Full Length Research Paper

Adult learners’ demographic variable as predictor of access and participation in literacy programmes in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria

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Literacy is an indispensable foundation that enables young people and adults to engage in learning opportunities at all stages of the learning continuum. Literacy is a prerequisite for the development of personal, social, economic and political empowerment. In Nigeria, attempt to increase access to literacy education for the enhancement of learners’ daily living include establishing State Agencies for Adult and Non-Formal Education. For the dearth of empirical studies, the study examined the influence of demographic factors on access to basic literacy education as an indicator for participation for life-improvement skills of rural adult learners in Oyo and Ondo states. Survey research design of ex-post facto type was adopted and 1,310 adult learners (Oyo: 579, Ondo: 731) were selected through stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Four research questions complimented with Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) were answered. Literacy Access Questionnaire (r = 0.81) was used to gather information while data were analysed using percentage and context analysis. Findings showed that access was expanded by annual average of 15.04% and 35.07% in Oyo and Ondo states respectively. Significant differences existed in the access to literacy programmes from the two states (t = 2.82, df = 1308, p < 0.05). The FGD also shows that the beneficiaries are willing to participate more if the outcome will improve their economic life. There is the need for improved funding of adult basic literacy; increase post literacy activities for sustainability of acquired skills and improve curriculum that meets the basic life needs of learners.

Key words: Access, Adult Learners, Demographic Variables, Participation, Literacy Programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is an indispensable foundation that enables young people and adults to engage in learning opportunities at all stages of the learning continuum. The right to literacy is an inherent part of the right to education. It is also a prerequisite for the development of personal, social, economic and political empowerment. Literacy is an essential means of building people's capabilities to cope with the evolving challenges and complexities of life, culture, economy and society (UNESCO, 2009).

In fact, no country has achieved or sustained economic growth without attaining near universal basic education (UBE), the goals of which was to universalise access to basic education, engender conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in the country within the shortest possible time. An educated populace is more likely to enjoy higher agricultural productivity, longer life...
expectancies, lower infant mortality rates and greater political stability (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), 2008; Mylek, 2008; Lind, 2008). Therefore, where the right to education is guaranteed, people’s access to and enjoyment of other rights are enhanced (Colclough et al., 2003). Also, the people are better equipped to protect themselves from various diseases particularly HIV/AIDS (BEC, 2004).

Against the backdrop of several educational opportunities like formal and non-formal education available in Nigeria, unequal participation and access continue unabated among the citizens (Federal Ministry of Education (FME), 2003). Nigeria has been involved in various educational activities aimed at increasing access to literacy education. Educational provision has been on in the two states in the days of Western region. Also, the two states, Oyo and Ondo set up agencies for adult and non-formal education since 1980. Despite the phenomenal growth in the formal educational system and the interest shown to non-formal education in the past decades, some members of the population are still found to be non-literate in the two states.

The total population of 5,591,589 (male = 2,809,840; female = 2,781,749) was recorded in Oyo state according to 2006 population figure. Of the total population, 65.2% are literate in any language other than English while 71.3% are literate in the native language (Yoruba). In Ondo state, the total population was 3,441,024 (male = 1,761,263; female = 1,679,761). 76.1% of the population in Ondo is literate in any language while 74.3% are literate in Yoruba. This data indicate that an average of 30% of the population in the two states is not literate (N.P.C, 2006; National Bureau of Statistics (N.B.S), 2010). In spite of these developments, about 30% of the population of the states could still not read and write (NBS, 2010, NPC, 2004).

Data emanating from government, donour agencies and private organisation show that there is more need for expansion in literacy distribution as shown in Table 1. Why do we still have illiterates in the two states? This study therefore investigate how demographic factors like age, sex, marital status and occupation affect learners’ willingness to attend literacy classes in an attempt to acquire education that will enable them to acquire skills necessary for life-improvement.

### Statement of the problem

Nigeria has been involved in various basic educational activities aimed at increasing access to literacy education for the enhancement of learners’ daily living by establishing State Agencies for Adult and Non-Formal Education. However, there is a dearth of empirical studies that show the extent to which demographic variable contributes to accessibility and participation in basic literacy. This study, therefore, examined the influence of demographic factors on access to basic literacy education as an indicator for participation in literacy programmes; also, an empirical study into assessment of adequacy of access to literacy skills have not been conducted as far as my consultation with existing literature is concerned particularly in the two states. The study is also designed to establish why many adults and out of schools youths have still not been able to benefit from literacy provision in the two states as about 30% of the population in the states are illiterate especially in the rural areas (NPC, 2006).

### Research questions

a. What are the access/opportunities available to rural opportunities in adult education programmes in the selected rural communities from the two states?

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**Table 1. Literacy in any languages by age group by state in south west.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Ekiti</th>
<th>Lagos</th>
<th>Ogun</th>
<th>Ondo</th>
<th>Osun</th>
<th>Oyo</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00 - 05</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 - 09</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 14</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>97.9</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 39</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 44</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 - 49</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 yr+</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. What demographic factors affect access to literacy programmes in the states?  
c. In what way(s) do demographic factors affect adult learners’ participation in literacy programmes?  
d. How can we address these challenges facing adult learners’ access and participation to literacy programmes?

**Operational definition of terms**

**Literacy education:** The first stage of the adult learning activity that comprises the 3Rs: reading, writing and arithmetic.  
**Access:** Educational opportunity and availability of learning facilities to those who are willing to acquire knowledge, skills and attitude. Access in the context of this study involves adult learners getting enrolled in centres, maintaining regular attendance, availability of learning materials – primers, facilitators, location of centres near learner’s residence, completion of the prescribed number of years of literacy and the successful learning achievement.

**METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE**

The descriptive survey research design of *ex post facto* type was adopted for this study. A total of 1,310 adult learners were used for the study in 127 literacy centres from 12 local governments from the two states as shown in Table 1. The two states were selected due to the similarity in their socio-economic and ecological characteristics. The two states had been part of old Western Region and had enjoyed literacy activities of the region since 1955. The literacy programme from the two states was also believed to be more viable when compared with other states from South Western States. Research questionnaire and focus group discussion were used for the adult basic literacy learners sampled for the study.

**Sample size and sampling techniques**

A multi-stage sampling technique was used in the selection of the respondents from each of the two states. The first stage involved purposive and clustered used in selecting two rural based local governments from each of the senatorial districts from the two states thus making 6 rural based local governments from each of the two states.  

The second stage involves the use of the stratified random sampling technique on delimiting the population of the study along all the existing adult literacy centres in each of the 12 rural based local government selected.  

The third stage of the sample selection involved the use of proportionate and simple random sampling technique in selecting 40% of those that have participated in the literacy programmes from the literacy centres identified. However, the use of purposive sampling was adopted in selecting all the facilitators teaching in each of these literacy centres as well as 12 LAEO from the two states. The distribution of the respondents selected for the study is presented in Table 2.

**Instruments**

Questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), observation and assessment of official records were used. Simple frequency counts and percentage were used in the analysis of data.

**Concept clarifications**

**Literacy**

The term ‘literacy’ does not lend itself to easy definition. This is because of the interdisciplinary, complexity and diverse nature it possesses. There are therefore, different forms of literacy. A person could be literate in his dialect but be illiterate in the regional, national or another man’s language. A Professor of Mathematics could be an illiterate in computer application/programme or even in a language. There could also be verbal or visual literacy. To most people, literacy means the ability to read and write, to understand information, and to express ideas both concretely and abstractly. The assumption is that “to read and write” means to read and write text. Although media and computer literacy are occasionally mentioned in these definitions, media literacy is most often defined as the ability to understand how television and film manipulate viewers, and computer literacy is generally defined as the skills to use a computer to perform various tasks such as accessing the web (Olojede, 2012).

A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development” (UNESCO, 2009). But in today’s world, where we read not only words in a written text, but also a wide variety of other symbolic codes for transforming reality, literacy can be defined as “the ability of a person to code and decode, smoothly and effortlessly, and with understanding, a living and growing system of symbolic transformations of reality, including words, numbers, notations, schemata, diagrammatic representations and other marks, inscribed on paper or other two-dimensional surfaces (cloth, celluloid or the screen of a computer terminal), all of which have become part of the visual language of a people and have thus come to be collectively and democratically shared by both the specialist and the non-specialist (such ability having become part of the current social, economic, political and cultural demand system of a society)” (Bhola, 1984).

Adults use literacy for many purposes and acquire literacy in many ways. The motivation to improve literacy in adult life is frequently connected to change, whether in personal life or in society. Adults may recognise a need to improve their literacy skills when they start a new job, when their children start school and want help with homework, when a relationship ends, or when they lose their usual forms of employment. Societal changes demanding new skills in literacy and numeracy may include economic or forced migration, industrialisation and the passing of subsistence economies and traditional forms of labour, social and economic development, and deepening of democracy. All these and several other reasons could help reshaping adults’ life and the need to participate in adult literacy programmes.

**Factors affecting participation in literacy activity**

Olojede (2012) identified the following as factors that affect the learners’ willingness to participate in literacy activities:

- Individual, family, or home-related problems  
- Cost concerns --Questionable worth, relevance, or quality of available educational opportunities  
- Negative perceptions of the value of education in general  
- Lack of motivation or indifference toward learning  
- Lack of self-confidence in one’s learning abilities  
- A general tendency toward non-affiliation
- Incompatibilities of time and/or place

The major factors deterring re-entry women from pursuing education include poor self-concept, home-related problems, lack of awareness, cost, and incompatibilities of time and place. Among the deterrents most likely to hinder the elderly are personal (particularly health) problems, questionable relevance of programing, cost, accessibility, and social non-affiliation. The predominant barriers hindering the participation of educationally disadvantaged group are lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, and negative attitudes toward education, compounded by language or literacy problems. Among the rural adults, Inaccessibility, lack of support services, cost, and job and family conflicts often deter rural adults from participation.

Facilities, teaching and learning materials

Olojede (2012) tried to document the supporting environments at home, conditions of the centres and kinds of materials available as affecting access to literacy. His study found that learners lacked literacy support materials at home, except for the primary books for their children, which were irrelevant to their needs. Hence they learned only at the centres, which were not purpose-built for adults. The seats could not be used to ensure concentration in class. Even the posters adorning the walls were meant for nursery school pupils. The lack of toilets in many centres also posed a health risk. Learners were also found to be travelling fairly long distances to the centres (200 m to 2 km), causing low participation. Teachers had no guides, curriculum or reference materials to guide them. They therefore had great difficulties determining the starting point for learners. This led to lack of detailed content, sequence, uniformity and standardized teaching. The primers used by the learners were obsolete, and learners generally lacked relevant reading materials in all the centres. Teachers were found to be uncomfortable teaching the 3Rs only. There is therefore a special manpower problem in the areas of socio-economic skills as teachers have serious inadequacy in vocational skills areas that learners need most. Also, the fact that learners were providing their own writing materials was a disincentive.

The choice of language of instruction

The choice of language of instruction is critical for motivation and learning. In fact, a first timer learner could be scared if the appropriate language is not chosen in his first contact with the facilitator. A number of crucial considerations need to be taken into account. First, the mother tongue, or a language the learners are fluent in, is the most appropriate for learning. Second, it is important to find out which language the learners demand. Otherwise, they may resist and drop out, as in the case of Mozambique, where learners’ motivation for literacy was tied to learning Portuguese. Third, learning literacy in a language without written material is not very meaningful. A bilingual approach is often recommended, but is not always easy to implement. The most sensible option is to use local languages for initial literacy teaching, and then to provide a route to the official language for those who have acquired initial literacy. Once the choice of language of instruction has been made, this will have implications which learning method or methods to use; since both the structure of the language and how writing relates top speech must be taken into account in the design of a literacy programme.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents summaries of the characteristics of the respondents by state, sex, marital status, age, religion, occupation and occupation and their relation to access to and willingness to participate in adult basic literacy.

Research question 1: What are the access/opportunities available to rural opportunities in adult education programmes in the selected rural communities from the two states?

Generally in Nigeria, the Federal Government through the National Policy on Education, (2004) made provision for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (MLANFE) in its policy as the first accessibility provision. The policy states among others that MLANFE shall be
provided free to the beneficiaries through the establishments of literacy centres by agencies of mass literacy at States and Local Government areas of the federation. Therefore, the establishments of Ondo and Oyo AANFE proved that the governments provided access towards the attainment of the provision of basic literacy education to the non-literate adults in the two states. This is in line with World Bank (1991) quoted in Nnadozie (2005) that development as a sustainable increase the standards of living of one’s country that includes a large number of things: material consumption, education, health and environmental protection.

Apart from the management cadre at the head offices, field officers were also employed as well as facilitators who handle the teaching of the learners. In Oyo state, these field officers are called Local Adult Education Officers (LAEOs) whereas in Ondo state they are called Area Mass Literacy Officers (AMLOs). Official records and documents from the two states showed that learning materials like primers, policy in support of access, teaching aids, chalkboards, are provided by the two state governments through the agencies for adult and non-formal education.

Available records in the agencies showed that access opportunity was expanded by annual average of 15.04 and 35.07% in Oyo and Ondo states respectively. Majority of the respondents 969 (73.96%) agreed that the two states provided access to literacy education going by policy and programmes put in place (Table 3). The records in the agencies also showed that provision were made to make learning easy and accessible to learners, even though the basic education policy adopted by SUBEB did not allow for total recognition of adult literacy programmes.

**Research question 2: What demographic factors affect access to literacy programmes in the states?**

Reports from the FGD and complimented with literature review (Kalman, 2005), demographic factors such age, sex, occupation, social and marital status, religion, previous educational achievement affect adult learners participation in literacy education programmes. Field reports also confirmed that learners who are married especially women are affected by domestic responsibilities as well as social responsibility within the community. Learners’ attendance at literacy programmes is also influenced by their occupation especially on market days.

**Research question 3: In what way(s) do demographic factors affect access to literacy programmes in the state centers?**

Figure 1 shows that only 579 (44.2%) of the respondents came from Oyo State while the remaining 731 (55.8%) came from Ondo. This implies that the participants sampled for the study in respect of the questionnaire distribution were more in Ondo State than Oyo State.

Records show that number of adults’ participation in literacy programme is higher in Ondo state hence the choice of highest number of respondents from the state. It should also be noted that adult literacy activities are more viable in Ondo State than Oyo State because of the programmes acceptability among the people leading to large turnout of participation by adult illiterates in Ondo State. More importantly, it is on record that annually, Ondo State celebrates her adult learners through International Literacy Day programme every September 8 (Ondo AANFE, 2010). New learners are given Certificate of Participation while successful past beneficiaries are accorded special recognition. Successful learners also have the opportunity of continuing their education to Junior Secondary School for adult learners. All these contribute to the fact that participation in literacy programme in Ondo State is better than that of Oyo State (Filed Study, 2009). In Ondo State, the Agency for Adult and Non-Formal Education has transformed into a fullledge Ministry of Non-formal and Vocational Education.

Table 4 shows that 19.1% of the respondents’ age falls within 18 to 25 years, 28.9% are in 26 to 35 years range. 20.4% are within 36 to 45 years while the remaining 31.6% were those from 45 years and above. The implication is that those above 45 years are the majority of the respondents who value education and develop the interest as the second chance opportunity. This finding confirms EFA 2000 findings that over 45 years-of-age group has the highest illiteracy rate in the world and this can be attributed to the fewer years of schooling (or poorer quality of schooling) that this group received (EFA, 2000). The literacy organisers will have to as a matter of significant take note of this in terms of curriculum design, fixing and duration of classes, sitting arrangement and the likes so as to meet up with the needs and aspiration of the learners.

Figure 2 shows the gender composition of the respondents. 43.5% are male while 56.5% are female. The implication is that there are more female learners in the learning centres spread across the two states especially the area covered by the study. Literature review confirmed that women make up two thirds of those who are unable to read and write in the world (UNESCO, 2009).

This is a symptom of the fact that girls have been disproportionately excluded from education for generations. It is difficult for women to challenge traditional gender roles and to be empowered in the modern world when they have no access to the written word (International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy, UNESCO, 2006). This probably accounts for the high number of registration recorded for women in literacy programmes as reflected in this study.

However, as majority of the respondents used for the study were female, this cannot be unconnected with the
The fact that in Nigeria, female and girl child education has been marginalized. Various studies (Hum and Simpson, 2004; Kim and Merriam, 2004; NIACE, 2002; HRDC/OECD, 2000) have also revealed that participation of women in literacy activities have increased even though the majority of employer-sponsored training still goes to men (HRDC/OECD, 2000).

The fact that there are more female learners in the learning centres across the two states confirms that women make up two thirds of those who are unable to read and write in the world. This is a symptom of the fact that girls have been disproportionately excluded from education for generations. It is difficult for women to challenge traditional gender roles and to be empowered in the modern world when they have no access to the written word (International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy, UNESCO, 2006). The implication of this fact therefore rest on the fact that literacy organizers should be conscious of the female participation and design their programmes in such a way as to encourage increased female participation.

The majority of the respondents are married 973 (74.3%) while 261 (19.95%) are single, 354 (2.7%) are separated from their spouses and the remaining 406 (3.1%) are widow/widower (Figure 3). The implication of this is that despite domestic responsibilities and social commitment of the respondents who are married, some of these respondents still have time for learning activities as reflected by 83% of FGD.

Marital status significantly influences people’s participation in adult literacy. This is especially true of the women who have dual roles of mothers and wives at home front. As reflected in the study, majority of the respondents (74.3%) are married, hence, their duties as home front. As reflected by 83% of FGD.

The many functions and responsibilities at home, social circles, within and among the members of the community affect the rate of acquisition among the women. This as a matter of fact should

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The literacy learning centre is centrally located for all to attend.</td>
<td>468 (35.7)</td>
<td>631 (48.2)</td>
<td>115 (8.8)</td>
<td>96 (7.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The distance of the centre to my house is Okay.</td>
<td>646 (49.3)</td>
<td>203 (15.5)</td>
<td>366 (27.9)</td>
<td>95 (7.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The time for lessons is in line with learners’ interest.</td>
<td>596 (45.5)</td>
<td>643 (49.1)</td>
<td>40 (3.1)</td>
<td>31 (2.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Days fixed for classes are not in conflict with learners’ personal programmes.</td>
<td>459 (35.0)</td>
<td>430 (32.8)</td>
<td>295 (22.5)</td>
<td>126 (9.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The location of the centres is acceptable to all learners.</td>
<td>596 (45.5)</td>
<td>646 (49.3)</td>
<td>48 (3.70)</td>
<td>20 (1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The venues and time allocated for lessons are suitable for learning.</td>
<td>517 (39.5)</td>
<td>667 (50.9)</td>
<td>86 (6.6)</td>
<td>40 (3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I do not pay any fee to attend the literacy class.</td>
<td>612 (46.7)</td>
<td>451 (34.4)</td>
<td>119 (9.1)</td>
<td>128 (9.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The learning instrument or materials are adequate for learners.</td>
<td>430 (32.8)</td>
<td>676 (51.6)</td>
<td>126 (9.6)</td>
<td>78 (6.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The primers are provided freely and relevant to learners’ needs.</td>
<td>459 (35.0)</td>
<td>617 (47.1)</td>
<td>169 (12.9)</td>
<td>65 (5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The teaching of the facilitator is always very interesting.</td>
<td>596 (45.5)</td>
<td>646 (49.3)</td>
<td>48 (3.70)</td>
<td>20 (1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The facilitator is friendly and accommodating to us all.</td>
<td>572 (43.7)</td>
<td>643 (49.1)</td>
<td>40 (3.1)</td>
<td>55 (4.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The facilitators make use of the Learner Generated Materials to facilitate effective teaching activities.</td>
<td>140 (10.7)</td>
<td>247 (18.9)</td>
<td>386 (29.5)</td>
<td>537 (40.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>There are adequate chairs and tables at the literacy centres.</td>
<td>282 (21.5)</td>
<td>486 (37.1)</td>
<td>322 (24.6)</td>
<td>220 (16.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Members of my immediate family who are literate are source of inspiration that enabled me to register for literacy programme.</td>
<td>113 (8.6)</td>
<td>204 (15.6)</td>
<td>350 (26.7)</td>
<td>643 (49.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>455 (34.7)</td>
<td>514 (39.2)</td>
<td>179 (13.7)</td>
<td>153 (11.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25 years</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35 years</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45 years</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 and above</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1310</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Distribution of respondents’ responses on access facilities to literacy skills.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by age.
Many of the women used for the study were petty traders, hence, economic factor will determine their rate of acquisition, as they were thinking of how to keep their
homes so also would they be thinking of how to acquire or sustain the knowledge they have acquired. This is also true of their concentration in the literacy class. Experiences gathered by the researcher from the field showed that learners nursing babies are more involved in circumstances that lead to dropping out, hence, the need to design the programmes to include health education, skills acquisition, and home economics.

Figure 4 shows that majority of the respondents 895 (68.3%) are Christians, 373 (28.5%) are Muslim, 197 (1.5%) of the respondents claimed African Traditional Religion while the remaining respondents 209 (1.6%) were silent about their religion. About 78% of FGD respondents who were Christians claimed that their Pastors always involve them in various activities that require them to read their Bibles and participate in various church activities. The implication of this finding is that literacy programmes are well received by Christians in the two states. A strong indication of this as observed during the course of this study is that the low level of participation of the Muslims may be attributed to the belief that anything western is Christian.

This finding shows that religion affects the level of participation and acquisition of adult literacy. Probable accounting for this finding is that most Christian churches have adult education department and Sunday school services where both young and old are enjoined to learn how to read the Bible. The commitment to serve God and to keep abreast of the story in the Bible has a significant influence on why this is common among the Christians. It is important to report however that some of the FGD respondents confirmed that mosques organisations like Ahmadiya, NASFAT and Ansarrudeen Muslim Society are also involved in adult literacy education but would need to improve more in order for their involvement to be well appreciated.

The majority of the respondents about 494 (37.7%) of the 1310 participants have had no formal education prior to their joining adult literacy programmes. 406 (31%) had not completed primary school education before they dropped out of the formal education system. 328 (25%) had completed primary school education while 79 (6%) respondents who had not completed junior secondary education before they dropped out. The implication of Figure 5 is that 485 (37%) of the participants who had never been to school before and about 812 (62%) who had attended but not completed the education and as such have not attain permanent level of literacy. The implications include the fact that facilitators will have to address learners needs based on their level of literacy attained.

This implies that more than half of the respondents’ agitation for educational advancement was necessitated as a result of the need to be literate. This of course affects the readiness to learn irrespective of the problems they encounter in the course of learning and that previous educational background is a determinant factor in designing and implementation of adult literacy programmes. Acquisition of learning is reinforced with the knowledge a learner wishes to acquire and the type of programme that is available at a given period. For the category of respondents who have not been to school before, it is only logical that basic literacy education is essential, while those that have dropped out of their secondary school education would need to go for a remedial and continuing education that will prepare them back into the formal education.

When there is enough facilities in terms of accessibility to literacy activities and within the context of literacy provision in the states, the level of acquisition of the skills must be maintained in the level at which it would enhance active participation of the learners and utilisation of the skills acquired among the learners. The study however shows that there was no significant different between the use of skills among the males and females used for the study.

On the occupational factor, majority of the respondents 636 (48.5%) are traders, this was closely followed by those involved in farming 131 (17.6%) of the sampled population (Figure 6). 159 (12.1%) are artisans, 147 (11.2%) of the respondents are civil servants; while 131 (10%) had no job. 3.9% did not specify their occupational status. The result is in contrast to the fact that majority of people who reside in rural areas are expected to be farmers, and this implies that the facilitators need to organize the literacy class to meet the participant job’s
requirements as this will increase their interest and promote their active participation in literacy programmes. Also, the organizer should also bear it in mind the subject content and the curriculum to include topics that will cover the various skills that would make the knowledge gained to be used in whatever occupation a learner intends to practice and skills that could improve and sustain their life.

Research question 4: How can we address these challenges facing adult learners’ access and participation to literacy programmes?

To achieve sustainable development, individuals must become critically aware of themselves and their behaviours. They must become critically conscious of their limitations and opportunities for self-development; hence the level of perception of the literacy activities can not be the same among the participants of literacy activities.

When there are enough coverage of issues and topics to be taught in literacy class, the level of literacy participation and acquisition of the skills will be enhanced. To achieve sustainable development, individuals must become critically aware of themselves, their behaviours and interest in the content of subject covered. The organizer and literacy facilitators must therefore be critically conscious of the limitations and opportunities for self-development because the level of perception of the literacy activities can not be the same among the
participants of literacy activities.

Conclusion and recommendations

The outcome of the study as shown in the two states covered (Oyo and Ondo States) shows ensuring equal opportunity of access to formal and non-formal education has remained a major challenge in achieving Universal Basic Education enrolment. However, the two states provided access opportunity to both adults and youths that are illiterate through the creation of learning centres; provision of facilitators, supervisors, payment of honorarium learning materials, and locating the centres close to learners’ residence. Various factors such as age of the learners, socio-economic activities, occupation, as well as previous educational background are among others affect the willingness and outright participation in adult literacy programmes. Findings and FGD reports have also shown that many adult learning centers are located in schools because of the need for tables and chairs to be used for learning, this therefore affect learning and continuing patronage of literacy classes by adult learners. Because of the age and occupational status of the adult learners, the problems of economic and/or socio-cultural are compounded by the problem of distance, this therefore calls for the attention of the facilitator by arranging the programmes in such a way it will interest between the age of 26 and 45 years as this is the range of adults that are of the majority in the cohorts used in the study. To this end, the following recommendations are made:

- There is the need for improved funding of basic adult literacy in the states in order to create more access,
- Organisers of adult literacy programmes needs to work collaboratively with learners in designing programmes that would enhance participation in literacy programmes,
- Increase of post literacy activities that will help in sustaining the skills acquired and
- Designing curriculum that meets the learners’ basic life-improvement needs.

REFERENCES

Filed Study (2009). Visit by authors to different learning centres in Oyo and Ondo.
Appendix A

Various learning programmes available to adult literacy learners in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria

From the available records from the agencies, the facilitators that handle the literacy programmes as well as the respondents, the following adult education programmes are available in the two states, these include among others the following:

(a) Basic literacy programme:
This programme is basically for the first timer. That is those that have never had the opportunity of being literate before. They are taught all the skills that enable them acquire rudiment of knowing how to read and write. Every other thing that would assist them to relate and function effectively in their environment is included in their curriculum. Yoruba, Isiro (Arithmetic), and Ibagbepeda (Social Studies) are the three core subjects taught in the basic class. Civic and ethics are also taught under family living. As an elementary stage of literacy activities, the duration of the learning is between 6 and 9 months. Lessons are held two to three times a week depending on the consensus arrangement among the learners. Lessons are held in learners’ mother tongue unless otherwise decided by learners.

(b) Post literacy:
This is the second stage of adult literacy class. Those that successfully completed the basic literacy move to this class. As an intermediary between basic and advance class, lessons are held in English language. Subject like science is included. Like the basic class, the duration of the class is 6 to 9 months.

(c) Advanced literacy:
Learners in this category are deemed to have matured enough to sit for the primary leaving certificate examination. The curriculum for this class is designed to compete favorably with the primary six standard of the formal education set up. English, Mathematics, Social Studies and Integrated Science are taught.

(d) Vocational education:
Literacy activities in this category prepare the learners for skills and knowledge that could be used to be independent. Women go for skills like tye and dye, soya making, adire cloth design, tailoring, and so on, while men can learn mechanic, vulcanizer, brick laying, weathering, in addition to literacy. Sometimes, independent professional practitioners are contacted to train learners on vocation that are not readily available in the agency.

(e) Women education:
This is a purely Home Economics activity for women. They are taught how to cook, raise family, relates with and among the people in the society especially in their families. Issues like family planning, HIV/AIDS, circumcision, and so on are taught as well.

(f) Liberal education:
It is also known as Recreational Education and are organized for social Clubs, cooperative members, regular “ayo” player.

(g) Continuing education:
This is a special remedial class for students who have problem in obtaining their school certificate subjects. The classes are organized specially and does not in any way rival the privately owned continuing education centres run by individual in the two states. What makes the continuing education organized by state agencies different from the individually owned is the fact that the fees are subsidies by the agencies. In Ondo state, the continuing education class as a separate department of the agency is called the Prospect High School.

(h) Artisan class:
This is meant for occupational groups like the Mechanic, Vulcanisers, Rewire, and Battery chargers. It could also be for bricklayers, carpenters, painters, Mason, Fashion Designers and Hair Dressers. Manual which deal with their tools and language occupations can be designed for them.

(i) Quranic school:
This is meant for children and out of school youths who have either been to school. It is operated at local quranic school or centres where children or youth are taught the quranic and Arabic language exclusively.

Appendix B

Focus group leading questions

1: How did you get information about the existence of the learning centre?
2: What is the distance of your residence to your learning centres?
3: Was there any provision for learning materials like primers, writing books, pencils, and so on by the organizer of the programme?
4: How can you describe the attitude of your facilitator to your learning achievement?
5: Does the programme attend to the reason why you enrolled at the centre?
6: Apart from materials provided by the organizer, do you have other materials available at home, which encourage you to learn?