

AN EVALUATION OF WOMEN LITERACY PROGRAMME IN BENIN METROPOLIS: A REPLICATED VALIDATED STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated women literacy programme in Benin metropolis. A total of 250 women randomly drawn from five (5) learning centres within Benin Metropolis constituted the sample for the study. A questionnaire with a reliability index of 0.75 was used for the collection of Data. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics comprising of mean score analysis with criterion mean of 2.50 and simple percentage. The analysis of data collected revealed that women literacy programme is faced with a number of problems such as financial constraints, inadequate instructional facilities, low level of women participation due to cultural constraints, inadequate instructors and poor publicity. It was also revealed that majority of the instructors in the programme are non-professional and that women are not involved in the planning of the programme. However, the programme was found to be meeting the needs and interest of the women in the area. Based on the findings, it was recommended that women literacy programme should be encouraged and strengthened.

Keywords: Evaluation, Literacy, Metropolis

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the development of educational programmes for women is of recent origin (Omoruyi 2002). The emergence of specific programmes for the education of women can be traced to the early 60s. The delay can be attributed to the fact that before then the education of women was not considered important. (Oduaran, 1991; Oduaran and Okukpon, 1997 and Omoruyi, 1998). The general belief is that it was a waste of time and resources sending a woman or a female child to school. Besides, in Nigeria like as in many parts of Africa, women were victims of many social, political, cultural and religious restrictions, which prevented them from gaining access to education. Added to that, women were not seen as bonafide members of their natal home or family of orientation, since they have to be married out to other family (Omoruyi 2002). Consequently upon this, the women received no noticeable and serious attention in terms of access to educational pursuit. Education was discriminated against them in favour of their male counterpart. The socialization process domesticated the women as it was oriented towards moulding than to serve the male members of the family and perform well in their domestic or feminine role as mother and managers of the home. Besides, girls were trained to be docile and service-oriented to their family of procreation i.e. their husband's family to which they go to live when they are eventually married. Parents prefer to keep their girls at home and help with the household chore rather than sending them to school.

In the early 60's when the girl child started to gain access to educational opportunities their education generally was given the least priority. This development led to high illiteracy rate among women. Little wonder therefore, when in 1990 the literacy rate of female in Nigeria was put at 39.5% as against that of the male, which was 62.7% (Omokhodion, 1998). This by implication meant that the female illiteracy rate in the country was about 61%. In addition,

Osunde (2001) and Omoruyi (2001) also reported that 26.23 million out of the estimated 43.9 million women in Nigeria are illiterates.

The high illiteracy rate among women became cause for great concern especially against the background that a predominantly illiterate society cannot achieve any significant social economic and technological development. Thus, education was considered an instrument par excellence for achieving national development (NPE, 2004).

The development in the country in the 80's and accompanying socio-economic changes necessitated a change in the roles of women as housewives and mothers in society. The effective performance of these new roles requires that women be adequately prepared through education and training. This situation led to the identification of women education as an area yearning for adequate attention.

As a corollary to the above, in September 1986, a national workshop was held in Dubal hotel in Lagos to produce a blueprint on women education in the country. A year later, the document was produced and recommended the promotion of women education at all levels and in all spheres of human endeavour. Since then, women education has continued to attract a boost. Series of programmes and actions have been taken to foster women educational development in the country. For instance, in 1987, the Better Life for Rural Women came into being. One of the major aims of the programme was the cognitive empowerment of women. In 1989, the National Commission for Women was established by Decree Number 40, which was later repealed and replaced by Decree Number 42 of 1992. The commission was later upgraded and became the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, given the mandate to executive and promotes projects and programmes to enhance the general welfare of women and children and the disabled. The body was essentially set up to facilitate the social, economic and academic emancipation of women. To redress the educational imbalance between males and females and reduce the high illiteracy rate among women in the country, women education centers were established throughout the country.

The study is important because the level of illiteracy of women poses a great problem, which is likely to hinder their meaningful contribution to national development and the development of their families and positive self-image. Moreover, a number of questions can be asked: has women education been profound in Nigeria? If not, why? Are there any known problems hindering the effective and successful implementation of women education programme? etc. Since these programmes are aimed at solving these problems and huge amount of scarce resources are invested in them, it is only proper to determine the effectiveness of the programme in achieving the anticipated results. This is the task, which this study seeks to accomplish.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It has been observed that women play a vital role in economic development and political life in respect of their country. Their numerous contributions to nation building cannot be over emphasized. Besides, they are known to be well endowed with rich potentials, which they have not been able to explore maximally. One of the major hindrances to the women effort to maximally utilize their rich potentials and contribute meaningfully to national development is education. It is in recognition of this that there has been agitation to give education to women or to allow women to have unhindered access education.

In the light of the present development particularly at the international scene, women education has continued to receive great attention. However, there is indication to suggest that the attempt to raise women's involvement in educational programmes have not been

quite successful. Women have continued to suffer discrimination, exploitation as well as subjected related to all forms of subjugation. Besides, they are saddled with different responsibilities. There appear to be a number of constraints against women efforts to fully participate in education. Furthermore, the implementation of the various education programmes meant to raise the level of education and economic status among women cannot be said to have faired better either. The education of women remains at its lowest ebb in the society. The problem of this study therefore is how effective is the women's literacy education programme in Benin Metropolis?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based on the issues raised in the background to the study and the statement of the problem, this study was designed to achieve the following purposes.

1. To find out if adequate and enough facilities are provided for ensuring the effective implementation of the programme.
2. To identify the quality of instructors in the programme.
3. To ascertain the extent to which the programme has achieved its objective
4. To find out the attitude of the women towards the programme.
5. To determine if women are involved in the planning of the programme.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In view of the purposes intended, the following questions were raised to guide the investigation.

1. How adequate are the facilities provided for the implementation of the programme?
2. What is the quality of instructors in the programme?
3. To what extent has the programme achieved its objectives?
4. What is the attitude of the women towards the programme?
5. Are women involved in the planning of the programme?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design to investigate women literacy programme in Benin Metropolis. The research design was chosen because of it acknowledged role in a fact finding study of this nature. Besides, according to Kelinger (1979) allows for the description of attributes in a situation at one or more points in time. According to Kelinger (1979), the method has the ability to provide accurate information on a whole population even when a reliable sample is used. The study sample consisted of a total of 250 women selected at random from five learning centres within Benin metropolis. Fifty (50) participants were selected from each of the five learning centres. The major instrument was a research questionnaire designed in the format of Likert Scale of measurement. The instrument was titled Evaluation of Women Literacy Assessment Questionnaire (EWLAQ). The reliability test of the instrument using a split half procedure produced a reliability coefficient or index of 0.76. Five research assistants (one for each learning centres) were used in administering the instruments. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistical technique involving mean analysis and a criterion mean score of 2.50 was adopted for decision making purpose. The instrument was validated using expert judgment approach before it was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result obtained from the data collected and analyzed are presented in the Tables below

Table 1. Data on the adequacy of instructional facilities for the implementation of women literacy education programme

S/N	Instructional Aids/ Facilities	Adequate	Not Adequate
1	Primers	55 (22%)	195 (78%)
2	Charts	47 (18.8%)	203 (81.2%)
3	Posters	81 (32.4%)	169 (67.6%)
4	Billboard	9 (3.6%)	241 (96.4%)
5	Stationers	35 (14%)	215 (86%)
6	Chalkboard	155 (62%)	95 (38%)
7	Overhead Projector	(0%)	(0%)
8	Maps	(0%)	(0%)

The result presented in Table 1 revealed that majority of instructional facilities available for the implementation of women literacy education programme are not adequate. For items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, the facilities were found to be inadequate. The result also revealed that 155 or 62% of the respondents indicated that chalkboard facility is adequate for the implementation of women’s literacy education while 100% of the respondents stated that overhead projector and maps were not available for the implementation of women literacy education programme.

Table 2. Data on the quality of instructors

<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
TC II/G.C.E O/L	238	95.2%
N.C.E	8	3.2%
Diploma	4	1.6%
B.A/B.SC/B.Ed	-	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>100%</i>

The result in Table 2 revealed that majority of the instructors were either ordinary level General Certificate (G.C.E O/L) holders or Teachers Grade Two Certificate (TC II) holders. This accounted for 95.2% of the instructors while 3.2% of the instructors have the Nigeria certificate of Education (NCE). It was also revealed that a negligible number of 1.6% instructors were holders of Diploma. None of the instructors have any University degree or its equivalents

Table 3. Data on the objective of women literacy education

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
1	Provision of functional literacy education	66	26.4
2	Creating awareness on existing opportunities of living	70	28
3	Re-orienting the attitude of female towards education	24	9.6
4	Awakening the consciousness of women for the development of positive self-image	54	21.6
5	Giving civic education for public enlightenment	36	14.4
<i>Total</i>		<i>250</i>	<i>100%</i>

The result in Table 3 revealed that creating awareness on existing opportunities for living is the most important objective of women literacy programme. this represent 28% while provision of functional literacy education followed with 26.4 percent. The data also revealed that 54 out of the 250 respondents sampled indicated that awakening the consciousness of women for the development of a positive self image is one of the objective of women literacy education programme. This represents 21.6 percent. Giving civic education for public enlightenment had 36 respondent represent 14.4 percent and re-orienting the attitude of female towards education got 24 responses which represent 9.6 percent respectively among the objectives of women’s literacy education programme.

Table 4. Data on the attitude of Women towards Literacy Education Programme

N = 250 Criterion X = 2.50

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Variable/Options</i>	<i>Weighted Mean Score</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1	I like women’s literacy education programme	560	3.50	Accepted
2	Since I started attending classes, I can read and understand local newspapers	510	3.19	Accepted
3	The programme meets the needs and interest of the women	510	3.19	Accepted
4	Women in the area participate actively in the programme	600	3.75	Accepted
5	Since I started attending classes, there is improvement in my skills	620	3.88	Accepted
6	Women’s literacy education programme is aggressive	590	3.69	Accepted
7	Government should provide enough fund and facilities for the programme	550	3.45	Accepted
8	Women are favourably disposed towards the programme	610	3.81	Accepted
9	Women participate in the programme because of the benefits to be derived	500	3.13	Accepted

Results in Table 4 above revealed that all the issues raised met the criterion mean standard. It is thus obvious that there is improvement on the women literacy education programme and women should be encourage to benefit maximally from the programme.

Table 5. Data on the involvement of women in the planning literacy education

<i>Options</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Yes	95	38
No	155	62
<i>Total</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>100</i>

The result in Table 5 above revealed that 95 out of 250 respondents are of the opinion that women are involved in the planning of the programme. This represents 38 percent while 155 or 62% states that women are not involved in the planning of the programme. It is therefore, concluded that women are not involved in the planning of the programme within the area.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the study revealed that most of the instructional facilities available for the implementation of women literacy education programme in the area under focus were not adequate. Facilities such as primers, chart, posters, billboard and stationers, the respondents claimed were inadequate other sophisticated facilities like overhead projector and maps were found to be non-existent.

The result of the study also point out the fact that majority of instructors in the programme are non-professional. Only a negligible number of 1.6% of instructors were found to have Diploma certificate. This means that the instructors employed and charged with the task of impacting knowledge to participants of the women literacy education programme are not trained in the science of adult methodology.

Results also revealed that the creation of awareness on existing opportunities for living ranked the highest among the most important of the objectives of the women literacy education programme. This was followed by the provision of functional literacy skill. It was also found that awakening the consciousness of women for development of positive self-image, giving of civic education for public enlightenment and re-orientation of the attitude for female towards education ranked next. This also show that the desire to acquire functional skills that would enable them become more self-reliant, self dependent and the urge to know the opportunities that are opened, improving on their lots appeared to be the compelling force for women to enroll in the literacy education programme.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study investigated women literacy education programme in Benin Metropolis. It was observed that women literacy education programme faced a numbers of problems, These include financial constraints, inadequate instructional facilities, low level of women participation due to cultural constraints, low level of instructors and inadequate publicity. It was also found that the instructors in the programme are non-professionals and that women are not involved in the planning of the programme. It was also discovered that the programme are meeting the needs and interest of the women in the area.

Based on the findings made and the conclusion reached, the following recommendations are hereby offered.

1. Government should provide more funds to produce the required instructional facilities to aid effective instructional process in the programme centers.

2. Women should be involved in the process of planning the programme.
3. Government should embark on a more aggressive public enlightenment to create awareness among women about the existence of the programme and point out the benefits they stand to derive from participating in the programme.

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