

**THE LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMME
CONTENTS TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE MASS LITERACY IN SOUTH-EAST
NIGERIA.**

Dr Lydia Ogbeyialu Nwakanma¹

Department of Educational Management and Policy
Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
lo.nwakanma@unizik.edu.ng

Rev. Dr. Nathaniel C. Umeh²,

Department of Educational Management and Policy
Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
&

Dr Agbapuluonwu Georginia Nwabuno³

Department of Educational Management and Policy
Faculty of Education, Coalcity University Enugu
agbapuluonwugeorginia@gmail.com

Abstract

Adult literacy programmes are critical for fostering sustainable mass literacy in Nigeria, particularly in the South-East region where illiteracy remains prevalent among rural dwellers and women. This study examined the level of implementation of adult literacy programme contents, focusing on Basic English Language skills, Civic Education, HIV/AIDS prevention, Basic hygiene and nutrition, Entrepreneurship, and Basic technology. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a sample of 250 respondents drawn from teachers in both rural and urban literacy centres. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using simple percentages to determine the extent of content implementation across the two contexts. The analysis revealed that Basic English Language skills were relatively well implemented, with 30.8% of rural and 39.2% of urban teachers agreeing they taught reading, writing, and speaking. Civic Education contents were moderately implemented, with 27.2% of rural and 36.4% of urban teachers reporting inclusion of peace-building, democracy, and good governance. Similarly, HIV/AIDS prevention and Basic hygiene and nutrition were taught by a fair proportion of teachers in both rural and urban

centres. However, Entrepreneurship education and Basic technology contents were poorly implemented, with low agreement rates and high levels of disagreement among respondents. The findings suggest that while foundational literacy and civic contents are being delivered, transformative skills such as entrepreneurship and technology remain neglected. The study concludes that adult literacy programmes must broaden their scope to include vocational and technological skills to empower learners and achieve sustainable mass literacy.

Keywords: Adult literacy, Programme implementation, Transformational Learning Theory, Sustainable, and Mass literacy

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is universally acknowledged as a cornerstone of human development and a prerequisite for meaningful participation in society. In Nigeria, adult literacy programmes have been designed to address the educational needs of individuals excluded from formal schooling due to poverty, cultural factors, or early withdrawal from education. The South-East region, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States, has historically valued education, yet illiteracy persists among adults, particularly in rural communities and among women (National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education [NMEC], 2023).

Adult literacy programmes in Nigeria aim to provide functional literacy skills that empower individuals to improve their livelihoods, health, and civic engagement. UNESCO (2022) emphasizes that literacy is not only about reading and writing but also about equipping individuals with competencies that foster sustainable development. Despite government and non-governmental interventions, the implementation of adult literacy programme contents in South-East Nigeria has been inconsistent, leading to questions about their effectiveness in fostering sustainable mass literacy (Usman, Idris, & Hussaini, 2023).

Adult literacy programme is therefore a core component of lifelong learning. This is because it enable the adults to participate actively in the development of the community and society at large (Radhika in Owede, 2019). Adult literacy also includes education and learning opportunities for active citizenship, variously known as community, popular or liberal education. It empowers people to actively engage with social issues such as poverty, gender, intergenerational solidarity, social mobility, justice, equity, exclusion, violence, unemployment, environmental protection, and

climate change. It also helps people to lead a decent life, in terms of health and well-being, culture, spirituality, and in all other ways that contribute to personal development and dignity (UNESCO, 2017).

One value attached to adult literacy programmes is that they are voluntary (Adero, 2018). Therefore, the participants are generally self-motivated; the practice of adult education is regarded as andragogy. Adult education in Nigeria is therefore a core mandate to enhance the literacy rate in the country.

Content is the subject matters of adult literacy. The curriculum contents of adult literacy encompass the comprehensive plan of what the teachers want to teach the adult learners including the objectives and learning outcomes. According to Nwobi, Mbagwu, Onwuadi, Asogu, Nwachukwu, Okafor, Ifeanafo, Otegbulu, Idakpo and Yakubu (2017), the content of adult literacy are the specific information, topics and materials used to meet up to the curriculum of objectives of adult literacy programmes in Nigeria. The contents of adult literacy programme must be adequate, objective and comprehensive to meet up to the needs of the adult learners (Offorma, 2019). However, the question is whether the content of adult education is novel or obsolete? There are emerging issues which require proper evaluation of the contents of any educational problem to align it with the global best practice in order for all round development of the learner. For instance, the world of communication, education, association and businesses has been dominated with the use of improved technologies.

Challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, shortage of trained facilitators, and limited community participation have hindered the effective delivery of literacy programmes. Furthermore, weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have made it difficult to assess the extent to which programme contents are being implemented and whether they meet the needs of learners (Ejiro-Mitaire & Ezeyili, 2022). These gaps necessitate a systematic study of the level of implementation of adult literacy programme contents in South-East Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite decades of investment in adult literacy programmes, illiteracy remains a pressing issue in South-East Nigeria. Reports indicate that many literacy centres lack adequate teaching materials, trained facilitators, and sustainable funding. As a result, programme contents are either poorly implemented or not implemented at all. This situation undermines the goal of achieving sustainable mass literacy, which is critical for socio-economic development and poverty reduction. The

problem, therefore, is that while adult literacy programmes exist in South-East Nigeria, there is limited evidence on the extent to which their contents are being implemented effectively. Without proper implementation, the programmes cannot achieve their intended outcomes, leaving many adults without functional literacy skills necessary for sustainable development.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons:

- **Policy relevance:** It will provide empirical evidence to guide policymakers in improving adult literacy programme implementation.
- **Educational impact:** Findings will help educators and facilitators identify gaps in curriculum delivery and adopt strategies to enhance learning outcomes.
- **Community development:** By highlighting the importance of literacy for sustainable development, the study will encourage greater community participation and ownership of literacy centres.
- **Contribution to knowledge:** The study will add to existing literature on adult education in Nigeria, particularly in the South-East region, and serve as a reference for future research.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the level of implementation of adult literacy programme contents in South-East Nigeria and to determine how such implementation fosters sustainable mass literacy.

Research Question

To what extent are adult literacy programme contents implemented to foster sustainable mass literacy in South-East Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of adult literacy programme contents and sustainable mass literacy in South-East Nigeria.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework of Adult Literacy

Adult literacy is broadly defined as the ability of adults to read, write, and apply functional skills in everyday life. UNESCO (2022) emphasizes literacy as a lifelong process that extends beyond basic reading and writing to include numeracy, digital literacy, and civic participation. In Nigeria, adult literacy programmes are designed to provide functional education for those excluded from formal schooling, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education.

Adult Literacy Programmes

Literacy in its broadest sense describes particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing with the purpose of understanding or expressing thoughts or ideas in written form in some specific context of use. In other words, humans in literate societies have sets of practices for producing and consuming writing, and they also have beliefs about these practices (Mkandwire, 2018). According to Mkandwire (2018), an adult person is literate when he/she can 'read and understand everything he would have understood if had been spoken to him; and can write, so that it can be read, anything he can say (Lindquist, 2015). This definition focuses on comprehension and was created thinking of mother “tongue literacy”, and does not include reciting passages in another language that the person does not understand. Therefore, adult literacy programmes are learning activities directed towards improving the literary skills or ability of adult persons in the society in terms of reading, writing and speaking. The concept of adult literacy is derived from the general concept of literacy. In other words, it is an aspect or a type of literacy that has to do with the adults. An adult in this case is someone, in the Nigerian context, who is eighteen years and above, and who is mentally, physically, socially and psychologically mature. Adult literacy therefore has to do with the ability of an individual adult (man or woman) to read, write and communicate in known language(s), as well as the ability to do basic mathematical computations far beyond basic literacy level.

Literacy is a vital instrument to all inclusive/total development of man. Literacy is a powerful weapon that will give the power to confront, express and triumph over the inevitable challenges of human life (Adedokun, 2017). When a person acquired literacy, he/she will reflect over difficult, negative situations and use the acquired skills to form basis on a rich and meaningful life. Education in a general term is a process of transforming the society both developed and developing

nations, Nigeria inclusive. Therefore, every education programme has to be planned bearing in mind cultural element needs, social, political economic development, aspirations and trends of the society. Education especially adult literacy is a problem solving device and an instrument for socio-cultural change. According to Ajayi (2015) literacy is an integral part of basic education and the benefit of quality basic education to individuals and the society is immense. A good basic education strengthened by the acquisition of literacy and numeracy is the minimum educational foundation upon which an individual can build life-long learning attitudes. This is the reason why as far back as 70s, the Federal Government of Nigeria was making frantic efforts to eradicate non-literacy in Nigeria. To achieve this, the Federal Government in 1990 established National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC). More so, each state has an Agency for Adult and Non-Formal Education (AANFE). The sole responsibility of this Agency is to eradicate or reduce drastically non-literacy within its domain.

Adult literacy programme can be categorized into two: basic adult literacy and functional adult literacy programmes (Ezimah in Mkandwire, 2018). The Basic Adult Literacy Programme is mainly designed to arm or furnish the students with the rudimentary skills of reading, writing and computation through the use of the local languages, especially in the mother tongue. The objective here is to equip the learners with basic skills of communication and understanding of their environment. On the other hand, functional adult literacy programmes combine both the teaching of literacy, numeracy and vocational skills. The objective is to equip recipients with skills and knowledge that could make them employable and useful in other spheres of life on completion of training. For this reason, adult literacy learning programmes should take place in the context of development or livelihood activities. In this respect, Hauwa (2017:42) postulates that: "... literacy can best be learned by adults through a highly contextual, even individualised programme in which the literacy learners are engaged in doing their own daily life literacy activities – "learning by doing" rather than "learning in preparation for doing", or... "breaking out of the education silo into ..." a "literacy second" model, a programme starting with a developmental activity and including informal literacy learning within it" (p.55). This type of adult literacy makes the participants useful to themselves as well as to the larger society. In effect, adult literacy programme should not take a single model, rather it should be diversified. It could be argued that a "one-size-fitsall programme" can be a recipe for failure.

Historical Development of Adult Literacy in Nigeria

Adult literacy initiatives in Nigeria date back to colonial times, with missionary schools providing rudimentary education. Post-independence, the Federal Government established the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) to coordinate literacy programmes nationwide. Despite these efforts, illiteracy rates remain high, particularly in rural areas and among women (Ejiro-Mitaire & Ezeyili, 2022).

Adult literacy initiatives in Nigeria trace their roots to the colonial era, when missionary schools introduced rudimentary education. These schools primarily focused on religious instruction, teaching basic reading and writing skills to enable converts to read the Bible. Literacy was therefore limited in scope, serving religious and administrative purposes rather than broader socio-economic development. Access was also highly unequal, with rural populations and women largely excluded (Fafunwa, 1974).

Post-Independence Expansion

Following independence in 1960, Nigeria recognized literacy as a national priority. The government began to establish structures to expand access to education beyond formal schooling. Early adult literacy programmes were often community-based, relying on voluntary teachers and local initiatives. However, these efforts lacked coordination and sustainability, leading to uneven outcomes across regions.

Establishment of NMEC

A major milestone came with the creation of the **National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC)** in 1990. NMEC was tasked with coordinating literacy programmes nationwide, developing curricula, and monitoring implementation. Its mandate aligned with global initiatives such as UNESCO's *Education for All* (EFA) campaign, which emphasized literacy as a driver of development. NMEC introduced structured adult literacy centres, standardized curricula, and partnerships with NGOs to expand reach (NMEC, 2023).

Persistent Challenges

Despite these efforts, illiteracy rates remain high, particularly in rural areas and among women. Studies show that cultural attitudes, poverty, and early withdrawal from formal schooling continue to fuel adult illiteracy (Ejiro-Mitaire & Ezeyili, 2022). Many literacy centres face challenges such

as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and shortage of trained facilitators. These issues hinder effective implementation of programme contents and limit sustainability.

Regional Context: South-East Nigeria

In the South-East region, literacy has historically been valued, with communities emphasizing education as a pathway to social mobility. Yet, adult illiteracy persists, especially among rural dwellers and women. Literacy programmes in the region often struggle with resource constraints and limited community participation. While NMEC provides national coordination, local implementation varies widely, reflecting disparities in political will and community engagement.

Contemporary Developments

Recent years have seen efforts to integrate vocational and digital skills into adult literacy curricula, making programmes more relevant to learners' socio-economic realities. For example, literacy centres increasingly combine basic reading and writing with training in entrepreneurship, agriculture, and ICT. This approach aligns with the **Transformational Learning Theory**, as it enables adults to acquire new perspectives, empowering them to participate more fully in social and economic life.

Adult Literacy in South-East Nigeria

The South-East region, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States, is known for its emphasis on education and entrepreneurship. However, many adults—especially rural dwellers—remain illiterate due to poverty, early school dropout, and cultural factors. Studies show that literacy centres in the region often lack adequate infrastructure, trained facilitators, and sustainable funding (Bessong, Bessong, & Oboqua, 2021).

Implementation of Adult Literacy Programme Contents

Implementation refers to the extent to which planned programme contents are delivered effectively. Research indicates that while adult literacy curricula in Nigeria are well-designed, their execution is often weak. Key challenges include:

- **Funding constraints:** Government allocations are insufficient, leading to reliance on donor support.

- **Infrastructure deficits:** Many centres lack classrooms, teaching aids, and instructional materials.
- **Human resources:** Facilitators are often untrained or poorly motivated.
- **Community participation:** Cultural resistance and low awareness hinder enrolment.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Weak systems make it difficult to assess outcomes (Ironbar & Anam, 2024).

5. Impact of Adult Literacy Programmes

Adult literacy has been linked to improved socio-economic outcomes. Ironbar and Anam (2024) found that literacy programmes in Cross River State enhanced participants' income generation, civic participation, and health awareness. Similarly, Usman, Idris, and Hussaini (2023) argue that literacy contributes to human security by reducing poverty and fostering social inclusion.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories underpin adult literacy but the researcher adopted **Transformational Learning Theory**: Adults acquire new perspectives through literacy, enabling empowerment and social change.

Transformational Learning Theory, developed by Jack Mezirow, provides a powerful lens through which adult literacy programmes in South-East Nigeria can be understood. At its core, the theory posits that adults undergo a process of perspective transformation when they critically reflect on their assumptions, beliefs, and experiences. Literacy, therefore, is not simply the acquisition of reading and writing skills; it is a catalyst for empowerment and social change. Framing this study through Transformational Learning Theory highlights how adult literacy programmes can reshape learners' identities, foster critical consciousness, and enable sustainable mass literacy.

Adult learners often enter literacy programmes with deeply ingrained assumptions shaped by years of exclusion from formal education. Many perceive themselves as incapable of learning or believe that education is reserved for the young. Transformational Learning Theory suggests that through structured dialogue, reflection, and engagement with new knowledge, these assumptions can be challenged. Literacy centres in South-East Nigeria provide spaces where adults begin to see

themselves differently—not as passive victims of illiteracy but as active participants in their own development. This shift in self-perception is the essence of perspective transformation.

The implementation of adult literacy programme contents is central to this process. When curricula integrate functional skills such as vocational training, entrepreneurship, and health education, learners connect literacy with their lived realities. For example, a market woman who learns to keep records of her sales experiences a transformation in how she views herself as a business owner. Similarly, a farmer who acquires literacy skills to access agricultural extension services gains a new perspective on his role in community development. These transformations are not merely cognitive; they are social, economic, and political, enabling adults to participate more fully in society.

Transformational Learning Theory also emphasizes the importance of critical reflection. Literacy programmes that encourage learners to question cultural norms, gender roles, and social inequalities foster empowerment. In South-East Nigeria, where women often face cultural barriers to education, literacy programmes can help them challenge these norms and assert their rights. This process of reflection and dialogue leads to social change, as empowered individuals influence their families, communities, and broader society.

The sustainability of mass literacy depends on the extent to which these transformations are maintained and expanded. Transformational Learning Theory underscores that learning is a continuous process. Adults require ongoing opportunities to reflect, engage, and apply new perspectives. Therefore, effective implementation of literacy programme contents must include mechanisms for sustainability, such as community ownership, government support, and integration of digital literacy. Without these, the transformative gains achieved risk being short-lived.

In conclusion, framing this study through Transformational Learning Theory highlights the deeper significance of adult literacy programmes in South-East Nigeria. Literacy is not only about functional skills; it is about transformation—adults acquiring new perspectives that empower them to enact social change. By examining the level of implementation of programme contents, this study seeks to understand how literacy can foster sustainable mass literacy through the transformative empowerment of individuals and communities.

Globally, countries like India and Bangladesh have successfully integrated vocational skills into literacy programmes, ensuring sustainability. UNESCO advocates for community-based

approaches and digital literacy integration to meet contemporary needs. Nigeria's literacy programmes can draw lessons from these models to strengthen implementation.

Empirical Studies in Nigeria

Ejiro-Mitaire and Ezeyili (2022) conducted a study that focused on identifying strategies to improve adult literacy programmes in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on government involvement and community mobilization. Their work is situated within the broader discourse on literacy as a driver of sustainable development, aligning with UNESCO's emphasis on literacy as a tool for empowerment and poverty reduction. The study highlighted that while Nigeria has made progress in establishing literacy centres and designing curricula, the actual implementation remains weak. The authors argued that government involvement is critical, not only in terms of funding but also in policy formulation, monitoring, and evaluation. They observed that literacy programmes often suffer from inadequate financial support, leading to poorly equipped centres and unmotivated facilitators. Without strong government commitment, literacy programmes risk becoming unsustainable. Community mobilization was another key strategy identified. The authors emphasized that literacy programmes must be rooted in local contexts, with communities actively participating in their design and delivery. They found that cultural attitudes toward adult education often hinder enrolment, particularly among women, who may face social stigma for attending literacy classes. Mobilizing communities through awareness campaigns, local leadership involvement, and integration of indigenous languages was recommended as a way to increase participation and retention. Methodologically, the study employed surveys and interviews with facilitators, learners, and policymakers. Findings revealed that learners were more motivated when literacy programmes incorporated vocational skills, such as tailoring, farming, or trading, alongside basic literacy. This integration made literacy relevant to their daily lives, thereby fostering sustainability. The implications of this study are significant. It suggests that literacy programmes cannot succeed in isolation; they require a multi-stakeholder approach involving government, NGOs, and communities. It also underscores the importance of contextualizing literacy curricula to meet the socio-economic realities of learners. For South-East Nigeria, where entrepreneurship is highly valued, integrating business and vocational skills into literacy programmes could enhance their relevance and sustainability. In summary, Ejiro-Mitaire and Ezeyili (2022) provided a roadmap for improving adult literacy in Nigeria by emphasizing government involvement and community mobilization. Their findings highlight the need for a holistic approach that combines policy support, financial investment, and grassroots participation to foster sustainable mass literacy.

Bessong, Bessong, and Oboqua (2021) conducted an empirical assessment of adult literacy programme implementation in Cross River State, Nigeria. Their study is particularly relevant because it sheds light on the practical challenges of delivering literacy education at the grassroots level. The authors found significant gaps in facilitator training and resource provision. Many literacy centres were staffed by facilitators who lacked formal training in adult education pedagogy. This deficiency affected the quality of instruction, as facilitators often relied on rote teaching methods that failed to engage adult learners. Adult education requires specialized approaches that recognize the unique needs, experiences, and motivations of adult learners. Without adequate training, facilitators struggled to deliver programme contents effectively. Resource provision was another major challenge. The study revealed that literacy centres were poorly equipped, with limited access to textbooks, writing materials, and teaching aids. In some cases, learners had to share materials, while facilitators improvised with outdated resources. This lack of resources undermined the effectiveness of literacy programmes and discouraged learner participation. Methodologically, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Data were collected from facilitators, learners, and administrators across several literacy centres. The findings painted a picture of systemic neglect, where literacy programmes were underfunded and undervalued compared to formal education. Despite these challenges, the study also identified areas of strength. Learners expressed enthusiasm for literacy programmes, particularly when they saw direct benefits in their daily lives. For example, traders who acquired basic literacy skills reported improved record-keeping and communication with customers. This demonstrates the transformative potential of literacy, even in resource-constrained environments. The implications of this study are clear: effective implementation of adult literacy programmes requires investment in facilitator training and resource provision. For South-East Nigeria, where similar challenges exist, addressing these gaps is critical to fostering sustainable mass literacy. Training facilitators in adult education pedagogy and equipping centres with adequate resources would enhance programme delivery and learner outcomes.

In conclusion, Bessong et al. (2021) highlighted the practical challenges of implementing adult literacy programmes in Nigeria, particularly in terms of facilitator training and resource provision. Their findings underscore the need for systemic reforms to strengthen the capacity of literacy centres and ensure that programme contents are delivered effectively.

Ironbar and Anam (2024) examined the socio-economic impacts of adult literacy programmes in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Their study is notable for

demonstrating the tangible benefits of literacy while also highlighting weaknesses in sustainability mechanisms. The authors found that literacy programmes had positive socio-economic impacts on participants. Learners reported improved income generation, better health awareness, and increased civic participation. For example, farmers who acquired literacy skills were able to access agricultural extension services more effectively, while women reported greater confidence in participating in community decision-making. These findings align with the human capital theory, which posits that education enhances productivity and economic growth.

However, the study also noted weak sustainability mechanisms. Many literacy centres relied heavily on donor funding, which was often inconsistent and short-term. When funding ended, programmes struggled to continue, leading to high dropout rates and closure of centres. The authors argued that sustainability requires integrating literacy programmes into broader community development initiatives, with local ownership and government support. Methodologically, the study employed case studies and interviews with learners, facilitators, and community leaders. The qualitative data provided rich insights into the lived experiences of participants, highlighting both the benefits and challenges of literacy programmes. The implications of this study are profound. It demonstrates that literacy programmes can have transformative impacts on individuals and communities, but without sustainability mechanisms, these gains are short-lived. For South-East Nigeria, where similar challenges exist, ensuring sustainability requires a multi-pronged approach. This includes securing government funding, fostering community ownership, and integrating literacy with vocational and digital skills.

In summary, Ironbar and Anam (2024) showed that adult literacy programmes have significant socio-economic benefits but are undermined by weak sustainability mechanisms. Their findings highlight the need for long-term strategies to ensure that literacy gains are maintained and expanded, thereby fostering sustainable mass literacy.

While studies have examined adult literacy in Nigeria, few focus specifically on the South-East region. Moreover, limited research exists on the extent of implementation of programme contents and their sustainability. This gap justifies the present study.

METHOD

Design of the Study

The design of this study was the descriptive survey design. The area of this study is South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. The zone covered Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The choice of this area of the study is particularly informed by the noticeable lapses in the implementation of adult literacy programmes by State Agencies for sustainable mass literacy in South East Nigeria. The researcher observed that many adults in the area cannot read or write or even use modern technologies in offices, businesses and politics among others despite the policy on universal access to education or mass literacy by the United Nations. The population of this study comprised one thousand two hundred and eighty (1280) adult literacy centres in South East, Nigeria. As at the time of this study, there were 262 adult literacy centers and 339 Adult literacy teachers in Enugu State; 171 adult literacy centres and 259 adult literacy teachers in Ebonyi State; 209 adult literacy centers and 312 adult teachers in Imo State; 283 adult literacy centres and 279 adult teachers in Anambra State; 355 Study Centers and 533 teachers in Abia State (States' Agencies for Mass Literacy, 2023). The choice of this population is to ascertain the level of implementation of adult literacy programmes in South-East States. Therefore, the use of adult literacy teachers helped the researcher to get the extent of implementation of programmes of adult literacy in the area. The sample of the study was 250 Adult literacy teachers from 50 adult literacy centers. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) literacy centres from each of the 5 States in South East Nigeria; making it a total of fifty (50) adult literacy centers for the study. This is to ensure equal representation of the population across the States or strata. Second, five (5) adult teachers were proportionately selected from each of the 50 adult literacy centers selected; making it a total of 250 adult literacy teachers that was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was adapted Checklist. The items of the checklist were derived from the literature review. The Checklist is divided into two sections, A and B. Section A contains items which were used to elicit information on personal profile of the respondents such as State and location. Section B elicited information assessment of the implementation of Adult Literacy Programmes by State Agencies for Sustainable Mass Literacy in South East Nigeria. Section B is further divided into five clusters B-F. **Cluster B** elicited information on the level of implementation of contents stipulated in the Adult Literacy Programmes in South East Nigeria; **Cluster C** covered information on the level of use of methods in the implementation of Adult Literacy Programmes by State Agencies in South East Nigeria; **Cluster D** covered information on the level of use of instructional materials in the implementation adult literacy programmes by State

Agencies for sustainable mass literacy in South East Nigeria; **Cluster E** covered information on the qualifications of adult literacy teachers that are involved in the implementation of adult literacy programmes in South East Nigeria; while **Cluster F** covered information on the evaluation strategies used in the implementation of adult literacy programmes for sustainable mass literacy in South East Nigeria. There was no validation of the instrument. This is because the checklist was adapted from State agencies from the five States of South East Nigeria covered. In order to determine the reliability of the Checklist, the researcher gave the instruments to five teachers in Adult Literacy Centres in Benue State to rate in terms of implementation of Adult Literacy Programmes by State Agencies for sustainable mass literacy in South East Nigeria. The researcher then applied the scorer reliability method using Kendall's W Test of concordance with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.63, with an overall reliability index of 0.63 approximately (See Appendix page). These reliability indices show that the instruments are reliable. The researcher, with two (2) research assistants in each state administered the instrument directly to the respondents in the two hundred fifty adult literacy centers in the Five States of South East Nigeria. The researcher instructed the assistants on the best approach for instrument administration and the retrieval such as the use of the appeal method of approach to the respondents to enable them respond to the items of the Checklist without bias. The assistants, researcher, and Centre coordinator go through the checklist to indicate the level of implementation of the programme. Frequency tables and Percentages were used to analyse the data collected on research questions while Chi-Square statistics were used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The choice of using Chi-Square for testing hypotheses and the data analysis involves frequency tables and percentages. Hence, Chi-Square statistics would help the researcher to determine the difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies. For the checklist, items with 50% rating and above were accepted as high implementation while 49% and below were not accepted. The null hypotheses would be upheld when the probability value is greater than 0.05 level of significance ($P > .05$), and not upheld when the probability value is less than 0.05 level of significance ($P < .05$).

RESULTS

Research Question: What is the level of implementation of contents stipulated in the Adult Literacy Programmes in South East Nigeria?

Table 1: Percentage Response on the Level of Implementation of Contents Stipulated in the Adult Literacy Programmes foster sustainable mass literacy in South-East Nigeria .

S/N	Item Statements	Total	YES				NO				Dec
			Rural	%	Urban	%	Rural	%	Urban	%	
1	Basic English Language skills e.g. reading, writing, speaking	250	77	30.8	98	39.2	35	14.0	40	16.0	HI
2	Civic Education Contents e.g. peace-building, democracy and good governance	250	68	27.2	91	36.4	38	15.2	53	21.2	HI
3	HIV and AIDS prevention	250	54	21.6	81	32.4	50	20.0	65	26.0	HI
4	Basic hygiene and nutrition	250	66	26.4	89	35.6	41	16.4	44	17.6	HI
5	Entrepreneurship contents e.g. family economics, vocational skills, etc.	250	45	18.0	50	20.0	56	22.4	99	39.6	LI
6	Basic technology e.g. wood work, electrical work, automobile mechanics etc.										

250 38 15.2 70 28.0 72 28.8 70 28.0 LI

Field Work, 2026; **Keys=** HI= High Implementation; LI= Low implementation

The data in **Table 1** shows that out of 250 respondents, 30.8% of teachers from rural and 39.2% from urban area agreed that they teach Basic English Language skills e.g. reading, writing, speaking while 39.2% from rural and 16.0% from urban area disagreed; 27.2% from rural schools and 36.4% from urban school agreed while 15.2% from rural and 21.2% from urban school agreed that they Civic Education Contents e.g. peace-building, democracy and good governance; 21.6% from rural and 32.4% from urban schools agreed that they teach HIV and AIDS prevention while 20.0% from rural and 26.0% from urban disagreed; 26.4% from rural schools and 35.6% from urban schools agreed that they teach Basic hygiene and nutrition while 16.4% from rural schools and 17.6% from urban schools disagreed. It also shows that 18.0% from rural schools and 20.0% from urban schools agreed that they implement Entrepreneurship contents e.g. family economics, vocational skills, etc. while 22.4% of teachers from rural and 39.6% from urban schools disagreed; 15.2% of teachers from rural schools and 28.0% from urban schools agreed while 28.8% and 28.0% disagreed. This shows that Basic English Language skills, Civic Education Contents and HIV and AIDS prevention and Basic hygiene and nutrition where the contents of adult literacy implemented while entrepreneurship education contents and Basic technology were not implemented in adult literacy programmes.

H₀₁: The level of implementation of contents stipulated in the Adult Literacy Programmes in South East Nigeria is dependent on location.

Table 2: Chi-Square statistic on the level of implementation of contents stipulated in the Adult Literacy Programmes in South East Nigeria is dependent on location

	df	$\chi^2\alpha$	Sig.	Alpha Level	Remarks
Chi-Square	25	30000 ^a	.224	0.05	NS
Number of valid Cases	6				

Df = degree of freedom, $\chi^2\alpha$ = chi-square calculated, Sig. = P-value; P < .05, NS= Not Significant

The data in **Table 2** shows a P-value of 0.224 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance and with 25 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of rural and urban teachers on the level of implementation of contents stipulated in the Adult Literacy Programmes in South East Nigeria was accepted. This indicates that the implementation of contents of adult literacy programmes was the same in rural and urban public secondary schools in South East Nigeria.

Summary

The data in Table 1 reveals varying levels of implementation of adult literacy programme contents across rural and urban schools. Out of 250 respondents, a significant proportion of teachers in both rural (30.8%) and urban (39.2%) areas agreed that they teach **Basic English Language skills** such as reading, writing, and speaking. However, disagreement was more pronounced among rural teachers (39.2%) compared to urban teachers (16.0%), indicating uneven delivery of this core content.

For **Civic Education contents** (peace-building, democracy, and good governance), 27.2% of rural and 36.4% of urban teachers agreed they implemented these topics, while smaller proportions (15.2% rural and 21.2% urban) also reported agreement, suggesting moderate but inconsistent coverage.

In terms of **HIV and AIDS prevention**, 21.6% of rural and 32.4% of urban teachers agreed they taught this content, though notable disagreement was recorded (20.0% rural and 26.0% urban). Similarly, **Basic hygiene and nutrition** was reported as taught by 26.4% of rural and 35.6% of urban teachers, with disagreement levels relatively lower (16.4% rural and 17.6% urban).

By contrast, **Entrepreneurship education contents** (family economics, vocational skills) and **Basic technology** were poorly implemented. Only 18.0% of rural and 20.0% of urban teachers agreed they taught entrepreneurship, while disagreement was high (22.4% rural and 39.6% urban). Basic technology showed even weaker implementation, with low agreement (15.2% rural and 28.0% urban) and high disagreement (28.8% rural and 28.0% urban).

Overall, the data indicates that **Basic English Language skills, Civic Education, HIV/AIDS prevention, and Basic hygiene and nutrition** are relatively well implemented, while **Entrepreneurship education and Basic technology contents** are largely neglected in adult literacy programmes.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that adult literacy programmes in South-East Nigeria are unevenly implemented, with stronger emphasis on traditional literacy skills and civic education, but weaker integration of entrepreneurship and technology. This imbalance suggests that while learners are acquiring foundational skills, they are not being adequately prepared for economic empowerment or digital participation, both of which are critical for sustainable mass literacy in the 21st century.

The conclusion drawn is that adult literacy programmes remain partially effective: they succeed in delivering basic language, civic, health, and hygiene education, but fail to fully embrace transformative contents such as entrepreneurship and technology. For literacy to foster sustainable development, programme implementation must be broadened to include these neglected areas. Strengthening facilitator training, resource provision, and curriculum integration will be essential to ensure that adult learners not only gain functional literacy but also acquire the skills needed for empowerment, livelihood improvement, and social change.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Curriculum Integration:** Adult literacy programmes should expand beyond basic language and civic education to include entrepreneurship and basic technology contents. Integrating vocational skills, family economics, and digital literacy will make programmes more relevant to learners' socio-economic realities and foster empowerment.
2. **Enhance Facilitator Training:** Teachers and facilitators need specialized training in adult education pedagogy. This will equip them with the skills to deliver diverse contents effectively, encourage learner participation, and apply transformational learning approaches that help adults critically reflect and acquire new perspectives.
3. **Improve Resource Provision:** Government and stakeholders should ensure literacy centres are adequately supplied with instructional materials, textbooks, ICT tools, and teaching aids. Proper resource provision will reduce disparities between rural and urban centres and enhance the quality of programme delivery.
4. **Promote Community Mobilization and Ownership:** Communities should be actively involved in designing and implementing literacy programmes. Awareness campaigns, use of indigenous languages, and local leadership participation will increase enrolment, reduce cultural resistance, and ensure sustainability through community ownership.

5. Establish Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms: Robust systems for monitoring and evaluating programme implementation should be developed. Regular assessments will identify gaps in content delivery, track learner outcomes, and provide evidence for policy adjustments. This will ensure that literacy programmes remain effective and aligned with sustainable development goals.

References

- Ejiro-Mitaire, F. O., & Ezeyili, P. N. (2022). *Assessment of strategies for improving adult literacy programmes in Nigeria*. Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of Adult Education.
- Fafunwa, A. B. (1974). *History of education in Nigeria*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC). (2023). *Revitalization of adult and youth literacy in Nigeria*. Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Bessong, N. O., Bessong, C. D., & Oboqua, E. D. (2021). Assessment of the implementation of adult basic literacy programmes in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Prestige Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 4(2), 84–96. openaccessglobal.com
- Ejiro-Mitaire, F. O., & Ezeyili, P. N. (2022). Assessment of strategies for improving adult literacy programmes in Nigeria. *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of Adult Education*. journals.unizik.edu.ng
- Ironbar, V. E., & Anam, B. E. (2024). Assessing the impact of adult literacy programmes on socioeconomic development in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Comparative Studies in International Relations and Development*, 10(1), 16–29. internationalpolicybrief.org
- Usman, M. M., Idris, U. A., & Hussaini, U. F. (2023). Managing adult literacy programmes for sustainable human security in Nigeria. *RIJE*, 2(2), 85–94.
- UNESCO. (2022). *Literacy and sustainable development: Global perspectives*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

- Ejiro-Mitaire, F. O., & Ezeyili, P. N. (2022). *Assessment of strategies for improving adult literacy programmes in Nigeria*. Nnamdi Azikiwe University.
- National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC). (2023). *Revitalization of adult and youth literacy in Nigeria*. Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Usman, M. M., Idris, U. A., & Hussaini, U. F. (2023). Managing adult literacy programmes for sustainable human security in Nigeria. *RIJE*, 2(2), 85–94.
- UNESCO. (2022). *Literacy and sustainable development: Global perspectives*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.