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# Monitoring and Evaluation of Literacy Programmes in Nigeria

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## Abstract

*Monitoring and evaluation is very important in keeping record of the successful implementation of any programme, process or project. Literacy programme as a crucial aspect of adult education needs to be monitored and evaluated in order to measure the achievement of desired results and set out objectives. Although the formal system of education has enjoyed a great level of monitoring and evaluation, this has not been properly implemented in the non-formal sector, especially for literacy programmes. Even when such evaluative processes are set in place, they merely emphasize the physical facilities while leaving out the other aspects of the evaluation process such as the facilitators' inputs, learners' performance and other things. Other challenges of evaluating literacy programmes in Nigeria include inadequate training of evaluation experts and lack of national benchmark for evaluation. This paper seeks to advocate for an all encompassing forms of the evaluation of literacy programmes to achieve continuous successful outcomes of the desired objectives of the literacy programmes. It also suggests regular capacity building and training for evaluation officers as well*

*as the setting of a national benchmark for evaluation of literacy programmes.*

**Keywords:** Monitoring, Evaluation, Literacy Programme

## Introduction

Literacy programmes are very important given the rate of illiteracy in developing countries like Nigeria. There is a need to organise and maintain different types of literacy programmes for illiterate adults and million of out-of-school youths who have been affected by the prevailing poverty ravaging the developing countries. Other factors contributing to the high level of illiteracy in Nigeria also include the effect of diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria, which have claimed the lives of many parents in the country, thereby leaving many children and youths without any help to complete the formal school system.

A national literacy survey conducted in 2010 by the National Bureau of Statistics estimated Nigeria's adult literacy rate at 56.9 percent, with huge variations between States (Lagos 92.0% and Borno only 14.5%), regions (urban 74.6 % and rural 48.7%) and sex (male 65.1% and female 48.6%). The table below shows the rate of adult literacy in Nigeria and other developed countries.

**Table 1:** Ratio of adult literacy rate in Nigeria and some developed countries

| Countries | Adult Literacy Rate (%) | Year |
|---|---|---|
| Nigeria | 61.3 | 2010 |
| Japan | 99 | 2002 |
| France | 99 | 2003 |
| UK | 99 | 2003 |
| Switzerland | 99 | 2003 |
| West Germany | 99 | 2003 |

*Source*: World map indicating literacy rates by country in 2011 (UN Human Development Report, 2011).

The table shows that the literacy rate in Nigeria is relatively low compared to that of the developed countries. More importantly, statistics from the Federal Ministry of Education

indicate that only 500,000 of the 40 million adult illiterates are enrolled in adult learning classes. Another challenging situation is that of the 3.5 million school-aged nomadic children in Nigeria, out of which only 450,000 have access to any form of schooling. In addition, the criminal acts recently displayed by Fulani herdsmen who engage in the murder of many people and the insurgency activities of Boko Haram in some parts of Nigeria may, to a large extent, have contributed to this high level of illiteracy.

Nigeria is further saddled with the largest number of out-of-school-children in any single country. The survey of the National Bureau of Statistics indicates that about 3.6 million school age children (9.5% of the 6-14 years old) were not attending school. The result showed that while there was only a little difference in the rate of literacy of male and female children, there existed a wide gap between urban and rural areas (3.1% in urban areas as against 12.3% in the rural areas). Consequently, the government and other stakeholders need to cater for the education of these less privileged citizens to reduce crime rates in the country. Providing literacy programmes for these youths and adults will also help in improving the economic condition of the country as well as serve as an impetus to sustainable development in the long run. This is because the empowered youths and adults will be able to contribute positively to the growth of the economy instead of reverting to different forms of crimes or to begging. Ozoemena (2013) asserts that, to build a society that is self-sufficient requires the mobilization of the uneducated, the poor and underdeveloped, many of whom have untapped potentials; and if they are fully developed will be of immense benefit not only to themselves but to the nation as a whole. This is evident when one considers the objectives of setting up literacy programmes and how they are relevant to the sustainable development of any nation.

Some of the objectives of organising literacy programmes include the eradication of illiteracy among youths and adults by providing them with basic communication and numeracy skills. It also aims at sustaining and promoting multiple literacies

through post-literacy and continuing education programmes. Literacy programmes also target at providing education to out-of-school youths and adults through non-formal education approaches. Literacy programmes also set out to promote the acquisition of relevant knowledge, attitude and skills among adults in order to facilitate the adoption of new technologies and production skills.

A study carried out by Kenya's Department of Adult Education in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Education in 2005 where ten adult literacy organizations were purposively selected, enumerated the objectives of literacy programmes to be providing literacy and numeracy skills, fostering self-reliance, developing conflict resolution skills, developing materials in local languages for adults, helping communities to identify their problems, guiding relationships to access power and promoting knowledge on primary health care, nutrition and HIV/AIDS. In order to ensure the continuous achievement of these set-out objectives, there is a need for the organisers and sponsors of adult literacy programmes to put in place appropriate and adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. These mechanisms will help in checking performance against objectives. They will also help to effect corrective measures where performances are at variance with set objectives.

## Concepts of Monitoring and Evaluation

The concepts of monitoring and evaluation have been used widely in various disciplines. They have also been defined by different scholars but each of these definitions point to the same fact as given by Nafukho, Wawire and Lam (2011), that 'evaluation is about measuring the impact or contribution made by a programme, service or product.' It is important to point out the difference between monitoring and evaluation, since these two terms are often used interchangeably.

Universalia (2009) described monitoring as the continual process of collecting and analyzing data to determine if an initiative is achieving intended results while Evaluation is the

periodic assessment of the results of particular processes or activities. Comparing monitoring and evaluation of literacy programmes, Aderinoye (2004) describes monitoring as a tool for maintaining and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of a programme, but sees evaluation as a process of scientific methodology with specific objectives. This process, according to him, consists of the investigation, collection of data, measurement, analysis and interpretation of results for the purpose of decision making and further improvement of a programme. Monitoring and evaluation must be built into an entire literacy programme to yield the most useful results as both will serve as tools for a comprehensive assessment of the literacy programmes.

Ogola (2002) views evaluation as the systematic collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of data about the nature, value and effectiveness of the entity being evaluated with a view to facilitating a decision making process. According to Nevo (1995), evaluation in education has also come to be viewed by different scholars as providing information for decision makers, systematic investigation of the worth or merit of some objects and also an act of collecting information regarding the nature and quality of educational objects.

## Purpose of Evaluation in Literacy Programmes

After considering the various definitions of evaluation from different scholars, it could be deduced that evaluation is normally geared towards generating some information which could then be used to effect changes in the programme through informed decisions. For example, in literacy programmes, evaluation could generate information on learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness, relevance of curriculum and the efficiency of the programme.

The purpose of evaluation is neither to lay blame on poor performers nor to prove cause and effect (McLean, 2006); rather, an evaluation examines the process to determine what is working and what is not working. There are a number of reasons why adult education organizations should engage in an

evaluation of their programmes which include the determination of whether modifications need to be made, whether the initiative is the right one and if it is delivering good results, accountability to stakeholders (partners, shareholders, employees, learners and funders), building intellectual capital within an organization, receiving feedback for organizational improvement, doing what is effective and to stop doing what is ineffective and improving overall organizational performance.

The purpose of monitoring is for the stakeholders to have timely and relevant information about an ongoing programme project to help them in decision making. The evaluation results or information could be used in literacy programmes for decision making, programme improvement and accountability. It could be of benefit to learners, tutors, managers, sponsors and other stakeholders in the literacy programmes.

Specifically, the results of evaluation will help learners to have an improved environment. When the changes are implemented, learners derive both direct and indirect benefits like the simplification of learning materials. Tutors or facilitators for literacy programmes through the results of evaluation, will be able to carry out some self-evaluation of their teaching. If the results from evaluating their methods are negative, they will be able to take remedial actions like refresher courses. The management of literacy programmes will use evaluation results for the allocation of resources and improvement of the programme.

Sponsors of literacy programmes will also use the results to audit how the fund supplied was spent and to allocate funds in the future. Government could make policies and determine the level of funding needed for the literacy programmes through evaluation results. The evaluation must be comprehensive in nature, practical in value and economically feasible (Phillips, 1997). Therefore, in addition to evaluating stand-alone projects and programmes, organisational performance should be evaluated as well (MacPherson, 2005). This is also applicable to literacy programmes and their providers whether they are non-governmental, governmental or international institutions.

## Forms of Monitoring and Evaluation

There are different forms of evaluation of literacy programmes. This is because monitoring and evaluation can take place at different levels and also border on different aspects of the literacy programme. The type of evaluation will vary according to the nature of the assessment and the objective or purpose for which it is meant. The evaluation may be based on programme activities, the inputs or subject contents, material, facilities as well as the facilitating processes. Evaluation can be categorised into three phases: formative (during the process); summative (after or at the end the process); and longitudinal (repeated over time) (Mungania and Hatcher, 2004; McLean, 2006). Aderinoye (2004) classified evaluation into three, namely formative, ongoing and summative.

Formative evaluation is a deliberate, planned and methodical approach to ensure that implementation is going well and according to plan. According to Aderinoye (2004), formative evaluation involves the use of evaluation instruments and procedures at frequent intervals during the programme development process. It is undertaken during the development of the entire programme, and considers each of its components to provide feedback to programme developers in order to improve the product which is being developed and before it is finally released.

Summative evaluation, on the other hand is usually conducted at the end of the programme. It usually targeted at determining if objectives are set, to make improvements, justify the implementation of a new product, programme or service and also help to verify whether or not difficulties experienced during implementation were resolved (Magalhaes and Schiel, 1997).

## Barriers to Effective Monitoring and Evaluation of Literacy Programmes

This paper identifies some barriers to effective monitoring and evaluation of literacy programmes in Nigeria. These barriers prevent the actualization of the purpose of monitoring and evaluation of literacy programmes and eventually jeopardize the

positive effects of these literacy programmes on the learners and the nation as a whole. Three specific barriers have been identified by this paper which are lack of adequate training of evaluation officers, lack of national benchmark for evaluation as well as non-integrative evaluations basically on physical facilities.

The training of officers to embark on evaluation and monitoring of the literacy programmes have been grossly inadequate. However, the process of evaluation requires special skills and knowledge in the use of appropriate instruments needed for the process.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

Literacy programmes have been found to be useful tools for sustainable development considering the numerous advantages to individuals and the nation as a whole. However, the achievements of these positive impacts on the development of the nation will depend on regular evaluation and monitoring of these literacy programmes. It has been found out that the process of evaluating the literacy programmes in Nigeria is faced with the challenges of inadequate training of evaluation officers and lack of a national benchmark for evaluation. Also, most of the evaluations carried out have been based largely on physical facilities only.

The following recommendations are therefore suggested to make literacy programmes efficient tools for sustainable development. First, it is imperative to develop an integrated system of evaluating literacy programmes. This should include every aspect of the literacy programme as well as all the stakeholders. The environmental contents of the programme activities, the inputs, both material and human, the processes, the instructional, administrative and andragogical aspects, the immediate and the long-term effects on the quality of life of the participants and the society at large must all be evaluated.

The 2017 NMEC Policy Guidelines for Mass Literacy highlights the checklist for monitoring to include:

- Attainment of objectives per set target

- Learner enrolment, participation, retention, completion and transition
- Number of facilitators recruited and regularity of payment
- Training programmes provided for facilitators and programme managers (including the number of trainings attended annually)
- Fiscal discipline processes
- Learning materials produced (quantum and adequacy)
- Learning achievements
- Quality of centre management
- Impact of literacy skills on recipients
- Availability of monitoring report
- Evidence of the incorporation of monitoring reports into NFEMIS, and
- Accreditation of NFE

A consideration of all these aspects will lead to a holistic and integrative evaluation process. This will no doubt affect the credibility of the evaluation results and thus improve the programme when such results are put into use.

Joint monitoring and evaluation should also be considered by all the stakeholders. This will not leave the responsibility of monitoring to the government and its agencies alone. Rather, it will make all the stakeholders at all levels of executing the literacy programmes like planning, campaigning, facilitating to take active part in the process of monitoring and evaluation of these programmes. Some of the institutions expected to be involved in evaluation and monitoring are Federal Ministry of Education, National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), State Agencies for Mass Education (SAME), State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Nomadic Education Agency / Department Area Co-

ordinator and the Local Government Area Coordinating Offices of SAME, NGOs/CSOs/Professional bodies.

Secondly, there should also be adequate training of the personnel who will be saddled with the responsibility of carrying out the evaluation, whether they are externally or internally sourced. They should be trained on different aspects like data collection, instrument development, data collation and analysis.

Lastly, the government, sponsors and organizations involved in literacy programmes administration should develop a national benchmark which can serve as a standard against which performance could be measured. This is believed to serve as a motivating factor which will encourage stakeholders in literacy programmes to strive at the attainment of standard, thus improving the programmes.

The achievement of sustainable development through the literacy programmes will be possible if the monitoring and evaluation of these programmes are effectively carried out on regular basis and also the implementation of the recommendations above.

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