

Literacy Needs and Rehabilitation of Inmates in Correctional Centres in Ondo State

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Abstract

Literacy is crucial for personal and national development. Conversely, illiteracy leads to underdevelopment and all manner of crimes especially in developing nations, Nigeria inclusive. It is believed that different forms of literacy skills could be acquired by inmates in the correctional centres in order to be properly rehabilitated, be productive after their jail term, and thus avoid recidivism. It is against this background that this study examined the literacy needs and rehabilitation of inmates in Correctional Service Centres in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study employed non experimental research design involving descriptive research of the survey type. The respondents were inmates in the Correctional Centres in Ondo State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select sample size of 268 (male and female) inmates from Correctional Service Centres in Ondo State. Data collected for the study through the use of structured questionnaire were analysed through the use of frequency, mean, percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Findings showed that no significant relationship existed between literacy level and the participation of inmates in the literacy programmes in correctional centres: ($r_{cal}=0.215$; $r_{tab}=0.2540$; $p<0.05$). It was concluded that literacy programmes can improve the life of inmates and solve the problems of unemployment, thereby reducing the rate of recidivism. Consequently, it was recommended among others that, inmates should be exposed to different literacy programmes that would fully equip them for a productive life after imprisonment.

Keywords: *Literacy, needs, inmates, correctional service, recidivism.*

Introduction

The literacy skills of reading, writing and computing are believed to be crucial for every citizen in the 21st century, especially now that information dissemination is more often than not accessed through these skills. Indeed, the invention of electronic devices such as

handset, iPhones, tablets, and other mobile and digital tools appears to make the need for basic literacy even more ever than before, an important requirement for every citizen in the current and in the very far future.

Literacy has multi-dimensional perspectives. According to Lipschultz (2006), literacy is the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential. However, the term literacy is not limited to basic literacy which is the ability to read, write and compute. The concept has been expanded to include other forms including document literacy, environmental literacy, visual literacy, health literacy, financial literacy, and information literacy. According to Eno, Uduak, Mbaba, Udosen and Enang (2011), literacy has also been expanded to include skills in computer, basic numeracy, sound, still and moving images and graphical elements in digital based communication.

Being literate provides arrays of opportunities. It opens up several other avenues of communication, through print and non-printed media, thus widening their own perspectives and opportunities for self-development. According to Graff (2008), literacy is significance for individual and societal development. It leads to social, political, and economic emancipation. According to Adelere and Olomukoro (2015), the rapid changes being witnessed in many spheres of human endeavours: political, economic, occupational, social, cultural, and technological domains are linked to literacy. In other words, a meaningful participation in development presupposes acquisition of knowledge and skills through literacy or education.

In this era of Information Communication Technology, basic literacy is considered inadequate for an individual to function effectively and efficiently, hence, the need to attain a high level of literacy known as functional literacy. According to Murphy (2006), the single most important consideration in defining literacy is its functional significance. The ability merely to read and write at low levels of proficiency does not qualify a person effectively to meet the practical needs of daily life. Within increasing complexity of modern societies, the individual must be able to read simple instructions, write a legible letter, and engage intelligently in contractual relationships. This level of competence is referred to as functional literacy and the failure to achieve it is functional illiteracy. Schlechty (2014), defines functional illiteracy as 'reading and writing skills that are inadequate to manage daily living and employment tasks that require reading skills beyond a basic level'. Functional literacy means that a person can use reading, writing and calculation skills for his/her own and the community development. In other words, according to Olaniyi (2015), functional literacy could be seen as the ability of individuals to possess the reading and writing skills that are adequate to manage daily living and employment tasks that require reading skills beyond a basic level.

Although literacy is significant to individual and national development, it is worrisome that many third world countries have high level of illiteracy. Data from the UNESCO Institute for statistics shows that 750 million adults two-thirds of who are women still lack basic reading and writing skills (UIS, 2017). The latest available data for 2016 shows that one hundred and two million of the illiterate population was between 15 and 24 years old. The global adult literacy rate was 86% in 2016, while the youth literacy rate was 91%. Undoubtedly, literacy acquisition directly affects peoples' lives and increase their chances of employment, level of income and type of occupation (Itasanmi, Ojedeji, & Adelore, 2019).

In recent time insurgency, armed robbery, kidnapping, drug trafficking, fraud, rape, murder and theft have become more serious to tackle as they have manifested with new methods and techniques. Hassan and Oloyede (2011), opine that if crime rate is excessive, unemployment figure would seem to be high, and hunger at a point of food insecurity, such society cannot make meaningful development process and progress. They maintain that lack of gainful employment, could make people resort to criminal activities.

One of the main theories relating to human motivation is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954) used in different fields and by researchers in correctional services. According to Maslow, people have needs. A need is lack of something something we want. Major perceived needs are employment, housing and acceptance into the community. Addressing these needs help to build social interaction networks which many argue are critical post release success. Other needs can be met if the offender obtains and has consistent employment. Likewise, if the offender is accepted into the community, he or she will be offered the opportunities to gainful employment and therefore would not face the challenge of going back to crime, reoffending is a major outcome of lack of true rehabilitation. It is believed that if the literacy needs of inmates are to be properly addressed and government should provide adequate programmes to satisfy the needs of the inmates they will most likely live a profitable life.

Literacy programme in the correctional centre is any educational activity that occurs inside the correctional centre. Courses include basic literacy programmes, secondary school equivalency programmes and vocational education through literacy programmes, inmates are trained in civic skills, social studies and everyday basic skill such as coping with drug or alcohol problems, and planning their future. Also, in order to avoid the problem of recidivism in the society, the inmates' literacy needs should be given adequate attention. And literacy programmes should be provided and monitored in order to reform and rehabilitate the inmates.

According to Smith-Greenaway (2015), a common technique for generating population estimate of adult literacy level is to use information on adults' educational attainment

level as a proxy: adults who have completed a certain level of school are classified as “literate” and those who have not as “illiterate”. A handful of studies have shown that when measured alongside educational attainment, individuals' literacy skills have a strong independent effect on their fertility (Thomas, 1999), health knowledge (LeVine, 2012; Stuebing, 1997), and health outcomes (Smith-Greenaway, 2015), as well as their children's health and survival (Blunch, 2013; Glewwe, 1999; Khandke, Pollitt, and Gorman, 1999; Smith-Greenaway, 2013).

Barton and Coley (1996), state that prison inmates are among the least literate in the society and that their literacy level is lower than that of the average unskilled labourer. Barton and Coley supported that prison inmates with low literacy levels were more likely to have left school early, have a disability, have parents with low level of educational attainment, and be in prison for a violent offence. By implication, the illiterate without any means of livelihood are more susceptible to criminality. It is important therefore to examine if inmates have access to education while in incarceration as the knowledge will provide insight into their needs in preparation for life after serving their jail term.

Prison or correctional education is part of the prison reform movement. It is a window through which one can observe and encourage human progress. Simply put, it is the education given to prisoners to enable them leave the prison with more skills and be in a position to find meaningful and long-term employment (Rhode, 2004). Timmins cited in Russel (1997), in reveals that historically, prison education sought to fulfill the following functions namely: uplifting morals through Bible study, hard work and discipline, training in skills, developing intellectuality and human understanding, changing personality or behaviour modes, and increasing opportunity structures. The primary task of prison education is to increase the chances of employment by ex- offenders and hence reduce recidivism. Ostreicher (2003), asserts that people believe that preparing prisoners for release is a key to ensuring public safety. This can be done through education resulting in better communication and vocational qualifications.

Inmates appear to face considerable barriers in accessing their right to education and as such there are a number of relevant international provisions supporting the right of this specific target group to take up learning opportunities. The body includes the United Nations (UN) which states clearly that all human beings have the right to education. The right to education is in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 26. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (United Nations, 2005). This and other rulings mean that the government of any nation has the responsibility of making education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable for her citizens. Therefore, prison inmates should not forfeit the right to access education while in confinement. However, it must be stated that while in confinement, inmates have access to non-formal education such as carpentry, masonry and animal husbandry all of which are

geared towards making them self-reliant in their post release lives, and thus prevent the propensity for crime.

Crimes of various forms are on the increase in different nations of the world and Nigeria is not an exception. It is believed that illiteracy and unemployment account for the major causes of many of these social vices. Many criminals are assumed to be mostly illiterates who have not acquired any skill that can fetch them their means of livelihood. Correctional services are available to rehabilitate and reform criminals but some criminals seem to continue in their criminal activities even after their release. It is assumed that if inmates are not idle, and they are empowered and occupied with different literacy skills, the propensity for crime and the rate of recidivism would likely be reduced. Therefore this study examines the literacy needs and rehabilitation of inmates in Ondo State.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the literacy level of inmates in Ondo-State?
2. What are the perceived literacy needs of inmates?
3. What are the perceived functional literacy needs requires for rehabilitation of the inmates?

Research Hypothesis

The study generated and tested one hypothesis:

1. There is no significant relationship between literacy level and the participation of inmates in the literacy programmes in the correctional centres.

Methodology

The study adopted non experimental research design involving descriptive survey research type. The population comprised all the inmates that are currently serving jail terms in Correctional Centres in Ondo State. The population was the male and female inmates in the correctional homes in Ondo State. The sample for this study was drawn from inmates in Correctional Service Centres in Ondo-State. The *purposive and proportionate sampling techniques were used to select the three correctional centres from the three senatorial districts of Ondo State, inclusive of the Female Correctional Centre in Ondo which was purposively added in order to have appreciable number of female inmates.* The instrument used for data collection was a researcher designed questionnaire which has three sections: section “A” which contains seven (7) items seeking information on the respondent's bio data, section “B” contains five open-ended interview questions while section “C” is a twenty (20) item on four points Likert scale format of questionnaire. The questionnaire contains items designed to elicit information from the inmates on the literacy needs of the

inmates in the correctional centres. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviation and percentage for answering the research questions and inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test the hypothesis. The single hypothesis was tested at $P=0.05$ level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the literacy level of the inmates in Ondo-State?

Table 1:

Distribution of respondents based on literacy level (educational attainment)

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid NON-FORMAL | | | | |
| EDUCATION | 22 | 8.2 | 8.2 | 8.2 |
| PRIMARY | 55 | 20.5 | 20.5 | 28.7 |
| SECONDARY | 87 | 32.5 | 32.5 | 61.2 |
| NCE | 69 | 25.7 | 25.7 | 86.9 |
| FIRST DEGREE | 24 | 9.0 | 9.0 | 95.9 |
| MASTER | 11 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 100.0 |
| Total | 268 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 1 shows that 22 (8.2%) of the respondents had non-formal education, 55 (20.5%) completed primary school education, 87 (32.5%) completed secondary school education, 69 (25.7%) completed NCE certificate, 24 (9.0%) completed First degree and 11 (4.1%) got master's degree. This indicates that majority of the respondents were secondary school certificate holders. For the purpose of paper study educational attainment was the technique used to measure the inmates' literacy level. This was in line with the study of Smith-Greenaway, (2015) on educational attainment and adult literacy which suggested that a reliable and better technique for generating population estimates of adult literacy level was to use information on adults' educational attainment as a proxy. Adults who have completed a certain level of school are classified as "literate" and those who have not as "illiterate".

Research Questions 2: What are the perceived literacy needs of inmates?

From the opinion of the respondents on what they need for proper rehabilitation, 214 (79.9%) of the respondents believed in the proper rehabilitation programmes in the correctional centres and that this will require the provision of skills acquisition facilities, education, equipment, vocational training, literacy programme, availability of social amenities, and show of empathy. None of the respondents likes the environment of the correctional centres.

Furthermore, 175 (65.3%) of respondents believed that the literacy programmes that can benefit them include religious programmes, access to National Open University education, reading of different types of books such like prison journals, and other relevant literacy education programmes. This implies that many of the respondents believed that availability of literacy programmes for the inmates in the study area is crucial.

Research Questions 3: What is the perceived functional literacy needs required for rehabilitation of the inmates?

Regarding the opinion of the respondents on the perceived functional literacy needs of inmates, 216 (80.6%) of the respondents believed that literacy programmes that can improve their life in the society after their jail term include provision of funds to start their various businesses, vocational training, empowerment programmes, and admittance to schools. 240 (89.6%) of the respondents opined that assistance from government and Non-Governmental Organizations through the provision of the afore-mentioned programmes will enable many of the inmates to cope in the society after their jail term.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between literacy level and the participation of inmates in the literacy programmes in the correctional centres.

Table 4:

Relationship between literacy level (LL) and participation of inmates on the literacy programmes (PILP) in the correctional centres.

| Variable | N | r_{cal} | r_{tab} |
|----------|-----|-----------|-----------|
| LL | | | |
| PILP | 268 | 0.215 | 0.2540 |
| TOTAL | 268 | | |

Correlation is not significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the result at 0.01 alpha level where ($P < 0.05$), calculated value ($r_{cal} = 0.215$) and the table value ($r_{tab} = 0.2540$). This hypothesis however shows that the calculated value is less than the table value at the correlation significant of 0.01 level. Hence, the hypothesis is upheld. This implies that there is no significant relationship between literacy level and the participation of inmates on the literacy programmes in the correctional centres.

Also, the result on the hypothesis affirmed calculated value of ($r_{cal} = 0.215$) and the table value of ($r_{tab} = 0.2540$). This implies that the calculated value is less than the table value at the correlation significant of 0.01 level. Thus, the hypothesis is upheld. This implies that there was no significant relationship between literacy level and the participation of

inmates in the literacy programmes in the correctional centres.

Discussion

Educational attainment as a measure of the inmates' literacy level showed that secondary school certificate holders mostly constituted the inmates, followed by NCE holders, primary school certificate holders, first degree, non formal education and last by master's degree in the correctional centres. This was in line with the study of Smith-Greenaway (2015), on educational attainment and adult literacy which suggested that a reliable and better technique for generating population estimates of adult literacy level was to use information on adults' educational attainment as a proxy. Adults who have completed a certain level of school are classified as "literate" and those who have not as "illiterate".

The result on the hypothesis showed that there was no significant relationship between literacy level and the participation of inmates in the literacy programmes in the correctional centres. This finding is in line with Warschauer (2003), that offenders' motivation and capacity to achieve social inclusion after release from custody would be greatly diminished by their exclusion during incarceration and those opportunities to learn useful skills for legitimate employment-related purposes could elude them.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that literacy level of inmates was low and no relationship exists between literacy level and participation of inmates in the literacy programmes in the correctional centres. This is worrisome in the 21st century in which there is information explosion and globalization. It was also shown that the majority of inmates believed that the various literacy programmes mentioned are of great significant benefit to them and that government and non-governmental organisation support are germane to the provision of literacy programmes for the inmates so that they would be able to cope in the society after their jail term.

Therefore, it is recommended among others, that inmates should participate and be exposed to various literacy programmes so as to be fully equipped and be productive in the society after completing their jail term. Government, NGOs, churches and other relevant stakeholders should provide necessary assistance to correctional centres in the state and Nigeria as a whole.

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