers of basic literacy transited into post literacy. The study recommends that literacy planners must take women felt needs into consideration, monetary incentive should be given to women, legislation should be made to recognize literacy certificate for job seeking and admission into formal education institutions among others.*

### Background to the Study

Literacy has been identified as one of the forms of 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 as defined by UNESCO is the ability of a person to function in all the activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his/her group and the community and also for enabling him/her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his/her own and the community's development (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005:30). The relevance of this definition comes into picture in this study because literacy is regarded as a powerful tool for the development and empowerment of women. Literacy is considered a right, an essential and adds value to a person's life.

Basic education is widely regarded as making a basic contribution to social and economic progress. Women empowerment through their participation in literacy programmes according to The World Bank Source Book (2002:17) can build on poor people's strengths to:

- i. solve problem;
- ii. be initiative and manage resources;
- iii. gain knowledge, skills and values and;
- iv. rise out of poverty

The building of a literate society will lead to the development and empowerment 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.

A number of adult literacy programmes are available for women through different promoters of adult literacy. No doubt, adult literacy programmes have contributed to women empowerment in different facet of life. 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 have opened several opportunities for new literate women to step out of households and involve themselves in some enterprise or a new vocation. The Dumka Campaign in Bihar has demonstrated how literacy campaign has helped women to take charge of their lives. They have formed a group called "Joga Behna" (Awake sister), which tries to sensitize the women to the need of collective action against social ills. These women have also set up "Didi Bank" (Sister Bank), which promotes the habits of thrifts and savings.

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. Pant (2004) equally submitted that literacy

programme in Naugaon, Uttaranchal allowed women to reflect on their everyday experiences and articulate their needs and priorities. More importantly, they were able to move beyond the limited realm of the household

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).

The realization that adult literacy has potential to bring about development for men and women has motivated governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals to subscribe for adult literacy, for empowerment purpose. The Kwara State, Agency for Mass Education was established to provide adult and non-formal education programmes. The establishment of the agency gave impetus to the literacy efforts in Kwara State. This was seen in the establishment of literacy classes in different parts of the state. Many literacy classes sprang up in different ministries for Kwara State

illiterate civil servants to acquire and upgrade literacy skills. There was also considerable enthusiasm for adult literacy among the people and the government of Kwara State. Government and non-governmental organizations started to organize Adult and non-formal Education programmes for people. The importance of literacy was also stressed to promote socio-economic and educational development of women in the state (Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, 1999). One of the prominent programmes of the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education is Adult literacy programme. The aim of this programme is to alleviate illiteracy, so as to uplift the standard of living of people in the state. This objective could only be realized if women are actively involved in the programmes

The level of participation of adult learners in literacy programme in developing countries especially women has been declining over the years. A combination of social, economic, cultural and psychological factors have accounted for the apparent low level of motivation, which had negatively affected participation. While substantiating on the decline in women enrolment in adult literacy programs in Kenya, Thompson, (2002) reported that in 23-years, a total of 4,207,687, adult learners (76% women) participated in the programme with the

declining enrolment trend continuing. For example, in 1990, 110,847 women participated in adult literacy programme in Kenya and 66,573 in 2001 despite increase in women population in the country.

The reasons for decline in women enrolment according to Thompson (2002) include low facilitators motivation due to poor remuneration resulting in irregularity in class attendance, lack of teaching and learning materials, lack of income generating activities and inadequate training of part-time facilitators. It has been observed that classes and centres with income generating activities are likely to retain both the level of learners' motivation and their participation (Thompson, 2002).

One cannot rule out the poverty factor of women to have contributed to their decline in participating in adult literacy programme. Umar (2003) argued that women are also discouraged by the attitude of men who do not want them to attend literacy programme. Husbands and guardians sometimes forbid women to participate in any programme perhaps because they are afraid that if women learn as much as or more than them, their own ignorance may be exposed.

Where female adult learners in more favorable circumstances have managed to acquire elementary literacy skills, the sustenance of literacy is even more difficult for them than for men. This is because women have less access to reading materials and less time. Also, where women are able to enroll into post literacy programmes, they often drop out because of their demanding domestic duties, as well as unfavourable economic status (Umar, 2003). Umar (1997) also argued that women literacy classes are mostly attended more by wives of highly placed men or women whose husbands are literate.

It seems this situation has changed as many wives of non-literate husbands and market women are now enthusiastic in attending literacy classes. Therefore efforts need to be made to encourage women in literacy programme for individual and societal development. Obstacles identified must be removed to pave way for enthusiasm among women in literacy programme.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Considering the enthusiasm of women in participating in adult literacy programmes in Kwara State, effort must be made to sustain the tempo. It is on the basis of this that this study examined the factors that can promote women

participation in adult literacy programmes in Kwara State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- (i) to determine the level of women participation in basic literacy programme in Kwara State;
- (ii) to determine the level of women participation in post literacy programme in Kwara State; and
- (iii) to examine the factors that can promote women participation in adult literacy programmes in Kwara State.

### **Research Questions**

For the purpose of this study the following research questions were asked:

- (i) What is the level of women participation in basic literacy programmes in Kwara State?
- (ii) What is the level of women participation in post literacy programme in Kwara State?
- (iii) What are the factors that can promote women participation in adult literacy programmes in Kwara State?

### **Methodology**

The research adopted survey design to examine the factors that can promote women participation in adult literacy programmes in Kwara State. The population for this study comprised of all the women beneficiaries in the Kwara State agency for Mass Education, Ilorin literacy centres scattered all over the state.

The sample consisted of two hundred and seventy-five (275) respondents randomly selected from 40 literacy centres across Kwara State of Nigeria using a simple random sampling technique.

Documentary analysis on level of women participation and Factors for Promoting Women Participation in Literacy Programmes Questionnaire (FPWL PQ), designed to gather information on factors for promoting women participation in literacy programmes were used. The respondents reacted to the questionnaire by rating the items in order of importance with 4 as the most important and 1 as the less important

Questionnaires were administered during the researchers visit to the sampled literacy centres. The content validity of the questionnaire was determined by some experts in the Department of Adult Education & Community

Services Bayero University, Kano. A reliability co-efficient of 0.72 was obtained. The data collected was analyzed using mean score rank order and simple percentages.

**Results**

**Research Question One:**

What is the level of women participation in basic literacy programme in Kwara State?

This research question was answered using a documentary analysis and the results are presented in table 1 below.

**Table1: Women Participation in Basic Literacy Programme in Kwara State between 2000 to 2008**

Year	Number Enrolled	Number Examined	Percent (%)	Number Passed	Percent (%)	Number Failed	Percent (%)	Drop Out	Percent (%)
2000	3,487	3,353	96.2	3,343	99.7	10	0.3	134	3.8
2001	3,587	2,979	83.5	2,979	100	-	-	608	16.9
2002	3,397	3,070	90.4	3,064	99.8	6	0.2	327	9.6
2003	5,125	5,020	98	5,020	100	-	-	105	2
2004	4,932	4,750	96.3	4,658	98.1	92	12.3	182	3.7
2005	1,536	1,442	94	1,436	99.5	6	0.4	94	6
2006	5,320	4,985	93.7	4,870	97.7	115	2.3	335	6.3
2007	4,056	4,031	99.4	4,031	100	-	-	25	0.6
2008	5,830	5,567	95.5	5,489	98.9	78	1.4	263	4.5

**Source: Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, Ilorin, 2009**

Table 1 shows the level of women participation in Basic Literacy Programme between 2000 to 2008 in Kwara State. A critical look at table 1 shows that women actively participated in the programme. For example the least percentage of women who stayed till the end of the programme when examination took place was 83.5% in 2001. Also, the least percentage of those who passed the literacy programme was 97.7% in 2006, as can be seen from the table. In fact, the highest

number of the beneficiaries who dropped out from the programme as low as 0.6%.

**Research Question Two:**

What is the level of women participation in post literacy programme in Kwara State? This research question was answered using a documentary analysis and the results are presented in table 2 below.

**Table2: Women Participation in Post Literacy Programme in Kwara State between 2000 to 2008**

Year	Number Enrolled	Number Examined	Percent (%)	Number Passed	Percent (%)	Number Failed	Percent (%)	Drop Out	Percent (%)
2000	205	197	78.8	192	97.4	5	2.6	53	21.2
2001	291	274	94.2	249	90	25	9.1	17	6.2
2002	247	196	79.4	192	97.8	4	2	51	20.6
2003	265	202	76.2	102	100	-	-	63	23.8
2004	258	193	74.8	193	100	-	-	65	25.2
2005	341	295	86.5	293	99.3	2	0.7	46	13.4
2006	485	374	77.1	374	100	-	-	111	22.9
2007	470	367	78.1	359	97.8	8	2.2	103	21.9
2008	523	403	77.1	392	97.3	11	2.7	120	22.9

**Source: Kwara State Agency for Mass Education, 2009**

Table 2 also shows women participation in Post Literacy Programme in Kwara State between 2000 to 2008. The table reveals that the participation of women in post literacy programme was encouraging in terms of those enrolled, examined and completed the programme. For example, the least of percentage of those who were examined vis-à-vis those who registered for the programme was 74.8% in 2004. Also, the highest of percentage of those who passed the examination vis-à-vis those

who were examined was 94.21%. The highest of percentage of those who dropped out of the programme was 25.2% in 2004.

### Research Question Three:

What are the factors that can promote women participation in adult literacy programmes in Kwara State? This research question was answered using a mean score rank order and the results are presented in table 3 below.



**Table 3: The means score rank order of the view of the literacy beneficiaries on the factors for promoting Women participation in literacy Programme**

S/N	Motivating Factors	Mean response	Rank
1.	Women will participate in literacy programme if Literacy is combined with income generating activities	3.62	5 <sup>th</sup>
2.	Women will participate in literacy program if provided with monetary incentive	3.63	4 <sup>th</sup>
3.	Women will participate in literacy if literacy addresses women's felt needs	4.00	1 <sup>st</sup>
4.	Women will participate in literacy if literacy certificates are acceptable for admission into formal education institutions	3.64	3 <sup>rd</sup>
5.	Women will participate in literacy if literacy certificates are acceptable for seeking job in both public and private establishments	3.56	6 <sup>th</sup>
6.	Women will participate in literacy programme, if literacy planners consider women's peculiarities.	3.85	2 <sup>nd</sup>
7.	Women will participate in literacy if facilitators are friendly	3.53	7 <sup>th</sup>
8.	Women will participate actively in literacy programme if their families and general public support them	3.51	8 <sup>th</sup>

**Source: Field Survey, 2010**

The responses analyzed in Table 3 showed that the most important motivational factors responsible for promoting women participation in adult literacy programme as perceived by the women literacy beneficiaries was that literacy programme should address women's felts needs and taking their peculiarities into consideration, as ranked 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively. The marginal motivational factors responsible for promoting women participation in literacy programme were that literacy certificates should be recognized for admission into formal education institutions, provision of monetary incentive, literacy combined with income

generating activities and making literacy certificates recognized for job seeking. These ranked as 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> respectively. The least motivational factors responsible for promoting women participation in literacy programme were facilitators should be friendly to women and support of family and general public as ranked as 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> respectively.

#### **Discussion of the findings**

The research findings revealed that the women participation in Basic literacy programme was encouraging. 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 2 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 corroborates 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.

It is interesting to note that the motivational factors for encouraging women to participate in adult literacy programmes were; literacy programmes should be geared towards meeting the needs of learners, the peculiarities of women like their socio-economic roles among others must be taken into consideration while planning

adult literacy programme for women. Other factors include making literacy certificates acceptable for seeking jobs and admission into formal education institutions, provision of monetary incentive, combining literacy skills with income generating activities, facilitators being friendly and family and general support for women education. Certainly when the above motivational factors are provided, women participation in literacy programme would be encouraged. This result collaborates the findings of Thompson (2002) who observed that classes and literacy centres with income generating activities and those that meet learners' needs are likely to retain both the level of learners' motivation and their participation.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study examined the factors that can promote women participation in adult literacy programme in Kwara State. From the study it is apparent that the level of women participation in both basic and post literacy programme was encouraging in terms of those who enrolled and completed the two programmes. Though, transition from basic literacy to post literacy was not encouraging at all. To help sustain the level of participation and to encourage those who completed

the basic literacy programme to continue with post literacy programme the following recommendations were made.

1. Literacy programme must address the felt needs of participants. Literacy programmes whose objectives are not linked to the basic needs and rights of the learners are likely to fail. The demise of many literacy programmes as indicated by falling enrolment rates evidences this assertion. Meeting short term basic needs is important but the need for the learners especially women to be equipped to exercise their basic rights seems more important. Exercise of basic rights and meeting of felt needs will have tremendous implication for meeting basic needs. Literacy programmes should therefore seek to address the underlying causes of women's positive enrolment and staying at the learning class up to the end of the programme
2. Government of Kwara State and private organizations should promote women adult literacy programme through monetary incentives for women who enroll for literacy

programme. Government should equally make a legislation whereby literacy certificates will be made acceptable for job seeking and admission into formal education institution. This will retain both the level of women's motivation and participation in the literacy programme.

3. Kwara State Agency for Mass Education should hold graduation ceremonies for those who completed the programme in places where there is a high rate of illiteracy. This can serve as a motivational factor for illiterate women to enroll for adult literacy. Facilitators should show right attitude to the learners. The attitude and values of facilitators must be that of showing support, caring or and being passionate about the programme where they are negative and pessimistic there will be no progress.

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