

Implementation of National Adult Literacy Benchmark in Adult Literacy Centres in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study was designed to investigate the extent of implementation of national adult literacy benchmark in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The specific purposes of the study include the examination of the extent Ebonyi State Agency for Mass literacy adult non-formal Education (SAME) has implemented national adult literacy benchmark on provision of conducive adult literacy learning environment, assess the recruitment and retention of adult education facilitators and the training of adult literacy facilitators. The study was guided by 3 research questions and 3 null hypothesis. The design of the study was descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 22351 respondents (171 administrators, 855 facilitators and 21325 adult literacy learners) in the 171 adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State. Using stratified random sampling technique 10% (2234) of the entire population were selected for the study. Researchers structured questionnaire titled: Implementation of National Adult Literacy Education Benchmark Questionnaire (INALEBQ) was used for the study. The instrument was validated by research three experts. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained which showed that the instrument is reliable. The data collected from the study were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while ANOVA was used to test the 3 null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The data analyses revealed among others that; State Agency for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-Formal Education (SAME) implemented national adult literacy benchmark on the provision of conducive adult literacy learning environment, recruitment and retention of adult literacy facilitators and on training literacy facilitators to a low extent. We recommended amongst others that Ebonyi SAME in collaboration with NMEC should research together with literacy administrators towards enhancing the implementation of adult literacy benchmark. They should organize regular refresher training, seminars, workshops, conferences or sadwich programmes to upgrade the facilitators.

Key words: Implementation, national adult literacy benchmark, adult literacy centres, Ebonyi State, Nigeria, seminars

INTRODUCTION

Contributions of adults towards the growth and development of the society cannot be over-emphasized. They are the working population of every society and hence, play active roles in its growth and development. Thus, any nation which fails to prioritize the education of her adult population is indirectly promoting illiteracy, poverty and underdevelopment. Adult education is defined by Nzeneri (2008) as any form of education (formal, informal or non-formal) given to adults based on

their felt social, economic, political and cultural needs to enable them adjust fully to life challenges. The components of adult education programme according to Anonymous (2004) includes functional adult literacy, remedial education, continuing education, vocational education and aesthetic education. Consequently, society like Nigeria that needs to survive on knowledge creation and innovation in the real sense of it does not simply need institutionalized periods of instruction but has to foster effective adult literacy education provisions to raise the general skill level of her working population

(adults). Literacy expands the horizon of individuals as it brings them out of their narrow and restrained vision, thus, enabling them to appreciate and participate in their socio-economic, political and cultural milieu (Igbo, 2008).

According to Anonymous (2005), literacy is defined as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and communicate using printed and written materials associated with varying context. In this study, adult literacy is defined as the ability of adults to utilize printed and/or written materials in their daily endeavours, so as to enhance their living standard and that of their society in general. Thus, since, educating adults is the only way of eradicating adult illiteracy, the Federal government of Nigeria established the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) in 1990, so as to address illiteracy pandemics in Nigerian and also set aside a national benchmark for its successful attainment. A benchmark is an expected standard in a venture or activity. It is a plan developed for implementing better or best approach or practice on adult literacy programmes (Anonymous, 2014). Based on this, Nigerian national adult literacy benchmark is a blueprint designed to help governments and individuals who are committed towards the development of adult literacy programme attain their desired objectives. The national adult literacy benchmark, according to Anonymous (2008) are as follows:

- The adult literacy environment should be learner friendly
- Recruitment and retention of facilitators should be based on national minimum requirement of minimum wages of 7,500 and minimum qualification of National Certificate of Education (NCE)
- Under qualified facilitators in the system should have their skills upgraded to meet the national minimum requirement through a systematic and well organized professional skills development programme
- Adult literacy centre should be equipped with learning materials and vocational equipments

Implementation of national adult literacy benchmark rests with National Commission for Mass Literacy, adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) and her state Counterparts, State Agency for Mass Education (SAME) which organizes and oversees all adult literacy programmes within her locality. Implementation is the process of moving an idea from concept to reality, it refers to the building rather than the design process. Implementation is a deliberate and sequential set of activities directed towards putting a programme in

effect. Implementation of national adult literacy benchmark in literacy centres in Ebonyi State became the responsibility of Ebonyi SAME. On provision of conducive adult learning environment, SAME should create conducive environment to develop literacy skills among illiterates and to sustain literacy skills among neo-literates (Anonymous, 2008). Conducive learning environment is needed by adult learners for proper teaching and learning to take place. Regrettably, in most parts of Nigeria and in Ebonyi State, teaching/learning of the adult literacy learners takes place in un-conducive environment like under shades of trees whether in cool or harsh weather conditions and in an abandoned dilapidated building. In line with the above development, Moja (2000) affirmed that due to lack of conducive classrooms, teaching/learning are offered in the open spaces which are always subjected to all problems associated with outdoor teaching such as weather fluctuations, leading to cancellations of classes and inadequate teaching/learning processes.

More so, FRN in its national adult literacy benchmark advocates that recruitment and retention of facilitators be based on national minimum requirement of minimum wages of 7,500 and minimum qualification of NCE. Hence, there is need to uphold the principle of remuneration for time and services rendered. Paying at least the minimum wage of primary school teachers, depending on hour of research, need to be duly considered (Anonymous, 2008). Indeed, facilitators are categorized into full time and part time facilitators with respect to minimum wage consideration. For full time facilitators, it is important that they should be paid in accordance with what is applicable in the public service while part-time facilitators should be paid a minimum of 7500 Naira (₦7,500) only (Anonymous, 2008). Adult literacy facilitators are expected to obtain the minimum qualification of Nigerian Certificate for Education (NCE) as a minimum teaching qualification in compliance with the provisions of the National Policy on Education (NPE), so, to ensure quality delivery in adult literacy centres (Anonymous, 2008). The reverse has been the case in Nigeria (Ebonyi State inclusive) as recruited facilitators sometimes are senior school certificate holders or teacher Grade 2 holders. Regrettably, NCE holders who research in the field are not paid the right remuneration rather, they were given shucks. No wonder, Fasokun and Pwol (2005) lamented that lack of facilitator's welfare has resulted to the lazier-affaire attitude shown by them because they are not rewarded in any angle.

The national benchmark in the area of training and retraining of adult literacy facilitators asserts that under-qualified facilitators in the system should have their

skills upgraded to meet the national minimum requirement through a systematic and well organized professional skills development programme such as training, exchanges and professional development through distance education (Hinzen, 2008). This has not been possible in most parts as there is little or no opportunity for seminar, workshop or other training programmes for the facilitators. This is contrary to the blueprint of the federation which recommends that under-qualified facilitators in the system should have their skills upgraded to meet the national minimum requirement through a systematic and well organized professional skills development programme which this mere negligence to training and re-training of adult literacy facilitators has thereby damned the implementation of national adult literacy benchmark in Ebonyi State and Nigeria in general. From the fore-goings, it is understood that the benchmark is out to improve the rate of literacy provision and delivery. However, in human development rate, Nigeria is one of the countries that have the highest number of illiterates in the world (Anonymous, 2000). There are about 60 million adults in Nigeria and 85% of them are under the age of 36 years who can neither read, nor write and calculate (Anonymous, 2010). Literacy is a prerequisite for active participation in societal affairs, poverty alleviation and socio-economic development in general. High rate of literacy attainment often coincides with improved living standard of citizens and their society.

In spite of the proposition and adoption of national adult literacy benchmark, many adults in Ebonyi State of Nigeria are still illiterate. They cannot participate in their community or national development. This makes one to wonder if the national adult education benchmark has been fully implemented in the state or not. Again, to the knowledge of the researchers, no assessment has been conducted on the extent to which the adult literacy benchmark has been implemented in adult literacy centres of Ebonyi State, since, its introduction in Nigeria. The problem of this study, therefore is to investigate the extent to which Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark in adult literacy centres?

The general objective of this study is to investigate the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined extent:

- Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on provision of conducive learning environment in adult literacy centres

- Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on recruitment and retention of facilitators in adult literacy centres
- Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on training of facilitators in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State

In line with the above specific objectives, the following corresponding which research questions guided the study: to what extent has Ebonyi SAME implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on provision of conducive learning environment in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State? To what extent has Ebonyi SAME implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on recruitment and retention of facilitators in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State? To what extent has Ebonyi SAME implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on training of facilitators in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State? The following null hypothesis guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- H_{01} : there will be no significance difference ($p < 0.05$) between the mean ratings of adult literacy administrators, facilitators and learners on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on provision of conducive learning environment in adult literacy centres
- H_{02} : there will be no significance difference ($p < 0.05$) between the mean ratings of adult literacy administrators, facilitators and learners on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on recruitment and retention of facilitators has been implemented in adult literacy centres
- H_{03} : there will be no significance difference ($p < 0.05$) between the mean ratings of the adult literacy administrators, facilitators and learners on the extent national adult literacy benchmark on training of adult literacy facilitators has been implemented in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Nworgu defined descriptive survey design as studies which aims at collecting data on and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The design was suitable for this study, since, it involved collecting and describing in a

systematic manner, data obtained from the respondents. The population of the study comprised 22351 respondents (171 adult literacy administrators, 855 facilitators and 21325 adult learners) drawn from 171 literacy centres in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Through stratified random sampling technique 10% (2234) of the entire population comprising 17 administrative, 85 facilitators and 2132 literacy learners were selected for the study. The instrument for data collection was researchers structured questionnaire titled: Implementation of National Adult Literacy Education Benchmark Questionnaire (INALEBQ). The instrument was face validated by three experts. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha reliability estimates. Reliability co-efficient scores of 0.79, 0.94 and 0.67 was obtained from the three clusters of the instrument. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.80 was an indication that the instrument is highly reliable. Researchers with the help of 10 research assistants administered 2234 copies of the instruments to the respondents. While, 2229 were well completed and was used for data analysis. The data were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation while ANOVA statistics was used to test the three null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Real limits of number were used as decision rule for the research questions. Hence, mean scores of 3.50-4.00 was classified as very high extent; 2.50-3.49 low extent; 1.50-2.49 low extent and 1.00-1.49 very low extent, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 showed the mean and standard deviations of respondents on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on provision of conducive learning environment in adult literacy centres. The result showed that items 1-7 had mean scores of 1.95, 2.07, 2.07, 1.97, 1.69, 1.77 and 2.01 with standard deviations of 0.98, 0.86, 0.90, 0.87, 0.73, 0.73 and 0.90, respectively. The mean ratings are within the range of 1.50-2.49 for low extent. This implied that to a low extent, there are good boreholes as sources of water supply for drinking, seats, teaching aids like primers, rulers, chalks, classrooms for accommodation, free circulation of air in classroom and there are provisions of science laboratory to a low extent in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State. The cluster mean of 1.93 with a standard deviation of 0.55 showed that Ebonyi SAME of Nigeria implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on provision of conducive adult literacy environment to a low extent.

Table 2 showed the mean and standard deviations of respondents on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on recruitment and retention facilitators. The result showed that items 8-12 had mean ratings of 2.19, 2.01, 2.09, 2.20 and 2.24 with standard deviations of 0.97, 0.85, 0.87, 0.92 and 0.95, respectively. The mean ratings are within the range of 1.50-2.49 for low extent. This implied that to a low extent, facilitators are paid at least equivalent of minimum wage of a primary school teacher, recruited facilitators are indigenous people with similar socio-economic background, facilitators are always paid when due, recruited facilitators are foreigners that have lived for some years with learners and have a wider background in the community and minimum qualification of facilitator is NCE. The cluster mean of 2.15 with a standard deviation

Table 1: Mean and standard deviations of respondents on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on provision of conducive learning environment in literacy centres in Ebonyi State

Items	N	\bar{x}	SD	Dec
There are enough good boreholes as sources of water supply for drinking in the adult literacy centres	321	1.95	0.98	LE
There are enough seats for the adults in the adult literacy centres	321	2.07	0.86	LE
There is enough provision of teaching aids like primers, rulers, chalks in adult literacy centres	321	2.07	0.90	LE
There are enough classrooms for accommodation	321	1.97	0.87	LE
There is free circulation of air in classrooms because of enough windows on the structures provided	321	1.69	0.73	LE
There is a provision of library materials	321	1.77	0.73	LE
There is enough provision of science laboratory	321	2.01	0.90	LE
Cluster mean	321	1.93	0.55	LE

Table 2: Mean and standard deviations of respondents on the extent Ebonyi same has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on recruitment and retention of facilitators in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State

Items	N	\bar{x}	SD	Dec.
Facilitators are paid at least equivalent of minimum wage of a primary school teacher	321	2.19	0.97	LE
Recruited facilitators are indigenous people with similar socio-economic background	321	2.01	0.85	LE
Facilitators are always paid when due	321	2.09	0.87	LE
Recruited facilitators are foreigners that have lived for some years with learners and have a wider background in the community	321	2.20	0.92	LE
Minimum qualification of facilitator is NCE	321	2.24	0.95	LE
Cluster mean	321	2.15	0.55	LE

N = Number of respondents, \bar{x} = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Dec. = Decision

Table 3: Mean and standard deviations of respondents on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on training of facilitators

Items	N	\bar{x}	SD	Dec.
Facilitators are always engaged in periodic seminars	321	2.14	0.85	LE
The initial training of trainers of adult literacy facilitators is always 14 days to 3 months	321	2.04	0.83	LE
Newly recruited adult literacy facilitators attain induction courses	321	2.06	0.80	LE
Two weeks induction courses are always held twice a year for facilitators	321	2.15	0.88	LE
Facilitators are always engaged in workshops at least twice a year	321	2.09	0.93	LE
Cluster mean	321	2.09	0.59	LE

N = Number of respondents, \bar{x} = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Dec. = Decision

of 0.55 showed that Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on recruitment and retention of facilitators to a low extent.

Table 3 showed the mean and standard deviations of respondents on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on training of adult education facilitators. The result showed that items 13-17 had mean ratings of 2.14, 2.04, 2.06, 2.15 and 2.09 with standard deviations of 0.85, 0.83, 0.80, 0.88 and 0.93, respectively. The mean ratings are within the range of 1.50-2.49 for low extent. This implied that to a low extent, facilitators are always engaged in periodic seminars, the initial training of trainers of adult education facilitators is always 14 days to 3 months, newly recruited adult education facilitators attain induction courses, two weeks induction courses are always held twice a year for facilitators and facilitators are always engaged in workshops at least twice a year. The cluster mean of 2.09 with a standard deviation of 0.59 showed that Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on training of facilitators to a low extent.

Results in Table 4 showed that F-ratio of 9.37 with a significant value of 0.00 were obtained. Since, the significant value of $0.00 < 0.05$ set as level of significance, this means that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of adult literacy administrators, facilitators and adult learners on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on conducive adult literacy learning environment is rejected. Inference drawn therefore is that adult literacy administrators, facilitators and learners had different views and opinion on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented national adult literacy benchmark on provision of conducive learning environment.

Results in Table 5 showed that F-ratio of 1.33 with a significant value of 0.26 were obtained. Since, the significant value of 0.26 is > 0.05 set as level of

Table 4: Summary of the ANOVA on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on provision conducive adult literacy learning environment

Groups	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Between groups	5.445	2	2.723	9.372	
Within groups	92.388	3198	0.2911		0.000
Overall	97.834	3200			

Table 5: Summary of the ANOVA on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on recruitment and retention of adult literacy facilitators

Groups	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Between groups	0.801	2	0.400	1.334	0.26
Within groups	95.496	3198	0.300		
Overall	96.297	3200			

Table 6: Summary of the ANOVA on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on training of adult literacy facilitators

Groups	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	Sig.
Between groups	10.245	2	5.123	16.00	0.00
Within groups	101.763	3198	0.3200		
Overall	112.008	3200			

significance, this means that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of adult literacy administrators, facilitators and adult learners on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on recruitment and retention of adult literacy facilitators is not rejected. Inference drawn therefore is that adult literacy administrators, facilitators and learners had the same views and opinion on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on recruitment and retention of adult literacy facilitators.

Results in Table 6 showed that F-ratio of 16.00 with a significant value of 0.00 were obtained. Since, the significant value of 0.00 is < 0.05 set as level of significance, this means that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of adult literacy administrators, facilitators and adult learners on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on training of adult literacy facilitators is rejected. Inference drawn therefore is that adult literacy administrators, facilitators and learners had different views and opinion on the extent Ebonyi SAME has implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on training of adult literacy facilitators.

Findings revealed that Ebonyi SAME implemented the national adult literacy benchmark on provision of conducive learning environment to a low extent. These findings are in line with which stated that unfriendly environment is not advisable. Rather conducive learning environment with adequate and suitable seats for adults, adequate learning materials, surrounding free from pollutants or distraction should be provided for

successful teaching/learning processes to take place. In the same vein, Obi (2015) noted that challenges arising from unfriendly learning environment and irrelevant learning experiences and/or curriculum amongst others are the greatest barriers to effective adult literacy education provision in Nigeria. He further noted that a good adult learning environment is a necessity if quality teaching/learning of adult literacy participants is to be achieved, environment which is safe and secure and matches with the background, status, research-styles and lifestyles of the participants remains invaluable in actualizing the goal of effective adult literacy teaching/learning process.

Findings further revealed that Ebonyi SAME implemented national literacy benchmark on retention of recruited adult literacy facilitators to a low extent. This finding is in line with Nwabuko (2004) which revealed that the voluntary nature of adult literacy has made the field porous and accessible to various kinds of people practicing in the field without any formal qualification in adult education. As a result of this development, qualified literacy facilitators are relegated to the background in terms of status and remuneration. The finding is also in contrast to Anonymous (2008) which recommends that recruitment of facilitators should be based on National minimum requirement (NCE), that under-qualified facilitators should have their skills up-graded to meet the national minimum requirement through a systematic and well organized professional skills development programme.

Finally, findings also revealed that Ebonyi SAME implemented the national literacy benchmark to a low extent which is contrary to the recommendations of Igbo (2008) which suggested that facilitators should be able to motivate, communicate effectively, understand needs of adult learners and provide support to meet such needs to be able to facilitate effective teaching/learning in adult literacy centres. In the same vein Mandefu (2003) asserted that there is an increasing recognition, that it is impossible to achieve improvements in access and completion of any adult education programme without a reasonable investment in the improvement of the quality of the facilitators. More so, the findings of the study contrasts with Anonymous (2004) recommendation which advocated for facilitators to be constantly given opportunities to update their professional skills through training programmes as no educational programme can rise above the quality of its facilitators. Thus, the merely negligence to train and retrain adult literacy facilitators has thereby impacted negatively the implementation of national literacy benchmark in adult literacy centres in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: inadequate provision of conducive adult education learning environment by SAME hinders the effective implementation of national adult literacy benchmark as conducive environment is very pertinent in adult teaching and learning as such if conducive environment is not provided it will negatively impact on the teaching/learning in adult literacy centres. More so, inadequate provision on recruitment and retention of facilitators by SAME hinders the effective implementation of national adult literacy benchmark. This affects the outcome of the benchmark, since, recruited facilitator cannot be retained because of poor remuneration, irregular or late payment. Finally, poor provision of training to adult literacy facilitators by SAME Ebonyi, Nigeria affects negatively the effective implementation of national adult literacy benchmark. Inadequate training of facilitator has created loopholes as facilitators are not updated through seminars, workshops, in-service training and sandwich programmes thereby, affecting negatively the implementation of adult literacy benchmark as no educational provision can rise above its instructors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government should endeavor to provide a friendly teaching and learning environment for the learner. It should be conducive and spacious classroom that is air free with enough seats and other teaching and learning facilities. The government at various levels (Federal, state and local government authorities) should set out a significant sum from their budget towards the running of adult education programmes and for the payment of facilitators. The facilitator should be paid on time and a minimum of 7,500, wage of a primary school teacher should be paid to them. Ebonyi State Agency for Adult and Non-Formal Education (SAME) in collaboration with NMEC should research together with literacy administrators towards enhancing the implementation of adult literacy benchmark. They should organize regular refresher training, seminars, workshops, conferences or sandwich programmes to upgrade the facilitator.

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