

ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION IN KANO STATE, NIGERIA, FROM 1960 TO 2015

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Abstract

This research aims to trace the historical development of Adult literacy education (in Western terms) in Kano State, from independence to the 21st Century, and the challenges that confronted the programme. The methodology used for the writing of this paper is purely historical. In the course of this study, both primary and secondary sources were used in analyzing the data collected. And it was revealed that, since independence, various governments in the State had strived to promote and sustain adult literacy education. In the 1980s, kano state set the pace for adult literacy and won the UNESCO Literacy Award twice within ten years. Since then, subsequent governments have struggled to sustain these efforts by reforming the system through capacity strengthening. However, the work concluded that despite its past glory in adult literacy, Kano State had one of the highest rates of illiterates in the country, which stemmed as a result of several challenges that include inadequate funding, which brought about the inadequacy of instructors, equipment and teaching/learning material, economic barriers etc. in this vain, the paper recommended that, the government need to commit more of the existing State budget to both formal and especially non-formal basic education, to ensure that all citizens have access to adequate educational opportunities, which would help them to develop themselves, as well as to strive to develop and implement rapid and sustained economic growth, policies and programmes, that would help in alleviating poverty in the society as a whole, to enhance individuals capacity to participate in the literacy programme.

Keywords

Adult, Literacy,
Kano State,
Government,
Challenges

Introduction

According to international law, the aims of education include the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and to enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society. (Lang, 2014) Therefore, the right to education

is not exclusive to children but adults. Adults as defined by the National Literacy Survey (2010), include persons aged 15 years and above. Adult literacy education connotes education provided to adult learners to acquire reading, writing, numeracy, and other skills for sustainable livelihood. It is also an education that improve their technical

or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education, or to acquire knowledge, skills and competences in a new field, or to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field, (UNESCO, 2011). The importance of Adult literacy cannot be over-emphasized, for among its advantages, is that, it promotes personal and professional development, thereby supporting more active engagement by adults with their societies. It also fosters sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and decent work prospects of individuals. It is therefore a crucial tool in alleviating poverty, improving health and wellbeing, and contributing to sustainable learning societies. (UNESCO, 2015).

However, illiteracy had continued to be a significant problem in Nigeria, Knoema report (2018) shows that illiteracy surged from 23,957,923 people in 1991 to 33,559,222 in 2003, and soared to 41,214,097 in 2008. The National Literacy Rate (2010) reported that Nigeria's adult literacy rate was 59.9 percent with huge variations between States, for example, Lagos State had 80.5 percent literacy in English, while Kano State was one of the States with very low literacy rate particularly in English (27.8 percent). This low literacy level has translated into high poverty, ignorance, diseases, etc. In 2013, Nyesom Wike, who was the Minister of Education for state, described two major challenges for the Nigerian adult education effort, which he attributed to the increasing number of adult illiterates to 35 million, in addition to the nation's more than 10 million children who were not in school (Relief Web, 2013).

Furthermore, in 2015, UNESCO lamented that, over 62 million

Nigerians were illiterates, a situation it described as dangerous to the development of the country. The organization was of the opinion that, it would take Nigeria about 58 years to stamp out illiteracy among its populace, despite modern trends in education (premium Times, 2015). However, Kano State, the most populous State in Nigeria, was said to have the highest population of out of school children. According to the Education For All National Review (2015), 40 percent of Primary School pupils and 44 percent of Junior Secondary School pupils in Kano State, were out of school in 2012. In conjunction with this, the National Education Data survey (NEDS, 2015), reported that, Kano State had the highest number (1,306,106) of out of school children in the country. The implication of this, was that, most of the of out of school children, grew up to become illiterate adults, thereby, increasing the rate adult illiteracy in the State every year.

The Development of Literacy Education in Kano State, 1960-2000

Literacy education have had a long history in Nigeria, the quest for knowledge began since the introduction of Islam in the 11th Century, in Kanem Borno Empire. From there on, Islamic scholarship took root in the area, and saw the rise of many scholars. Students from the old Kanem Borno Empire, also travelled to Cairo for further studies. In Hausaland, Islam was first introduced Kano, in the 14th Century, by Muslim traders and teachers, who taught their adherents to read and write in Arabic Scripts. At this period, many Islamic scholars sprang in Kano, Katsina and Zaria, all of which flourished as the centres of learning (Ozigi and Ocho, 1981).

However, the modern foundation of Adult literacy education in the North

was laid by the Colonial Government, around the 1940's to the early 1950's, when the first bold step was taken with the establishment of the Northern Regional Literacy Agency (NORLA), with its headquarters at Zaria. The NORLA served as a resource centre for learning and printing materials. The Agency's main objective was to raise the literacy level of the northern Nigerian populace. Hence, it started with a vigorous campaign against illiteracy. (Aigbomian, 1999).

Efforts in Promoting literacy education was strengthened with the McPherson Constitution, which ushered in Regional Governments controlled by Nigerians. These regional governments were given powers over education, health and Local Governments, among others. Thus, between 1952 and 1960, the Regional Governments embarked on policies to develop the educational sector. While the Western and Eastern Regional governments provided Universal Basic Education (UBE) due to the huge disparity in education between the north and the south, the Northern Regional Government opted for free Primary and Adult literacy in its war against ignorance. This set the tone for adult education development in the country during the first two decades of post-independence Nigeria. (NMEC, 2008).

In this vein, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the Northern Region, launched an educational crash programme which covered all levels, during his Northernization policy. It included, Adult literacy, advanced technical training, selecting of young northerners to study overseas, while others were sent into the institute of administration, Zaria, to study. During the tenure of Audu Bako, adult literacy was improved with campaigns against illiteracy, which started in Kano since

1950s. the initial enrolment of 407 adults, out of which 36 were able to obtain certificates, increased to 653,622 by 1969 with 172,173 students obtaining their certificates. post literacy classes for those who had achieved literacy in vernacular and who were eager to learn English, and eventually qualify for other studies, was also introduced in the state. women classes were also introduced. However, more women were involved in home craft classes, with an emphasis on domestic science. (Shehu, 1997).

In 1970, the adult education teaching guides, were revised and expanded from forty lessons to seventy-two as a necessary step to cope with the educational expansion in all aspects. In addition, the Education Ministry, under the Adult Education Section, re-trained all literacy instructors on new teaching methods and recruited and trained more supervisors. While a functional literacy course, with supervision under the direction of UNESCO personnel was also introduced. By 1973, a remarkable achievement was made as a result of the general campaign on adult education, for about 150 classes for post literacy education were opened, and run by 30 voluntary organizations in the state (Shehu, 1997).

Literacy campaign programme continued in earnest by the PRP- led government in Kano State, who had in 1980, promoted the Adult Education Unit of the Ministry of Education to an independent board called, Agency for Mass Education. This was a historic landmark, for it was the first post-independence government to go out of its way to set up an autonomous parastatal, responsible for adult and non-formal education. The Kano State Agency, under Abubakar Rimi's government, no doubt made tremendous progress especially in

Adult literacy, so much so that, by 1983, it won a UNESCO award for literacy. (NMEC, 2008).

By 1979, the proportion of people who could read and write in Roman letters stood at 15%, however, over 70% of the adult population could read and write *Ajami*. Which meant that, over 80% of the people in the state could not read or write in Roman letters. Therefore, the Agency was established with the Objective of ultimately wiping out illiteracy in the State, in order to raise the level of consciousness of the people on the much-desired upliftment of their social, economic and political condition. It was expected that non literate person would be made able to read and write Hausa within three months. As well as to add other subjects to it within the next six months. These subjects included, English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Religious Studies and Home Economic (Yakasai, 2013).

The administration of Rimi believed that, if people were illiterate, they would not be able appreciate the concept of the new social order, which the government envisaged. In addition, The establishment of the Agency was not meant only “to cater for young and old, but also for the women in *pardah*, and workers in government ministries and parastatals, who were unable to read and write in Roman letters. The seriousness of the government manifested itself when an ultimatum was given to all public servants, who could neither read nor write in Roman letters, to as a matter of necessity, learn how to do so, before December 1982. The order clearly stipulated that any worker who failed to do so “runs the risk of losing his or her job”. Consequently, 31 literacy centres were opened in all the Ministries, and other government establishments for the targeted civil servants. At the

termination of the order, the policy succeeded in changing the outlook of 2,348 students that comprised of messengers, laborers, drivers and watchmen (Essien-Ibok, 1983, Yakasai, 2013).

The Agency also established Vocational Centres in the Municipality at Dutse and Gwauron Dutse. The objective for the establishment of these centres, was to train different category of people on skills such as Carpentry, Typing, Mechanical works, Photography and other relevant courses. It is important to note that at that time, indigenes of Kano State frowned at trades mentioned above except carpentry. The establishment of the Agency for Mass Education in Kano State set the pace for the gradual phasing-out of this retrogressive attitude. Married women centre was established at Fagge in February 1983, with a total student’s enrolment of 180. Apart from learning how to read and write, the centre conducted Home Economics Education training for the women. The establishment of the centre at Fagge complemented the already existing one at the state library known as City Women Centre. To ensure that people, especially from the rural areas, became attuned to the activities of government, and the happenings around the world, nine hundred and eleven Television Viewing Centres were established throughout the state. Concisely, from 1980 to 1983 more than 500,000 people of different age have been trained by the agency to read and write. The activities of the Agency transcended training adults for basic literacy and vocational education in that, secondary school dropouts and adults who had already obtained Primary education and wanted to acquire secondary education were also considered (Essien-Ibok, 1983)

In 1986, the National Adult Education Centre, was established in Kano, under the Federal Ministry of Education, with a view to developing adult education materials, and the training of adult education personnel throughout the country. However, this centre was taken over by the newly established National Commission for Mass Education (NMEC) in 1991 (NMEC, 2008). In the Federal Government's bid to pursue the policy objectives of mass literacy, it made available the amount of N35 million to the State Agency for Mass Education between 1985 to 1991. The three core programmes of the Agency were, Basic literacy, Functional/Vocational Programmes for women, especially those in purdah, and post literacy/Remedial education for

Primary and Secondary Schools dropouts, (see the table 1). In addition, a Mass Education Programme for the disabled was also introduced, with an initial intake of 420 pupils. These programmes were conducted in more than 3000 centres scattered across the State. Through the involvement of the participants in the selection of places of instruction, and the general administration of the centres, intensive public enlightenment and propaganda campaign, coupled with the State Government support. The Agency was able to record more successes within six years (1985-1991), both nationally and internationally. As the Agency succeeded in winning for the second time, the UNESCO International Reading Association Award in 1990 (Handing Over Notes, 1985-1991).

Table 1

Breakdown of the Number (in thousands) of Beneficiaries of the Three Core Programmes of the Agency, 1985-1990

Year	Basic Literacy	Functional/Literacy Vocation for Women	Post Literacy/Remedial
1984-85	16,060	1819	1277
1885-86	16,531	1485	1124
1986-87	19,696	2510	1070
1987-88	28,996	2080	1577
1988-89	25,996	2060	850
1989-90	26,558	2420	1933
1990-91	94,925	2692	2500
Total	228,762	15,065	10,331

Note. Adapted from Kano State Government (1991). Handing Over Notes, 1985-1991, (Unpublished Manuscript). P. 24.

In Table 1, all the three core programmes had a steady increase on the number of beneficiaries. In Basic literary, the beneficiaries increased substantially from 16,060 to 28,996 in 1987-88, but had a steady decline between 1988-90. However, by 1990-91, the numbers of beneficiaries

spiraled to 94,925. There had also been a steady improvement in the Women beneficiaries in functional literacy and vocation, between 1985-1991, beneficiaries increased from 1819 to 2692 respectively. The number of the beneficiaries of the Post literacy and remedial studies had not been

encouraging, it rose from a paltry 1277 from 1987-88, and declined automatically to 850 in 1988-89 but picked up in 1990-91 with 2500.

Development of Adult Literacy Education, 2000-2015

In the 21st century, education at all levels had suffered untold and unapparelled neglect, partly due to the effects of the Structural Adjustment policies, imposed on the Nigerian populace in 1986. The removal of subsidies in the development sectors, was one of the conditions of the IMF and World Bank during the SAP period. Therefore, as a result of this, there was a cutback in budget allocation for the education sector. Since then, the quality of education had been on the decline, manifested in the dilapidated and inadequate structures, unavailability of working materials, and poor motivation for both teachers and learners. These circumstances, as well as the nonchalant attitude or lack of commitment of the governments, led to a decline in productivity, in the work of the Agency for Mass education.

The Kano State Government, despite the existing condition, realized that, the involvement of flocks of youths with non-formal education, would be indispensable, if it were to achieve its sets of objectives of achieving a 50% reduction in mass illiteracy by 2015. With 47 percent literacy rate in 2006, the government, therefore, made efforts to assist the youths in securing basic literacy, and to also, identify with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), and Education For All (EFA) objectives, by introducing programmes that would revitalize the functions of the State Agency for Mass Education (SAME), in order to synchronize the activities of all educational agencies, for the best options of the youths. In this vain, a Special Advisor to the Governor was appointed to facilitate the unfolding of

development in the sub-sector. Consequent upon this, government approved for the agency to recruit 80 more officers on permanent and pensionable appointment. It also procured five buses and 33 motorcycles for the monitoring of its activities throughout the State. (Kano in the Best of Times, 2003-2007).

In addition, the government regularly purchased instructional materials, vocational skills acquisition equipment, and materials for the adult literacy classes. The curriculum was also reviewed to cope with the demands of the 21st Century. It also established the *reflect circles* in the rural areas, as strategy for literacy acquisition and societal improvement. More Women Centres were also established, in order to meet the increasing demand of the women adult literacy programmes. According to the document, The Kano State Revised Education Strategic Plan, 2009-2018, by 2006, there were 440 Basic Literacy Centres, 308 Post Literacy Centres, and an unspecified number of Women Education Centres. The agency also manages 65 Television Viewing Centres, with a literacy component across all 44 Local Government Areas, while 3 LGA's went on to provide additional centres of their own (Kano in the Best of the Times, 2003-2007).

Furthermore, a Workers Education Programme, provided a compulsory literacy training for messengers, cleaners etc. working in Ministry of Education (MOE). Furthermore, a remedial SSCE programme was introduced for post literacy graduates, and young secondary school dropouts who wanted a second attempt at SSCE. There were 31 remedial classes with 1,964 learners in 2005 (Kano State Annual Education Sector Performance Report, 2010). In addition, an unspecified number of NGO's and voluntary organizations also participated

in the provision of mass literacy. An estimated 188 literacy classes with a total of 27,616 learners (more than that of the State complement), were run in the civil society sector. However, Agency for Mass Education (AME) supports selected CSO-run centres, by paying the allowances of 2 instructors. AME collaborated with the following external agencies: UNICEF (training Girl Child education), UNDP, NMEC (training in the REFLECT methodology), and USAID (proposal on Qur'anic literacy). (Kano State Annual Education Sector Performance Report, 2010)

Between 2011-2013 the Kano State Agency for Mass Education, in collaboration with UNESCO's global Education For All (EFA) project, increased its mass education classes in the 44 Local Government Councils. 12 million people were targeted to be given the literate capacity within 3 years (Blueprint, 2014), to achieve that, 874 locations were created to serve as classes across the State, while 16,148 teachers were recruited to teach at the various locations. 403,700 participants across the State were enrolled and expected to graduate within six months. And another batch of the same number will be registered and expected to graduate in the next six months. The objective was for every adult to be able to read and write in Kano State by 2015, in order to meet the millennium goals. (Kano State-Indelible Footprints, 2013). The adult literacy drive was also to create jobs, and improve the socio-economic power and living standards of kano People. (Relief Web, 2013)

Challenges of Adult Education in Kano State

Since its inception, the Agency of Mass Literacy Education in Kano State had recorded some successes. Although, the various governments had some degree of commitment in the programme, however, Kano State, in the decades 1960 to 1990, was under

the most visionary and innovative leaders. Under their governments, the mass literacy programme maintained the position of the pacesetter for all agencies of mass education in Nigeria, with the largest adult education programme. Furthermore, Kano State at the time, came up with many human empowerment initiatives for youths and adults, as the governments of this period made highly commendable efforts in promoting literacy in the State, considering the fact that the literacy rate of the State was only 5.0 percent in 1968 (Haruna, 1997), which rose to 15 percent in 1979, and by 1992, the literacy rate had soared to 46 percent. This was in spite of the challenges encountered in the course of developing the programme (Indabawa, 2006).

In comparison with the 21st Century efforts, in 2006, literacy rate was 46 percent, and the Action Plan Nigeria (2012), reported that, in 2012, out of a total population of 9,401,288 million, only 4,600,811 million were literate, thereby making the overall literacy rate to stand at 48.9%, thus, ranking Kano State 19th in the country. In essence, there was little progress in literacy education in this period. Nonetheless, the literacy programme has generally improved the social, cultural, intellectual and economic lives of individual who completed the programme, for it had recorded some achievements in its objectives of educating people in the areas of basic, post literacy and numeracy education, as many individuals had completed their primary and secondary education, and even proceeded to tertiary institutions. Literacy education also revolutionized the mindset of people, and the programme helped many people to learn and acquire various skills through vocational studies.

Kano State had continued to have one of the largest number of illiterates in the country. Thus, the above statistics indicated that adult literacy programme had been engrossed in various challenges, which inhibited its general success. According to the Kano Education Situational Analysis (2006), the Key challenges confronting the Agency included, declining enrolment. For example in 2006, there was 50 percent decline in enrolment in basic literacy centres, compared to 2001, learners in women education centres also dropped by 5 percent between 2005 and 2006. Gender disparity had continued to play a role in adult education, as there were more males than females in the programme. For instance, the NMEC (2008), reported that, there were more male participants in the post literacy classes than females. In 2001, there were 8,079 males and 985 females, while in 2006, the population were 8,178 males and 1314 females, and in 2007, there were 8485 males and 2,330 females. Among the reasons given by women for cutting down on class, was poverty, as well as domestic roles at home, and in addition, inadequate funding was also forwarded as one of the reasons for individuals dropping out of the programme.

Budgetary allocation for education at all levels of government had been inadequate for the country's successful running of the education sector. Consequently, the allocation for adult education was paltry compared to the budgetary allocation for the formal education sector. inadequate funding on adults and non-formal education, limited the opportunities of widening access to education, and continued to retard progress in the programme. Although Kano State had been one of the few states that showed commitment in funding adult programmes, the funds usually provided were

insufficient for running the programme. The shortage of funds had manifested in the lack of, or inadequacy of physical and instructional facilities for the general success of the programme (Kano Education Situational Analysis, 2006). Other issues related to shortages of funds, had to do with mismanagement of the already insufficient resources, and high rates of corruption, such as embezzlement and diversion of funds, equipment, school supplies, procurement funds etc. by government officials, which hinders the achievement of State goals for literacy programmes (Yakubu & Aboho, 2021).

Financial barriers also hindered access to literacy education. Kano State was one of the States with high incidence of poverty, which had continued to rise along the years. The rate of poverty was said to increase from 61 percent in 2004 to 73.0 percent in 2010 (Nigeria Poverty Profile, 2010). It further increased to 76. 0 in 2015 (OPHI, 2015). In a nutshell, poverty not only hindered access, but also led to high dropout rates of adult literacy education. Consequently, many individuals abandoned literacy classes in favour of income generating activities, because, even when adult education is provided for free, other associated costs were borne by individuals. These costs included, purchase of learning materials and uniforms, transport fees, as a result of distance between individual's home and the centre, as well as feeding. Many individuals had to prioritize between education and other basic needs, and this served as a barrier to accessing adult education.

Another challenge that confronted the programme, was community nonchalance about the purpose and relevance of adult literacy education. Much importance had not

been accorded to adult education by a large number of the populace, especially those in the rural areas, and this had thus, affected the level of commitment given to adult education by individuals. However, the problems could be related to the level of awareness, especially in the rural areas, for there was an increased public awareness of the value of literacy in the cities, but the lack of proper advocacy and sensitization for the sector was evident in the rural areas, as many adults were not aware of the existence of adult education centres. The National Literacy Survey (2010), reported that only 31.9 percent of the State's population were aware of the programme. Furthermore, the lack of trained and adequate instructors was more evident in the rural areas than the urban areas. And to compound it all, adult education instructors had to deal with poor remuneration and lack of incentives, which led to low morale and reduced their commitment to work. The above challenges made the quality of education received by adult learners in adult and non-formal education substandard.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it has become apparent that, since independence, various governments had made efforts to promote Adult literacy education in the State. But despite the long history and past glory of the Mass Literacy programme in kano State, the State had continued to have one of the highest population of illiterates in the country which was quite alarming, because illiteracy has adverse impacts at both an individual and societal level as people who are illiterates are more likely to live in poverty. economically, the impacts of illiteracy are also sizeable as workplace productivity, unemployment rates and even national GDP are all affected by a country's literacy levels. The literacy

programme was essentially troubled by several challenges that included; inadequate funding, lack of trained teachers and adequate teachers, inadequacy of physical and instructional facilities, poverty, gender disparity, lack of awareness of the programme, as well as corruption and mismanagement of resources all of which combined to lead to poor access to adult literacy programme as well as high dropout rates.

Recommendations

- In order to alleviate the challenges articulated above, the government and other stake holders as a matter of urgency, need to make reforms in the education sector that would improve its quality, and make education accessible to all its citizens. By taking this measure, the out of school population would decrease substantially and result in the dwindling of the population of illiterates.
- Also, since poverty played a huge factor in accessing adult learning, the government should strive to develop and implement rapid and sustained economic growth, policies and programmes, that would help in alleviating poverty in the society as a whole, in order to enhance individuals capacity to participate in the literacy programme, so that, individuals can make it a priority.
- In addition, the government must commit more of the existing State budget to formal and non-formal basic education to ensure that all citizens have access to adequate educational opportunities, which would help them develop themselves. And only with sufficient funds can the government be able to supply adequate instructors, as well as teaching/learning materials and other equipment.

- Adult literacy instructors should be equipped with requisite skill and knowledge, in order to be able to offer quality instruction, as well as to review instructors remuneration and provide other incentives to avoid demotivation, because a teacher that has not received quality investment cannot give out quality service delivery.
- Furthermore, the government should devise more efficient ways of sensitizing and mobilizing more people from the grassroot, and provide certain incentives, that would motivate them to enroll in the literacy programmes.
- Finally, gender disparity in education needs to be broadly addressed, because promoting gender equality in education is critical to development.

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