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Perceived Impact Of Functional Literacy Skills Acquisition Among The Participants In Skills Acquisition Centres From Three Senatorial Skill Acquisition Centres In Sokoto State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This study was carried out to investigate the Perceived Impact of Functional Literacy Skills Acquisition Among the Participants from three Skills Acquisition Centres in Sokoto state. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A sample of 100 Participants was Selected Using Random Sampling Technique. Result Indicate that Functional Literacy Skills Influenced the Acquisition of Vocational Skills. It was recommended among other things that; Skills acquisition centers should be well-equipped with the materials and equipment needed for effective skills acquisition training and vocational training that has direct relevance to the lives of the trainees.
Keywords: Functional Literacy, Skills and Skills Acquisition

INTRODUCTION

According to Graham and Kelly (2018), the benefits of literacy are enormous as are the costs of illiteracy. First, there are high rates of return to education: each additional year of schooling has a 10% private rate of return. Second, the labor market demand for advanced skills is rising, while the demand for routine and manual skills is falling (Graham and Kelly, 2018). Illiterate individuals will become increasingly disadvantaged relative to others, and societies may become increasingly unequal if literacy is not attained for all. However, shortcomings in literacy constrain a country's economic growth because without literacy the labor force lacks the skills necessary to harness technology and enhance productivity (Graham and Kelly, 2018). Finally, research has shown that illiteracy leads to higher societal costs in terms of employment, education, crime, and health (Gross, 2009 in Graham and Kelly, 2018)).

The Concept of Functional Literacy

Tsiga, (2017) opined that literacy is usually defined as the ability to read, write, and do the math. However, reading or writing words and numbers is not enough to assess literacy. People need to be able to understand and use those words and numbers for practical purposes, such as deliberating ideas and solving problems. This broader definition of literacy is called functional literacy. Therefore, functional literacy refers to the practical skill set needed to read, write, and do math for real-life purposes, so people can function effectively in their community. Functional literacy, however, is about much more than getting a job. It's also about preserving those skills our whole society needs to function. If we don't have individuals with mathematical knowledge, reading and writing skills,

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or analytical abilities, we won't have functioning businesses, governments, or communities. In other words, we need functional literacy to have a functional society. Consequently, functional illiteracy will mean living in a dysfunctional society, as satirized by the movie Idiocracy, (World Literacy Foundation, 2018). Functional literacy, therefore, involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, develop her knowledge, and participate fully in the community in which he or she lives. This, therefore, means literacy is a powerful tool in empowering artisans and others in thanking communities to perform their functions very appreciably in the community. Today literacy can be understood as an indispensable means for effective, social and economic participation contributing to human development and poverty reduction. Hence, a way for the social, economic, cultural, and political emancipation of individual members of society, (WLF, 2018).

Impact of Literacy

It has been reported that illiteracy and low levels of literacy have been estimated to cost the global economy. For instance, the UK, according to the report illiteracy costs their economy around £80 billion in 2018 due to costs associated with welfare, unemployment, and social programs, as well as reduced government tax revenue and productivity, (WLF, 2018). Furthermore, as the global economy moves more towards a knowledge economy, literacy is an essential skill for individuals and states to compete in the global economy. When a high proportion of the adult population has poor literacy skills, many positions remain vacant as insufficient individuals are adequately skilled to fulfill those roles. This results in slower GDP growth in the long term (Lal, 2015).

Significantly, individuals with low levels of literacy are more likely to experience poorer employment opportunities and outcomes and lower income. As a result, they often face welfare dependency, low self-esteem, and higher levels of crime. Moreover, people with a low level of literacy have limited ability to make important informed decisions in everyday life as they struggle with tasks such as filling out forms and applications, understanding government policies, reading medicine or nutritional labels, and more, (World Literacy Foundation, 2018). Moreover, parents who are functionally illiterate often prioritize work before education and have lower expectations in regard to schooling, and the children of parents who fail to complete primary school are more likely to follow in their footsteps and do likewise. This leads to a cycle of disadvantage through generations. On the other hand, strong literacy skills among parents will have positive impacts on their children's lives as they are more able to help and encourage their children in their schoolwork and communicate with their teachers effectively, (WLF, 2018)

Skills Acquisition

Skills acquisition refers to the ability to be trained on a particular task or function. It is a form of training for individuals or groups of individuals to acquire skills needed for self-sustenance (Idoko, 2014 in Ndubuisi, et al., 2021). Skill acquisition is the manifestation of ideas and knowledge through training geared towards instilling in the youths the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development (Douli, 2012 in Ndubuisi, et al., 2021). Skill acquisition is a major tool for extreme poverty and hunger eradication with the aim of creating an avenue for jobs and wealth which will bring self-reliance and sufficiency and, contribute to the growth and development of a country's economy (Isaac, 2011 in Ndubuisi, et al., 2021). Skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function. According to Idoko, (2014) in Ndubuisi, et al., (2021) posited that skill acquisition requires the gathering of various abilities that enhance task execution through the coordination of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for a certain duration and under certain conditions.

According to the Development Education Center (2019), reported in Ndubuisi, et al., (2021) skill acquisition and youth development are emphasized in Nigeria to meet the following needs: reduction in the youth unemployment rate, diversification of job opportunities, effective function, crime reduction, employment generation, and national development.

Research Context

Sokoto State is one of the 36 states of Nigeria located in the extreme northwest of the country on the national border with the Republic of the Niger. Its capital and largest city is the city of Sokoto. Sokoto is located near to the confluence of the Sokoto River and the Rima River. As of 2005, it has an estimated population of more than 4.2 million. Being the seat of the former Sokoto Caliphate, the city

is predominantly Muslim and an important seat of Islamic learning in Nigeria. The Sultan who heads the caliphate is effectively the spiritual leader of Nigerian Muslims.

Problem Statement

Research reports confirmed that around 1 in 5 people are completely illiterate. Three billion people around the world struggle with basic-level reading and writing, (WLF, 2018). This has significant economic, social, and health impacts at both an individual and societal level. Functional literacy is known as an important role to play towards the realization of both private and public development efforts, considering the fact that, it attempts to combine the skills of readings with another skills program relate to specific target groups in a particular environment. Hence, the statistical data shows that four in every ten Nigerian (40.1 percent) earn less than ₦377 per day, but in Sokoto, Taraba, and Jigawa, about nine in ten earn that amount, according to Nigeria's statistics bureau (2019) poverty and inequality report. Following closely behind these states are Ebonyi and Adamawa, where eight in ten earn ₦377 daily; as well as Zamfara, Yobe, and Niger, where seven in ten earn that amount. On the flip side are states with low poverty rates: Lagos (5 in 100), Delta (6 in 100), Osun (9 in 100), Ogun (9 in 100), and Oyo (10 in 100).

The report shows that 15 of the 17 states below the national average (i.e., where the majority of residents are poor) are in the northern part of the country. South-eastern states Ebonyi (80%) and Enugu (58%) are the other two poorest states. Kwara, Kogi, Benue and the FCT, all in the north-central, are the only other northern states below the nation's poverty line. Also, five of the best seven states are in the south-west. Ekiti, the sixth state in the region, ranks 12th with 28 per cent poverty rate. South-south states, Edo and Delta, are the other two in the top seven. This variation exists, the report showed, due to the size of the households in each region. Households with 2–4 people have a poverty rate of 17.88 percent. Those with 5–9 people have 40.9 percent, while those with 10–19 people 67 percent rate of poverty. "There must be a strategic state policy on population control," Azeez Olaniyan, a conflict and security expert, said. "A country that seeks to lift people out of poverty must engage in active production, rather than remain a service economy." Furthermore, the data showed that the more education the head of a family has, the lower the rate of poverty in that household. Mr Olaniyan explained that the government needs to invest in human capital development such as education and human welfare for its people to flourish.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the different Occupational/Vocational skills acquired by the Participants
2. To find out if there is a relationship between functional literacy and Skills Acquisition among the Participants
3. To find out the perception of Trainers on the importance of literacy on the literate trainees and illiterate ones on vocational skill acquisition
4. To find out the adequacy and availability of the training equipment and materials at the vocational skill centers in Sokoto state

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were generated for the study:

1. Literacy will not significantly impact vocational skill acquisition.
2. There is no significant difference in the rate of vocational skill acquisition between literate and illiterate participants
3. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the trainees on the importance of literacy in vocational skill acquisition.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive-analytic research design was used. This design was used to obtain data concerning the current state of a phenomenon. The design points to the determination of the nature of an ongoing situation as it stands in the study.

Population and Sample

The target population comprised all the beneficiaries of the Skills Acquisition Programme beneficiaries from three senatorial districts in Sokoto state who, at the time of the study, were still residing in the catchment areas where they operate their businesses. A sample size of 100 respondents was used for the study. The respondents were randomly selected by the proportional stratified random

sampling technique from all the beneficiaries of the skills acquisition centres from the three senatorial districts in Sokoto state.

Research Instrument

The research Questionnaire was the main instrument used for the study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected personally by the researchers. This involved visiting the respondents personally and explaining the purpose of the study to them and then administering a research questionnaire to them.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in accordance with the earlier stated research hypotheses as follows:

Table 1: Demographic information of the Skills Acquisition Participants in Sokoto state Nigeria

Status	**Variables**	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	86	86.7
	Female	14	13.3
Marital status	Single	52	50.2
	Married	48	40.8
Age	21-40	76	70.6
	41-60	24	20.4
Education	Non-Formal	14%	
	Primary	26%	
	Secondary	34%	
	Tertiary	26%	

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 1 reveals that 86 males representing 86% and 14 females representing 14% were involved in the study.

Research Objective 1: Vocational Skills Acquired by Participants

Table 2: Vocational skills acquired by the Participants

S/N	**Vocational skill**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1.	Hairdressing/Barbing	16	16
2.	Carpentry	30	30
3.	Welding	26	26
4.	Tailoring	20	20
5.	Catering	8	8
6.	Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Research Objective 2: To Find out the Perceptions of the Participants if there is Relationship between Functional Literacy and Vocational Skills Acquisition among the Participants

Table 3: Relationship between Functional Literacy and Vocational Skills Acquisition among the Participants

	Skills	**Frequency**
1.	The literate participants acquire skills faster than the illiterate ones	96 respondents Agreed
2.	Acquiring vocational skills needs literacy	86 respondents Agreed
3.	Being literate makes it easy for me to learn quickly and use my initiative for innovations	77 respondents Agreed
4.	The essence of literacy in an apprenticeship scheme is to use literacy skills to enhance the practicability of their occasions	81 respondents Agreed
5.	Being literate makes it easy to write down some important information for me to learn the letter	86 respondents Agreed

Source: Field Data 2022

Table 3 shows that 96% of participants believed that participants who are literate are able to catch up more easily in skill acquisition than their illiterate counterparts. Meanwhile, 86% of respondents' agreement showed that acquiring vocational skills needs literacy. 77% views of the skills acquisition participants agreed that being literate makes it easy for them to learn quickly and use their initiative for innovations. Moreover, 81 respondents were of the opinion that literacy would enhance the practicability of their vocations. However, 96% of respondents agreed that literate respondents are able to gather information concerning their vocations from lecture notes, books, and even on the net as they have access to phone browsing.

Research Objective 3: To Find out the Difference in the Perceptions of Skills Acquisition Participants on the Importance of Literacy in the Literate and Illiterate ones on Vocational Skill Acquisition

	Skills	**Frq.**
1.	Literacy is a necessary tool for vocational acquisition	90%
2.	Without being Literate I could not be successful in skill learning	28%
3.	Being illiterate does not mean I could not learn vocational skills	35.5%
4.	Literacy will help me to use the skills acquired	92.5%
5.	Being literate will help me communicate formally with my trainers and customers	91%

90% of the respondents believed that literacy is a necessary tool for vocational acquisition while 28% of respondents believed that without being Literate, they could not be successful in skill learning. According to the findings of this study being illiterate does not mean one could not learn vocational skills. However, the majority of the participants agreed that Literacy will help them to improve their skills acquired. Finally, respondents believed that being literate will help them to communicate formally with their trainers and customers

Research Objective 4: Participants' responses on the availability of training equipment and materials.

(SD = 1 D = 2 A = 3 SD = 4 Values in Percentage)

ITEM	SD	DA	A	SA	Total
There is inadequate provision of training equipment	0.0	37.5	62.5	0.0	100%
There is well-equipped working equipment	0.0	75.0	25.0	0.0	100%
The training equipment is up to date and relevant to the industrial equipment	0.0	67.5	32.5	0.0	100%
The training equipment is technologically modern	0.0	77.5	22.5	0.0	100%
The nature and availability of training equipment influence the acquisition of relevant vocational skills	0.0	37.5	62.5	0.0	100%

Source: Field Data 2022

Most of the participants (62.5%) indicated that training equipment was not adequate compared to only 37.5% of respondents who indicated that the training equipment was adequate. This implies that the participants felt that skills acquisition centers in the three senatorial districts of Sokoto operated with inadequate training equipment.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study established that there is a strong relationship between functional literacy skills and the ability to learn vocational skills. Hence, the goal of vocational skill acquisition is to ensure the self-relevance of the skills acquisition participants

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All stakeholders; parents, industries, government, and donors should contribute by providing adequate training equipment that is technologically modern in order to adequately equip the training centers
2. Government should equip the Skills acquisition centers with materials and equipment needed for effective skills acquisition training and vocational training that has direct relevance to the lives of the trainees and the needs of society should be offered in skill acquisition centers. at the vocational training centres in Sokoto state
3. Government and non-governmental organizations need to provide literacy training to all youths who were not able to attend school
4. The government should provide jobs for unemployed youths in the country by engaging them in skills acquisition programs

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