

ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DONOR AGENCIES IN REDUCING ILLITERACY RATE IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study is on assessment of contributions of donor agencies in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State. The study was guided by four purposes and four research questions. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The sample size adopted for this study is 178 respondents which is 20% of the total population. Instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Contributions of donor agencies in reducing illiteracy rate questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability coefficient of 0.82, 0.84, 0.85, and 0.86 were obtained with an overall reliability co-efficient of 0.85 using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that the extent of contributions of Donor agencies in infrastructure development, financial support, capacity building and awareness creation is low in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made, that the international donor agencies functional in Enugu State should focus more on the provision of stable power supply, computers, ICT gadgets, clean water supply and sanitation in literacy centers in Enugu State. Equally, the Local, State and Federal governments through the state agency for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education in collaboration with donor agencies can join forces to provide free transportation for learners which will in turn improve the enrollment rates in literacy centers.

Keywords: Assessment, Contributions, Donor Agencies, Illiteracy

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Introduction

Illiteracy has been a major problem in Nigeria, and it is one of the factors that account for the poor development of the country. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2023), defined illiteracy as the number of persons that cannot read and write. Illiteracy is typically measured according to the inability to comprehend a short simple statement on everyday life. Similarly, Nordquist (2019), portrays Illiteracy as the quality or condition of being unable to read or write. Of equal relevance is the concept of functional illiteracy, which means that an individual may have basic reading, writing and numerical skills but cannot apply them to accomplish tasks that are necessary to make informed choices and participate fully in everyday life. Such tasks among others include: reading a medicine label, balancing a cheque book etc. The level of educational achievement in Nigeria is low, given its moderately high per capital income. The national survey on literacy conducted by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) and Media and Marketing Communications Company (MMCC) (2010) portrayed that in Enugu State, adult literacy rate

in English language and other languages were 64.6% and 65.0% respectively. In agreement, UNESCO (2020), stressed that Enugu State literacy rate stood at 66.5% thereby placing its illiteracy rate at 33.5%. Hence, it is pertinent to note that, illiteracy has been identified as one of the major handicaps responsible for the setbacks in the realization of well-conceived development projects in Nigeria.

In the bid to eradicate illiteracy, various programmes like Universal Basic Education (UBE), National Mass Literacy for Adult and non-formal Education Commission (NMEC) and Back to School Campaign were all set up. Despite the great efforts of the government in the reduction of illiteracy, the finances allocated to the educational sector is far from satisfactory. It is quite apparent that Nigeria is yet to match her intention of placing literacy on a higher pedestal with the actual budgetary allocation to that sub-sector. The poor financial allocation no doubt constitutes a very big challenge in literacy policy, planning and implementation processes at national and even sub-national levels (Nnamani, 2014).

Donor agencies are non-profit and mostly non-governmental organizations that are dedicated to developmental and humanitarian services to mankind across the globe particularly in the developing countries where the needs are more urgent as a result of conflicts and other social disasters (Usman and Babayo, 2020). The major objectives of donor agencies include, among others, protection of human rights, fight against poverty, electoral support in emerging democracies, promotion of democracy and good governance, education, healthcare services, climate and environmental change, disaster management and aids to victims of violence and social crisis (Morton, 2013). Government seeks to attract resources and collaboration from donor agencies to reduce illiteracy rate as donor agencies seek to assist developing countries in various sectors in which they are performing poorly.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as one of the United Nations development agencies has played significant role especially in the 1990s in the promotion of literacy in Nigeria. During UNDP's 4th country programme (CP, 1994 - 1996) which had mass literacy as a focus, UNDP budgeted 8 million US dollars to support Nigeria's effort towards eradicating illiteracy in the country. UNDP also gave 100 million naira to 13 states of the federation, under the FGN/UNDP assisted project (UNESCO, 2010). Following the same view, Obasi (2004) purported that the mass literacy national programme was aimed at raising the literacy rate of the country from 50% to 80%, making a total of 26 million adults functionally literate and reducing the adult women illiteracy rate by at least half, that is from 61% to 30.5% within the project period. Moreover, Aladenusi (2018) opined that while the UNDP has provided funding for some adult learners, the program has not been able to cover all of the country's educational needs. This means that many adult learners are still unable to access education due to the cost of fees. In addition, UNDP's program has been criticized for being too short-term and not addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality, which are major barriers to education for many Nigerians.

UNESCO has remained the vanguard for championing literacy cases in Nigeria. They cooperate with governments and other United Nations agencies in the formulation of education policies, combating exploitative child labour, providing scholarships and food aid to lessen the burden of education on poor rural families. UNESCO's support in Nigeria is felt more in the provision of technical assistance to the government for policy development and strategic planning through distribution of materials, consultancies, workshops, conferences and programme implementation. The organization, besides providing technical support to

Nigeria's efforts at providing basic education, is also supporting the Literacy by Radio Project for Improving the Community Education and Literacy. They have offered aid to the reduction of illiteracy in Nigeria by contributing in various aspects which includes infrastructure development, financial support, awareness creation and also capacity building to see that the rate of illiteracy is reduced to a minimal level.

The contributions of donor agencies to infrastructure development is essential as it helps to have a conducive learning environment (UNESCO, 2010). Generally, the Nigerian education system is characterized by deteriorating facilities and equipment; inadequate provision of textbooks and other teaching materials; poorly stocked libraries, unequipped laboratories, poor administrative and managerial strategies, insufficient or incompetent teachers (National Universities Commission, 2012). In order to respond to the emerging needs and priorities of Nigeria's education system in conformity with UNESCO's mandate, UNESCO have contributed in the provision of infrastructures to improve the Nigerian educational system. These infrastructures include: Provision of science laboratories in 114 secondary schools in the different states in Nigeria, provision of desks for pupils in early childhood education, and provision of books and writing materials for a wide range of students (Ude & Ekesiobi, 2014).

Donor agencies have made important contributions to reducing illiteracy in Enugu State through awareness-raising activities. UNESCO (2004), has helped to create awareness on girls' education through the Guidance and Counseling Special Project for school age girls in Nigeria in the form of technical, materials and financial support to the Federal Ministry of Education in the training of educators and primary school administrators in gender-sensitive approaches in Guidance and Counseling for school children in Nigeria. Donor agencies have also helped to reduce illiteracy in Enugu State by building the capacity of local organizations and institutions through teachers' training and material development through curriculum renewal and research, as well as strengthening of the private sector participation for teacher development. In addition, the authors highlighted other areas of capacity building such as boosting Early Childhood Care Education and setting up Taskforce in conjunction with NERDC, UBE, the FME and an NGO with major tasks of developing norms and standards for ECCE, as well as making necessary suggestions that would assist the government on improvement (UNESCO, 2015).

UNDP have made significant contributions in terms of awareness building and broadening of policy dialogue and advocacy work in Nigeria through the "People's Vision of Development – 2010", the National Partnership Forum (NPF) and Human Development Network (HDN). In continuation, UNESCO and its partners promotes literacy day to underline the significance of literacy for healthy societies. International literacy day is a day observed to raise people's awareness and concern for literacy problems within their own communities. Activities such as letters to the editor in newspapers, as well as news reports about the concerns for low literacy levels, have occurred as a result of this increased awareness. Other activities include literacy day projects, particularly with regard to technology and literature, which are promoted by various organizations including reading associations (UNESCO, 2022). Also, the United Nations Development Programme in collaboration with some State Agencies and NGOs organized relevant manpower development programmes for Adult literacy education in Nigeria. It was discovered that the programme has helped to improve the socio-economic and living standards of the participants and has led to astronomical rise in enrollments in formal education. In providing free sponsorship, Department of Education (2012), opined that sponsorship may be limited in scope, and may not cover all of the costs associated with adult

learning. The sponsorship may only be available for certain programs or courses, and may not be transferable to other educational opportunities. There may be eligibility requirements that exclude some potential learners. Also, the sponsorship may have a time limit, which could create pressure for learners to complete their studies within a certain timeframe.

Despite the enormous contributions of donor agencies, literacy rate for Enugu State is still at 66.5% placing its illiteracy rate at 33.5%. Therefore, this study is set out to assess the contributions of donor agencies in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the contributions of donor agencies in the reduction of illiteracy rate in Enugu State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the extent to which donor agencies have applied infrastructure development in the reduction of illiteracy rate in Enugu State,
- ii. ascertain the extent to which donor agencies have employed financial support in the reduction of illiteracy rate in Enugu State,
- iii. find out the extent to which donor agencies have utilized awareness creation in the reduction of illiteracy rate in Enugu State; and
- iv. find out the extent to which donor agencies have utilized capacity building in the reduction of illiteracy rate in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions

- i. To what extent have donor agencies applied infrastructure development in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State?
- ii. To what extent have donor agencies employed financial support in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State?
- iii. To what extent have donor agencies exercised awareness creation in the reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State?
- iv. To what extent have donor agencies operated capacity building in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State?

Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted. Four research questions were employed. Area of study was Enugu State, Nigeria comprising 891 adult literacy facilitators as population. Simple random sampling was used to select 178 respondents which represents 20 percent of the total population. The instrument used was Assessment of Contributions of Donor Agencies in Reducing Illiteracy Rate Questionnaire (ACDARIRQ), self-developed by the investigators. The number of items in the questionnaire was 22. The instrument for the data collection was validated by three experts. Their inputs were incorporated into the instrument by the researchers. To ensure reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the instrument was administered to adult literacy facilitators in Anambra State. Reliability coefficient of 0.82, 0.84, 0.85 and 0.86 were obtained using Cronbach Alpha Statistical tool. Therefore the overall reliability of 0.85 show that the instrument is reliable. The data was collected at the

literacy centers. The instrument was administered to 178 adult literacy facilitators, 170 respondents properly responded and returned while 8 copies were not returned. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions. However, in interpreting the responses the real limit of numbers was adopted as follows: 3.50 – 4.00 as Very High Extent, 2.50 – 3.49 as High Extent, 1.50 – 2.49 as Low Extent and 1.00 – 1.49 as Very Low Extent.

Results

Question 1: What is the extent to which donor agencies have applied infrastructure development in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State (N=170)

Table 1: Mean scores of adult literacy facilitators on the extent to which donor agencies have applied infrastructure development to contribute in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State

S/N	Item statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Provision of learning materials (seats, tables, exercise books, and text books) to learners in the learning center.	2.61	0.97	HE
2.	Provision of light in the learning centers.	2.13	0.95	LE
3.	Provision of water and sanitation in the learning centers.	2.32	0.98	LE
4.	Provision of information communication technology (computers, internet) in the learning centers.	2.42	1.05	LE
5	Construction of classrooms to accommodate learners	2.70	1.13	HE
Grand Mean		2.44	1.01	LE

Table 1 shows the extent to which donor agencies utilized infrastructure development in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State. From the table it is observed that the mean scores of respondents in items 1 and 5 are high extent while items 2, 3, and 4 shows low mean scores. However, the cluster mean of 2.44 indicates that the overall response of the adult literacy facilitators is low extent.

Question 2. To what extent have donor agencies employed financial support in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State (N=170)

Table 2: Mean scores of adult literacy facilitators on the extent to which donor agencies employed financial support to contribute in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State.

S/N	Item statement	Mean	SD	Decision
6.	Provision of grants to support literacy programmes.	2.78	1.13	HE
7.	Awarding scholarship to intelligent adult learners.	2.58	1.04	HE
8.	Subsidizing school fees to adult learners.	2.30	1.00	LE
9.	Sponsoring work study programmes for adult instructors.	2.67	1.01	HE
10.	Sponsoring textbook production.	2.65	1.17	HE
11	Increasing the salary of instructors.	2.04	0.91	LE
12	Sponsoring transportation for learners from far	1.97	0.89	LE

distance.			
Grand Mean	2.43	1.43	LE

From table 2, it can be seen that items 6, 7, 9 and 10 have their mean values range from 2.50 – 3.49 which indicates high extent while items 8, 11 and 12 have the mean score range from 1.50 – 2.49 which indicates low extent. However, the grand mean score of 2.43 was obtained which shows low extent.

Question 3: To what extent have donor agencies exercised awareness creation in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State (N=170)

Table 3: Mean scores of adult literacy facilitators on the extent in which donor agencies have exercised awareness to contribute in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State.

S/N	Item statement	Mean	SD	Decision
13.	Campaign to the public to raise awareness on the importance of literacy.	2.65	1.09	HE
14.	Campaign to clear misconception on education of girls.	2.73	1.03	HE
15.	Campaign to increase the enrollment rates in the literacy centers	2.41	1.07	LE
16.	Annual celebration of international literacy day	2.70	1.45	HE
17	Laying emphasis on lifelong learning	2.58	1.05	HE
Grand Mean		2.61	1.14	HE

Table 3 reveals that items 13,14,16 and 17 have mean scores between 2.50 - 3.49 which shows high extent while item 15 has the mean range of 1.50 - 2.49 which is low extent. However, the overall mean of 2.61 was computed. This mean score of respondents indicates that donor agencies exercised awareness creation in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State.

Question 4: What is the extent to which donor agencies have operated capacity building in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State (N=170)

Table 4: Mean scores of adult literacy facilitators on the extent in which donor agencies have operated capacity building to contribute in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State

S/N	Item statement	Mean	SD	Decision
18.	Providing training for education of officials on how to improve the quality of education	2.28	1.07	LE
19.	Training to improve the skills of adult facilitators	2.23	1.02	LE
20.	Organizing mass training to increase the number of adult instructors	2.17	0.98	LE
21.	Free sponsorship as incentive to encourage people to enroll as adult learners.	2.08	0.94	LE
22	Training and retraining of instructors to upgrade their skills in line with current technology.	2.67	1.02	HE

Grand Mean	2.28	1.01	LE
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Table 4 indicates that item 22 has the mean score range from 2.50 – 3.49 which shows high extent while items 18, 19, 20 and 21 have their mean value range from 1.50 – 2.49 which indicates low extent. However, the computed grand mean of 2.28 was obtained, showing that donor agencies have not operated capacity building in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State.

Discussion of the findings

The findings revealed that donor agencies have contributed to provision of learning materials and construction of classroom accommodation for learners in reducing illiteracy rate in Enugu State. The findings lends credence to Ude and Ekesiobi (2014), which revealed that UNESCO has contributed in the provision of infrastructures to improve the Nigerian educational system, and these infrastructures include: science laboratories, desks, books and writing materials for a wide range of students. The findings also fall in line with UNDP (2020) which established that through the Regional Stabilization Facility, UNDP have rehabilitated damaged classrooms to encourage community members to return back to school. In the same way, the findings showed that provision of light, water, sanitation and information communication technology (ICT) in the learning centers is to a low extent. This could be so because Vickery (2015) highlighted that a shortcoming of UNESCO's efforts to provide light in learning centers is due to lack of sustainable power source. In agreement, WHO (2018) stated that many learning centers in rural areas lack access to clean water and proper sanitation. The findings further indicated that donor agencies have contributed to the provision of grants to support literacy programmes, awarding scholarship to intelligent adult learners, sponsoring work study programmes for adult instructors, and sponsoring textbook production. The finding was supported by UNESCO (2021) which emphasized a major role in contributing to the funding of scholarship programme thereby providing students an opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and to apply them to national development. Osorio (2019) also stated that UNDP has been involved in sponsoring the production of textbooks for adult learners through provision of financial support for the development of textbooks and collaborating with local organizations to develop and distribute textbooks. On the other hand, the findings portrayed subsidizing school fees for adult learners, increasing salary of instructors and sponsoring transportation for learners from far distance as low extent.

This finding is in agreement with Aladenusi (2018) who opined that while the UNDP has provided funding for some adult learners, the program has not been able to cover all of the country's educational needs. In the same way, the result lent credence to Stefano (2016), that while UNDP has made some progress in increasing the salary of instructors through the Global Partnership for Education, the GPE's funding is limited, and could not cover the cost of increasing salaries for instructors. The exposure also ensured that donor agencies have contributed towards campaign to the public to raise awareness on the importance of literacy to clear misconception on education of girls, annual celebration of international literacy day and laying emphasis on lifelong learning. This also buttressed Burnett (2010), which indicated that UNDP has made remarkable efforts to raise public awareness and support literacy activities to achieve national development goals at all levels in Nigeria. This is in line with the work of UNESCO (2022) which promotes literacy day to underline the significance of literacy for healthy societies. Result from the findings also showed that campaign to increase the enrollment rates in the literacy centers is to a low extent. This also supported Ralph (2017) who opined that UNESCO also relies on the cooperation of governments and other organizations to achieve its goals, and there may be factors outside of

UNESCO's control that affect enrollment rates. The result revealed that donor agencies have contributed towards the training and retraining of instructors to upgrade their skills in line with current technology. This conforms with UNESCO (2015) which opined that UNESCO helped in capacity building through teachers' training and development, material development through curriculum renewal and research, and strengthening of the private sector participation for teacher development. The study identified that providing training for education of officials on how to improve the quality of education, training to improve the skills of adult facilitators, organizing mass training to increase the number of adult instructors and free sponsorship as incentive to encourage people to enroll as adult learners is to a low extent. The study aligned with Jones (2010) which established that while initial resources allocation may allow UNESCO to launch adult instructor training programs on a large scale, the organization may lack the long-term capacity and resources necessary to sustain these efforts.

Conclusion

Adult population are important citizens that fall among the productive group in the nation. As such they should not be left to remain illiterates. Literacy will enable every adult to be functionally involved in the economy. Donor agencies have contributed to reducing illiteracy through infrastructure development, financial support, awareness creation and capacity building but assessment reveals that much is yet to be done. Financial support from donor agencies are not able to cover all the learning needs. There are often lack of political will that prevent the fund from reaching the people who need it. Donor agencies programmes may be too short-lived, not addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality which are major challenges to learning. The Federal Government through National Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education should be in constant collaboration with donor agencies as a means to reduce illiteracy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Federal government should maintain constant collaboration with donor agencies as a means to reduce illiteracy.
2. Federal government should ensure proper utilization of funds from donors through National Mass Literacy adult and Non-Formal Education for easy accessibility to literacy centers.
3. Federal government should increase their budget for education so that the burden of finance is not on donor agencies alone.
4. Federal government and donor agencies should intensify awareness and capacity building to increase the enrollment rate and sustain training of facilitators.

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