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Editorial Comment

The ***Journal of Capital Development in Behavioural Sciences*** is now out with its third volume! Our conviction that the journal will definitely continue to wax stronger is being further justified. This two-numbers-in-one volume also contains rich articles that have been well edited by our team of erudite scholar-reviewers, editors as well as the obviously committed in-house editors at the prestigious College Press, Jericho, Ibadan which is the publishing arm of Lead City University and its subsidiaries. It is our assurance that you will find in the volume a fountain of well researched knowledge.

Thank you.

The Editorial Team

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Literacy Education as a Tool for Empowering Women In Asa Local Government Area Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper examined the issue of literacy as a tool for empowering women in Asa Local Government area of Kwara State. The paper was premised on the fact that when women are literate, they will be more active in their various communities. Their voices will be heard as opposed to their faces being seen and this will instill in them the confidence to make progress in their daily living. The study made use of descriptive survey design, with 211 non-literates women randomly selected as sample within the local government. A 10 item questionnaire was designed to elicit responses on literacy education and empowerment. The data collected were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical test at 0.05 level of significance. The study discovered that literacy is a tool for fighting poverty, hunger diseases, and ignorance and when all these are fought, an average woman becomes empowered to participate actively in issues of development in her home and community. The study, therefore, recommended that women should be encouraged to enroll for literacy education programme while, governments at all levels should make efforts to fund literacy programme.

Keywords: *Literacy education, women empowerment,*

Introduction

Development issues at local, national, international and individual levels have occupied the minds and attention of scholars, activists, politicians, development practitioners and cynics over the years but reaching a crescendo in the year 2000 (Adra, 2008). Although there are different perspectives to development, there is however a general agreement that development will lead to positive change manifested in an increased capacity of people to have adequate control over material assets, intellectual resource and obtain it. While some other people contended that the purpose of development is to improve people's lives by increasing their choices, freedom and dignity.

The quest for the development of people's lives became serious as the participants at the World Conference on Education for All (WEFA) in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 stated clearly in its Article I that every person, child, youth, and adult should be able to benefit from education opportunities designed to meet the basic needs of human life (Asaolu, 2011). He further says that declaration was subsequently reaffirmed at the World Summit for Children in 1990 and 2000 with emphasis on raising the levels of female literacy. In the same vein, the MDGS adopted in September, 2000 at the United Nations Millennium declaration devoted one of the eight goals (that is Goal 3) to the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment.

Nigeria, over the years, have expressed a policy statement of its commitment to education believing that overcoming illiteracy, ignorance, hunger and unemployment will form a basis for accelerated national development. To buttress its averred commitment to national development, the Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013:22), states that "education in Nigeria is an instrument per excellence for national development". However, despite these commitments and active participation, the rural areas in Nigeria are still backward in literacy capacity and are soaked with myriads of problems looking for a way of solving them. Majority, if not all the rural women in Nigeria and Kwara State in particular are non-illiterates and have to be empowered so as to face and solve their own developmental problems. The concentration on the rural women becomes important due to the fact that global peace

and prosperity can only be achieved when the entire world's people are empowered so as to order their own lives and provide for themselves and their families. It was on this premise that the local government council facilitates the process of empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of the state with basic literacy.

Concepts of Literacy and Women Empowerment

The education declaration of Cairo 2005, stressed the main reason for the world's much emphasis on literacy. Literacy is at the heart of learning, the core of Education for All (EFA) and central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Access to quality literacy learning opportunities and the development of literacy environments is essential strategy for poverty reduction, equality, economic development and environmental protection and in general a prerequisite for achieving democracy.

The above view shows literacy as being essential for empowerment which spans through all areas of human endeavour. With literacy, women would become active participants in political issues, they will be empowered economically, socially and they will be able to feature amongst their fellow women folk. Their level of awareness would have increased, leading them to have a claim on their rights. Literacy for women empowerment is of immense benefit to all societies because women bring up future leaders of any country being the first known teachers of children at home and the best for that matter. This is why Okpoko, (2010) believe that women education is a key to development and that empowering women through literacy is an asset to her family, her immediate communities, her nation and the world at large. This implies that the acquisition of literacy education empowers an individual to think positively, take proper decision about her living and the society and acquire other skills that can assist her economically, politically and socially. Anyanwu, Omolewa and Siddique (1985) believe that people cannot learn the useful information required for their survival and happiness in the society without literacy.

This is corroborated by UNESCO (1997) that literacy is a human right and an essential ingredient to achieve equity, development and

peace. Thus, if literacy is a human right, it must therefore not evade women.

The purpose attached to literacy is to develop in people, the skills, attitudes, abilities and behaviours considered desirable in the society. Exposure to myriads of information builds and empowers people. It enables and ennobles them to have the power to control their situations. Women's literacy is thus of utmost importance in that once literate, they are freed from the hold of taboos and superstitions that keep them in the background, once they attain a level of literacy, ignorance which is associated with poverty is driven out of their lives as they will be able to think in the right direction and coupled with their functional literacy skills, they will reach a level of empowerment that would improve their living standards and make them recognized in the society.

In empowering women through literacy, Asaolu (2010) is of the view that vocational education must be an integral part of the education to be planned for women for it is this that will set them on the part of self-reliance; a stage whereby they will be able to add voice to their faces. In the same light, Jogwu (2010) believes that educated adults empower their families to develop socially, economically and politically. This is why enlightened families form the bedrock of community and national development. Women, important members of families of the world, must be made literate and not given away to rottenness with their endowed potentials.

Literacy is a tool that enables citizens to take their rightful position in the community.

This fact is supported by Bhola (1983) that without literacy, development only limps on one leg. When talking of development, it should not be one sided, it should come from the efforts of both men and women in the society. Literacy for women must therefore be encouraged as it is a tool that helps and equips one to face his or her challenges without an exception of any group of people in the society. Everybody needs to be literate to function properly in the society and to bring about development that is on the lips of everyone.

It is unfortunate however, to note that illiteracy is still rampant among women across the globe. Egunyomi (2000) considered the position of

illiteracy in Nigeria to be gender biased with women forming the bulk of the percentage of the Nigerian Population. The 1991 census presented women to be 44,053 out of the total population of 88,514 million illiterate people in Nigeria (NPC, 1994). In addition, World Bank Document reports the latest position of women in illiteracy – that illiterate adults and youths as at the year 2000 was 880 million out of which 60% were women. Illiteracy among women must therefore be fought if poverty is to be reduced and gender equity achieved. The type of literacy education to be given to women should be a lifelong one. This is the type that will give them total knowledge and understanding on how to deal with problems of survival and supporting lives in their communities, how they should act towards themselves and their fellow, what clarity they need to make in order to enjoy a satisfying and enriching life, in what direction they may try to shape their future, articulate and deliver solutions to specific problems they face (Aspin and Chapman2007).

For many decades, women's empowerment has been a stated objective of educational policies and programme, particularly those focused on adult literacy. Growing recognition that women's experiences and needs differ according to age, culture, ethnicity and education has challenged conventional development practices, which have tended to target women as a homogenous group. There is now widespread recognition that 'empowerment means different things for women in different situations' (UNL 2004) and that education alone is rarely sufficient to generate such social and political change. However, the tendency to think of 'women's empowerment' as an output rather than a process still persists and this is reflected in the kind of research evidence used to analysis women's empowerment. Consequently the statistical measures of women's literacy, decision making and economic participation have a greater influence on policy than ethnographic insights into how women's lives and identities are changing.

Statement of the Problem

Literacy is commonly defined as the ability to read, write and compute simple arithmetic. However, Sarumi (2005) believes that literacy can no longer be seen as the ability to read, write and compute alone, but it

must include adaptation to global information, skills, attitudes and knowledge. On this basis women who form part of the marginalized group must be equipped with literacy education to empower them to function as effective and efficient mothers of future children leaders, as good wives and as responsible, diligent and contributing citizens of the society and nation at large. The main question for this study therefore is "how can women be empowered to function effectively in the societies in which they live through literacy education?

Research Question

To what extent has basic literacy education impacted on the empowerment process of women in Asa Local Government, Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

HO1: There is no significant difference in the impact of basic literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State on respondents based on occupation.

HO2: There is no significant difference in the impact of basic literacy education for empowering Women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprises of women enrolled in basic literacy programme. One hundred and ten (110) respondents were randomly selected across the basic literacy classes in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. A questionnaire designed by the researcher tagged literacy as a tool for Empowering Women Questionnaire (LTEWQ) was used as an instrument for data collection in the study. It consisted of two (2) sections: Section A deal with demographic data of the respondents. Section B contains ten (10) items on basic literacy education as a tool for empowering women in Asa local government in Kwara State. A reliability co-efficient of instrument using test re-test method of 0.87 was obtained through the Pearson Moment Correlation

Coefficient method, revealing that the instrument was reliable enough to carry out the study. Responses to these items were taken on four (4) point Likert scale type rating. The administration of the instrument was done by the researcher and three trained research assistants. The research assistants were trained by the researcher on how to administer the questionnaire. The researcher made sure the selected research assistants were familiar with the interpretation of the content of the instrument in the language of the immediate environment of the respondents (adult learners). This was necessary in case a respondent does not understand English. The data collected were analyzed using frequency and percentages and mean rating and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) all decisions were taken at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Results

This section deals with collation, analysis and interpretation of data collected as illustrated below:

Answering of Research Question One

What are the benefits derived from basic literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government in Kwara State?

In order to answer this research question, responses of the respondents to items that addressed the benefits derived from basic literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government in Kwara State, were collated and subjected to mean calculation and the result is shown in Table 2 below.

Table: I Mean and ranking of benefits literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government in Kwara State

S/N	Statements	Mean	Rank	Decision
1	I see basic literacy education as a means of empowering women in my area	3.26	5th	Accepted
2	Basic literacy education promotes political and social life of women in Asa Local Government	2.97	9th	Accepted
3	Basic literacy education brings about the desired attitudinal change in the local communities in Asa Local Government	3.29	3rd	Accepted
4	Women voice were heard through basic literacy education	2.63	10th	Accepted
5	Government should encourage the establishment of Adult literacy classes across the local government	3.48	1st	Accepted
6	Government should fund basic literacy programme	3.43	2nd	Accepted
7	Skills acquisition should be encouraged in literacy centers	2.84	7th	Accepted
8	Women in literacy programme should be remunerated	2.60	8th	Accepted
9	Agencies and Non-governmental organizations should support the government in the funding of basic literacy programme	3.27	4th	Accepted
10	Basic literacy education programme enables women in Asa Local Government area of Kwara State to be well informed about the happenings globally.	3.26	5th	Accepted

Grand mean =2.63

Table1 Shows that, out of ten (10) items that addressed the benefits derived from basic literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government in Kwara State, it was found that the respondents perceived that "Government should encourage the establishment of Basic literacy Classes across the local government" had a mean score of 3.48 which ranked first. "Government should fund basic literacy programmes" attracted mean score of 3.43 which is ranked second. "Literacy education brings about the desired change in the local communities in Asa local Government" attracted mean score of 3.29 which is ranked third. All other items followed with the least as "women voice were heard through basic literacy education" having the mean score of 2.54. In all, the grand mean of 2.63 which is above the mid-point of 2.5 indicates that basic literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government in Kwara State.

Hypotheses Testing

Two (2) research hypotheses were postulated in the course of this study,. Hypothesis 1 and 2 were tested using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), at 0.05 level of significance and the results are as shown below.

HO_1: *There is no significant difference in the impact of literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State on respondents based on occupation.*

In order to test hypothesis 1, responses of the respondents to items that addressed impact of literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State on respondents based on occupation were computed using One-Way Analysis of Variance and the result is given in the table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance of the impact of literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State on respondents based on occupation

Sources of Variance	SS	Df	MS	Cal f-Value	Sig	Decision
Between groups	7.368	3				
Within groups	1762.132	106	2.456	0.148	0.931	Accepted
Total	1769.500	109				

$P < 0.05$

Table 2 shows that the calculated F-value is 0.148 with 3 degree of freedom and 0.931 level of significance. Since the calculated level of significance (0.259) is greater than the chosen one (0.05), then, hypothesis 1 is accepted. This implies that, there is no significant difference in the impact of literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State on respondents based on occupation

HO_2: *There is no significant difference in the impact of literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State on respondents based on age.*

In order to test hypothesis 2, responses of the respondents to items that addressed impact of literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State on respondents based on age were computed using One-Way Analysis of Variance and the result is given in the Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance of the impact of literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State on respondents based on age.

Sources of Variance	SS	Df	MS	Cal f-Value	Sig	Decision
Between Groups	7.370	2				
Within Groups	1762.130	107	3.685	0.224	0.800	Accepted
Total	1769.500	109				

$P < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that the calculated F-value is 0.224 with 2 degree of freedom and 0.800 level of significance. Since the calculated level of significance (0.224) is greater than the chosen one (0.05), then, hypothesis 2 is accepted. This implies that, there is no significant difference in the impact of literacy education for empowering women in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State on respondents based on age.

Discussion

The study is based on the importance of literacy in the empowerment of women folk. This study revealed that with literacy education, there

will be freedom from poverty. With literacy education the cycle of poverty will be broken. Going by the view of Aruma (2006), literacy is a tool that assists people to acquire relevant knowledge and skills needed for professional development in contemporary society so as to improve efficiency and productivity. Literacy education accompanied by vocational education will help women to live above poverty level. Lack of education would not give them the courage to have access to credit information, and they will lack the technical know-how of the skills that would make them buoyant to rise above poverty level. Lack of literacy skills would bring about poor organizational and accounting skills which are all germane to women enterprises that could raise her above poverty level. The essence of this discovery is that literacy is the key to the ultimate development. Priority must therefore be accorded programmes in literacy education because progress in other sectors depends on the resultant effect of literacy on women, their children and families.

The issue of women literacy education should be given more attention as one of the expected outcomes of the United Nation Literacy Decade 2003-2012 is improved quality of life, poverty reduction, hunger and unemployment, increased income, improved health, greater participation, citizen awareness and gender sensitivity among those who have participated in the various educational programmes under EFA (UNESCO, 2006).

The study also showed that there is a significant correlation between literacy and women. In this wise, women should be empowered through literacy education as they form an important part of the society world-wide. Literacy would help them to be aware of new productive opportunities in the areas of entrepreneurship skills acquisition, greater income generation and better opportunities in the world of emend greater income opportunities to better their lot in the world wide communities.

The above goes to confirm the discovery that there is a significant relationship between literacy education and improved standard of living. The acquisition of literacy education will empower women to think positively, air their opinions and take firm decisions concerning their health and work life. There will be an improvement in their livelihood as

livelihood comprises of the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. Giving functional literacy, women's livelihood will be sustained as they will be able to cope with stresses and shocks that might come their way (Sabetes, 2008).

Summary and Recommendations

The following recommendations are put across.

1. Women should be encouraged to enroll in literacy classes. They should be encouraged to know that the benefits that would accrue to their being literate is greater than the economic benefits they arecurrently gaining and so they should take bold steps to leave their trades at the stipulated time and hour for literacy classes.
2. Every educated woman should be involved in seeing to it that a woman becomes literate around her as this would bring comfort to all and sundry.
3. Awareness programmes should be floated on posters, and media houses and children in schools should be made to encourage their mothers on literacy education.
4. The government at all levels should fund literacy programmes, make it interesting to women so as to entice them to enroll for literacy classes in their various communities.

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