

Assessment of Literacy Learning Outcome among Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Nigeria is meant to develop knowledge skills and values that could make learners self-supportive in laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning. The study assessed literacy learning outcomes among universal basic education students in Kwara State, Nigeria. Students' gender, school ownership and school location were the moderating variables. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised all learners (Basic 1-9) in public and private UBE in Kwara State, while the target population consisted of students in basic 9 classes. A simple random sampling technique was employed at different stages of selection. The sample size of 1,612 was drawn from Upper Basic 9 students. Literacy Performance Test (LPT) was used as an instrument. Item Level Content Validity (S-CV) was carried out to obtain a 0.91 validity index. To ascertain the functionality of items in the instrument, item analysis (difficulty and discrimination) was carried out. The split-half method of reliability was employed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Research question one was answered using mean score performance. All the hypotheses postulated were tested using an independent t-test at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that students' mean performance in literacy (52.42%) indicated an average performance. There was no significant difference in the literacy level based on gender, School ownership and school location. This implied that the 5th objective of UBE has not been fully achieved in Kwara State, Nigeria. It was, therefore, recommended that proprietors of schools should focus on curriculum implementation strategies that could facilitate improved literacy in the learners.

Key Words: Assessment, Learning Outcome, Literacy, Upper Basic Education

Introduction

The development of any nation depends largely on the quality of the education provided to its citizenry. Generally, the primary goal of education is to prepare a nation's citizens for responsible and productive adulthood so that an individual will be able to function efficiently and effectively in society. It is an opportunity to acquire necessary knowledge and skills which will make him/her self-reliant, self-supportive, self-surviving and to be able to contribute meaningfully to his/her immediate environment.

Nigeria, like other countries of the world, acknowledges that education is an instrument for achieving national development (National Policy on Education, 2014). This, therefore, is regarded as the guiding principle of education in Nigeria to equip every Citizen with such knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that could be useful to him/her in the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). It is the only means of eliminating illiteracy in any society irrespective of gender, tribes and geographical location (Robert, Ma'aji, Kareem & Egbeta, 2014).

In reacting to these realities throughout the world, in 1990 the executive heads of UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and World Bank convened the world conference on Education For All (EFA). The conference listed six educational goals of EFA that needed to be achieved by all nations by the year 2015. The sixth objective of EFA is more relevant in this study, which states that there must be an improvement in the quality of education so that measurable learning outcomes could be achieved (UNESCO, 2008). Since then there have been a series of follow-up meetings, for instance, the Dakar of 2000 and Beijing 2010 conferences required stringent effort to reduce illiteracy in those countries of the world, especially where there is a concentration of illiterates.

The adoption of these goals of EFA goals in Dakar brought a significant change in the position of Nigeria on eradicating illiteracy which was launched in Nigeria. This brought about the pronouncement of the five broad goals of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria. In this study, emphasis is placed on the 5th objective of UBE, which is to ensure the acquisition of lifelong learning (Universal Basic Education, 2001 and Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

To sustain and solidify the achievement of EFA and UBE objectives, the United Nations came up with seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Out of which the 4th goal of SDGs is devoted to the provision of quality education which ensures inclusion of equitable education that could promote lifelong learning for all.

It must be noted that there is a lack of consensus among researchers regarding learning outcomes. However, the learning outcome is a measure of the degree of success in performing specific tasks in a subject after the learners have been exposed to a series of teaching and learning experiences (Changeiywo, 2000). It could also be described as what learners are expected to demonstrate at the end of significant learning experiences. They are actions and performances that are in terms of knowledge, skills and values upon completion of a course, a span of several courses, or a programme.

This suggests that learning outcome transcends cognitive assessment. Learning outcomes is an educational concept that promotes each part of an educational system around the test items that all learners should do at the end of the learning experience. To ascertain the extent to which the 5th objective of UBE is achieved, numerous evaluation programmes is to ensure the acquisition of which is credited to Tyler (1949) was adopted. The model examines the degree of success of a given educational programme. The conceptual framework of this study is presented in figure 1.

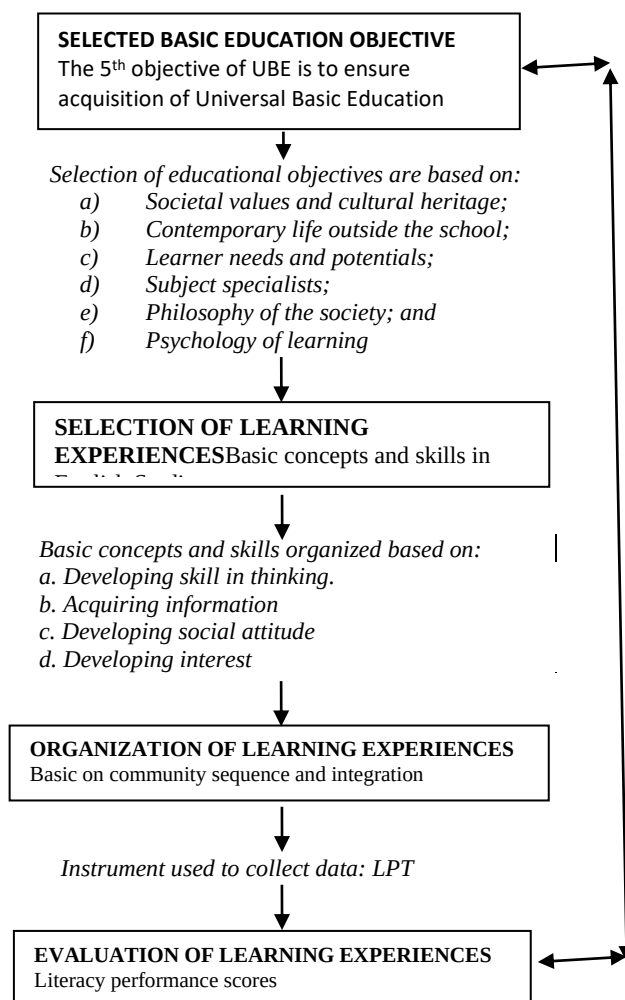


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework Coined out from Tyler Rationale Model

Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework for the evaluation of students learning outcomes in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. The 1st box shows the selection of education purpose or objective which is the 5h objective of UBE in Nigeria adopted in this study. This UBE objective is the intended learning outcome, which is what the students should be able to demonstrate in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes they are expected to attain at the end of the UBE programme.

The 2nd box addresses selection of learning experiences. In this study, English Studies is used to elicit information on literacy since it is the adopted officer language of communication in Nigeria. The learning experiences are in form of students' learning activities derived from curriculum contents prepare to achieve the stated UBE objective. It was prepared in such a way that they contained themes and sub-themes in form of topics and a series of suggested teaching strategies, materials and evaluation procedures that could be used to enhance efficient delivery of subject matter.

The 3 box, shows the organization of educational learning experiences that are put in place to achieve the planned education aims and objectives. The learning experiences were organized based on continuity, sequence of learning materials and integration of societal norms and values, attainment and sustainability of national development and realization of individual students' potentials.

The 4th box reveals the way learning experiences are evaluated. This shows the assessment of expected learning outcomes after being exposed to a series of learning based on stated educational objectives. In this study, data were obtained using Literacy Performance Test (LPT) and were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. The findings obtained were interpreted to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the stated 5" UBE objective.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, there have been a series of research activities that have been published by the UBE since it was launched. For instance, Federal Ministry of Education (1999) carried out a study on EFA assessment called monitoring of pupils' learning achievement project in Nigeria. National Bureau of Statistics (2010) also carried out National Literacy Survey (NLS) among youth and adult. The National Population Commission studied Nigeria Demographic and Health Education Data Profile published subsequently in 1990, 2003, 2009 and 2012. The Universal Basic Education Commission (2006) conducted the National Assessment of Learning Achievement among basic schools in Nigeria.

Further still, the Universal Basic Education Commission (2013) sponsored a study on the impact of the Universal Basic Education programme delivery in Nigeria from 1999 to 2009. In 2016, the National Population Commission and Research Triangle Institute reported in 2015 the Nigeria Education Data Survey (NEDS). Inko-Tariah (2014) researched on assessment of literacy and numeracy levels of Junior Secondary School Students in the Rivers State of Nigeria.

The motivation for carrying out this study was derived from the position held by Education Support Services Programme (ESSPIN) (2011) that many of the students in Nigeria that have gone through primary and secondary education are unable to read and perform basic calculations. It is on this note that the study is assessing the literacy learning outcomes among upper basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria. The researchers, therefore, wanted to ascertain the extent to which the position held by ESSPIN could be true. It must be noted that most of these studies targeted primary school pupils and a few of them extended their focus to JS 1 and 2 students but none of them focused on the terminal class (Basic Nine) where UBE of continuous nine years is terminated and stage the UBE programme could easily be assessed to ascertain the level of achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The study assessed literacy as a form of learning outcome among upper basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria. It was carried out to examine the extent to which the 5th objective of the Universal Basic Education programme has been achieved. Specifically, the objectives of the study examined the performance of: 42

1. upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State, Nigeria.
2. male and female upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State, Nigeria.
3. public and private upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State, Nigeria.
4. rural and urban upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Question

Based on the research objectives, one research question was raised and answered.

- (a) What is the mean performance score in literacy among upper basic nine students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference in the performance of public and private upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant difference in the performance of rural and urban upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design using Tyler's (1949) evaluation model tagged objective-centred model. The population for this study comprised 299,546 basic school students in both public and private schools in Kwara State. This was, therefore, stratified 202,015 students in public schools and 97,531 students in private schools. The target population comprised students in the last class of upper basic with 27,799 in public and 2,713 in private schools (Kwara State Annual School Census Report, 2016).

The study area has three senatorial districts (i.e. Kwara Central, North and South). Kwara Central comprised Asa, Ilorin East, Ilorin South and Ilorin West LGAs; Kwara North also comprised Baruteen, Edu, Kaima, Moro, and Patigi LGAs while Kwara South consisted of Ekiti, Ifelodun, Irepodun, Isin, Offa, Oke-Ero and Oyun LGAs).

In all, the state has 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Two LGAs were sampled from each senatorial district using a simple random sampling technique, making a total of six LGAs. In each of the LGA sampled, the existing number of public and private schools were listed and 10 per cent of the schools were sampled from each stratum using a simple random sampling technique. In all, 54 and 26 public and private schools respectively were sampled using a simple random sampling technique. The same principle and procedure were applied to sampled students based on school location. In any of the sampled schools, 25 students in basic nine were sampled using a simple random sampling technique.

In the course of data collection and entry into the computer, it was discovered that some of the questions in the instrument were not answered and those scripts were discarded. This, therefore, reduced the sample size to 1,612 students which were then used for the computation.

The researchers' designed instrument titled Literacy Performance Test (LPT) was used to collect data from the students. The instrument contained thirty (30) items constructed based on the recommended Upper Basic English Studies curriculum. In the course of items construction, the researchers adopted the two-dimensional table of specifications (Knowledge Process Skills and Cognitive Process Skills revised edition of Bloom Taxonomy cognitive

objectives). The first dimension (Knowledge Process Skills) assessed English Studies in areas of Spoken English, Vocabulary Development and Grammatical Development. The second dimension (Cognitive Process Skills) has six cognitive process skills, the first three lower cognitive process skills i.e. remembering, understanding and application were adopted.

Research assistants were recruited, trained and used to administer the instrument in each school sample. They were instructed to have zero tolerance to examination malpractice during the test administration. This allowed the researchers to harvest the true behaviour of the students sampled in terms of their proficiency in literacy.

The first psychometric property used in this study was Content Validity (CV). Three seasoned English Language Education teachers helped to scrutinize the 30 items in terms of relevancy to the curriculum and clarity of items with the research to the research objectives. Thus, Item Level Content Validity (S-CVI) was computed and obtained a 0.91 coefficient.

In carrying out the reliability estimate, two major steps were taken. The first step was the computation of item analysis which primarily focused on the item-level information. This item analysis was based on item difficulty and item discrimination using WinGen 3 Window software. This allowed the researchers to remove ambiguous items from the set of 30 items. The second step was the application of the split-half technique. This was employed to ascertain the internal consistency of the test items and to determine the number of errors in the instrument (LPT) that may be due to poor test construction. To do this, the LPT was administered once to similar students in Oyo State that are not part of the actual study. The reliability of the 0.85 coefficient was obtained by correlating the two halves using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) technique.

Result and Discussions

Answering of Research Questions

The only research question raised was answered using percentage mean score as illustrated in Table I

Research Question 1: What is the performance in Literacy among upper basic nine students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table I: Students' Performance in Literacy in the Upper Basic Schools in Kwara State, Nigeria

Literacy Level	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	0 – 33	279	17.13
Average	34 – 66	964	59.80
High	67– 100	369	22.89
Total	0 – 100	1,612	100.00

Mean Percentage Score = 52.42%

The result in Table 1 reveals that 279 (17.13%) had a low level of performance in literacy test administered, 964 (59.80%) performed averagely while the rest (22.89%) performed high in the test the mean performance of sampled students shows 52.42%.

Hypothesis Testing

All the three hypotheses were tested using an independent t-test at a 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: *There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State.*

Table II: The t-test Showing Difference in the Performance of Students in Literacy Between Male and Female in the Upper Basic Nine in Kwara State, Nigeria

Variables	NO	Mean	Std.	Cal.t-Value	Sig.	Remarks
Male	749	47.30	3.67	0.986	1.614	NS
Female	863	48.53	2.98			
P > 0.05						

Results in Table II reveals that the calculated t-value is 0,986 with 1.614 sig. computed at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis I is therefore not rejected because the significance level (1.614) is greater than the p-value (0.05).

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the performance of public and private upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State.

Table III: The t-test Showing Difference in the Performance of Students in Literacy between Public and Private Upper Basic Nine in Kwara State, Nigeria

Variables	NO	Mean	Std.	Cal.t-Value	Sig.	Remarks
Public	1021	49.37	4.15	1.135	0.830	NS
Private	591	50.52	3.69			
P > 0.05						

Results in Table II reveals that the calculated t-value is 1.135 with 0.830 sig. computed at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis 2 is, therefore, not rejected because the significance level (0.830) is greater than the p-value (0.05).

H₀₃: *There is no significant difference in the performance of rural and urban upper basic nine students in literacy in Kwara State, Nigeria.*

Table IV: The t-test Showing Difference in the Performance of Students in Literacy between Rural and Urban Upper Basic Nine in Kwara State, Nigeria

Variables	NO	Mean	Std.	Cal.t-Value	Sig.	Remarks
Urban	1046	49.27	3.48	1.072	0.792	NS
Rural	566	48.52	3.91			
P>0.05						

Results in Table IV reveals that the calculated t-value is 1.072 with 0.792 sig. computed at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis 3 is, therefore, not rejected because the significance level (0.792) is greater than the p-value (0.05)

Discussion of Findings

The first finding revealed that the literacy skill acquired by the sampled upper basic nine students in Kwara State was 52.42%. This performance is an improvement over the 25.10% performance in literacy test sampled and reported by the Federal Ministry of Education (1999) when UBE was launched in Nigeria. It is also an improvement over 16.44% in literacy of the finding reported by Osaige & Ehiamentor (2010) in their study. This finding is also better than 41.00% reported in 2011 by the National Population Commission and Research Triangle Institute (RTI International). In 2013, the Universal Basic Education Commission found that the national mean achievement score in English Language (literacy) was 47.66% for students in upper basic VII (JSS1). The explanation for this pattern of result might be attributed to an increase in a series of programmes in education that have been put

in place by the Kwara State Government especially that of ESSPIN programmes. Other programmes included the provision of modern instructional materials and school infrastructural facilities.

These programmes seemed to improve the quality of education in Kwara State. There are, however, some research reports that are of great disparity with the present finding: particularly the National Bureau of Statistics (2010) put literacy in the English Language at 76.3%. In the same vein, Universal Basic Education (2013) reported that the national mean achievement scores in literacy among pupils in primary 4 were 60.38% and 60.02% for primary 5 which are all higher than the finding of this study (52.42%). These variations in performance could be attributed to the fact that most of the previous findings were obtained from research carried out at lower classes especially primary school levels and JS 1. This might also be a result of differences in the research instrument used. They are not equivalent in terms of curriculum contents and items formation. Most of the previous studies were carried out in 2009, 2010 and 2013 and most importantly their respondents were not similar and the same as the respondents (students) of the present study.

Another finding revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females in the literacy skill acquired by students in the upper basic nine in Kwara State. Further breakdown of the performance reveals that the mean performance of males was 47.30% and female was 48.53%. The finding is an improvement over the earlier research reports. For example, the report of the Federal Ministry of Education (1999) when UBE was launched, reported that males had 24.80% and females 25.80% in the literacy performance test. The present finding is also an improvement over Osagie & Ehiamentor (2010) who obtained a mean score of 33.48% for males and 33.84% for females in literacy but no statistically significant difference. However, there are research reports that are contrary to the present finding, for instance, the National Bureau of Statistics (2009) reported literacy levels of males (85.60%) and females (74.10%) though high but no significant difference.

In another development, the National Population Commission and Research Triangle Institute International (2011) reported that Nigeria DHS EdData Survey of 2010 reported national literacy, though the mean percentage is lower than the present finding significant difference existed between male (37.00%) and female children (33.00%) of those that can read the whole sentence. In the same vein, Inko-Tariah (2014) found that there was a general low performance in literacy, but a significant difference existed in the mean performance of males (23.77%) and females (28.59%) in literacy. The performance of male and female students should not be an issue of concern because both of them were exposed to the same teaching and learning environment with the same human and physical educational resources. They were taught by teachers having similar pedagogy. Because of the attributes of human and material resources, their performance might not be significantly different as seen in this study.

Another finding from this study revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between public and private literacy skills acquired by students in upper basic nine schools, Kwara State. Further breakdown of the performance reveals that school mean performance of public-school students had 49.37%, while that of the private so that students obtained 50.52%. Statistically, no significant difference existed between students from public and private schools. This is an improvement from the report of the Federal Ministry of Education (1999). The ministry reported that students from public schools had a literacy mean score of 22.20%, while that of students from private was 40.80% with very wide variation. In the same vein, the National Population Commission and RTI International (2011) reported that the percentage mean score of national literacy of children from public schools was put at 56.70% and that of private schools was put at 68.60% which revealed a significant difference in their performance and high performance when compared with the present finding.

The last finding revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between urban and rural literacy skills acquired by students of upper basic nine in Kwara State, Nigeria. Further breakdown of the performance reveals that the mean performance of urban school students had 49.37% while that of the rural school students obtained 50.52%. This finding is an improvement over the finding of Osagie & Ehiametalor (2010) who obtained a mean score of 16.10% from urban and 16.64% from rural students in literacy, without much difference in performance between rural and urban school children. The finding is an improvement over the report of the Federal Ministry of Education (1999). The ministry reported that students from rural schools had a literacy national mean score of 22.60%, while that of students from urban schools was 28.90% with a marked significant difference between rural and urban. The present finding is below the report of River State Ministry of Education (2013) which reported that students from rural had 62.30%, while that of urban got 60.30% but marked with a significant difference. The National Population Commission, Nigeria and RTI International (2011) reported Nigeria DHS EdData Survey 2010 national literacy children that are in urban schools who can read a whole sentence was put at 52.50%, while those in rural schools had 22.60% which marked significant disparity in their performance. Further still, the 2010 National Bureau of Statistics Survey showed that the rural children had 38.5%, while urban children had a higher literacy rate of 69.4% marked with a wide gap between them.

The variations in the performance might be attributed to the fact that some of the earlier studies carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics and National Population Commission, Nigeria and RTI International were based on projections and estimations generated from national censuses. It could also be attributed to differences in self-report through questionnaires and not based on academic literacy test items.

Conclusion

It could be concluded that the intended learning outcomes on Literacy expected from the learners are not being adequately achieved because the performance means the score is put at 52.42%. This can be interpreted to say that learners acquire average literacy skills which may inhibit lifelong learning if proper attention is given quickly. Students' gender, school ownership and school locations had no significant influence on the observed variable (literacy) among upper basic nine students in Kwara State, Nigeria. This implies that the realization of the 5th objective of UBE needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning is being threatened in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

From the discussion of findings and conclusion reached, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. The school administrators and proprietors should find a way of focusing on curriculum implementation that could facilitate improved literacy and the realization of the 5th objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE).
2. The three tiers of Nigerian Governments (Federal, States and LGAs) should give the more priority to the monitoring of the UBE programme to achieve the stated objective knowing fully that it is the foundation upon which other levels of education are built.
3. To sustain and improve the average performance of sampled students and others, high modern educational resources such as the provision of functioning libraries, with relevant learning materials, modern ICT equipment compliance and stocked other valuable teaching resources are needed.
4. The welfare of teachers that are the wheels upon which these UBE curriculum objectives are being implemented is to be monitored.

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