

Perceived Influence of Non-Formal Educational Programmes on Basic Academic Attainment of Teenage Mothers in Enugu State Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study examined perceived influence of non-formal education programmes on the basic academic attainment of teenage mothers in Enugu state Nigeria. The total population for the study was 8,143 teenage mothers from which a study sample of 814 was raised. Four research questions were raised and four hypotheses were tested. Twenty-three items were used to elicit information from the teenage mothers. A four point scale was used to rate the responses. The research questions were answered using mean statistic(x), while t-test analysis was done to test the hypotheses at .05 significant levels. The findings showed that teenage mothers in Enugu state perceived a low influence of radio lessons on their ability to participate in practical subjects, cover subject topics and sit mainstream examinations. They however, perceived high influence of correspondence courses and evening lessons on their ability to study school subjects and sit mainstream examinations. Recommendations were made, which include the adoption of modern technology in the facilitation of learning for this group of learners especially one that guarantees personal relationship between the trainer(s) and trainees(s).*

INTRODUCTION

Equal opportunity in all aspects of education is an injunction of the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that is spelt out in section 1 of the National Policy on education (FGN, 2004), to ensure that various groups in society access educational provision irrespective of their age and ability. The provisions have been put into effect since 1977 when the policy was first published and launched to impact on various groups in society. Among the provisions of the Policy, adult and non-formal education in section 6 caters for groups of learners who lost the opportunity to acquire basic education as well as other groups with varying educational needs. These include vulnerable groups of children and young women of childbearing age that occasionally find themselves in difficult situations of isolation and lack of access to the requisite knowledge and information that would equip them for active participation in decision making processes within the family, community, and wider society (King and Hill, 1977). The resultant effect of such difficulties in many cases is minimal control over their physical bodies in desperation to survive daring circumstances. A good number of them develop into teenage mothers and eventually engage in premature marriage without adequate education to prepare for life.

Teenage pregnancy has become an important worldwide social issue in the present times because of lower educational levels, higher rates of poverty, and other poorer life outcomes in the children of teenage mothers and among the teenage mothers themselves. Teenage pregnancy in both developed and developing countries usually occur outside marriage, and it carries a reasonable level of social stigma in many communities and culture (Dryburgh,

2002). For these reasons there have been many studies and campaigns that attempt to uncover the causes of teenage pregnancies with a view to developing ways of limiting its occurrences. Among the issues raised while discussing teenage motherhood and the causes of teenage pregnancies. Locoh (2000) is of the opinion that while early marriage and traditional gender roles are important causative factors, some African societies believe in early marriage as a blessing because it is both a proof of a woman's fertility and a point of attraction, joy and boast for the woman's family. Adolescent sexual behaviour was also an identified cause of teenage pregnancy. Sex by age 20 is currently almost the norm across the world and countries with low levels of teenage pregnancy accept sexual relationships among teenagers while comprehensive and balanced information about sexuality is provided for guidance (UNICEF). Peer pressure has also been indicated as a factor in encouraging both girls and boys to have sex. Alcoholism and drug abuse also encourage unintended sex among teenagers. The National Survey of family Growth (2000), shows that lack of knowledge, lack of access to conventional methods of preventing pregnancy, and wrongful application of contraception by teenagers have also caused unwanted pregnancies. Other causes include domestic violence, family strife in childhood, and low educational expectations Treffers (2003), Family Planning Perspectives (2006).

Some studies have observed that less than 10% of teenage mothers pursued and completed their education in the long run (National Campaign for prevention of Teen Pregnancy, 2001). The study also found that poor academic performance in children of teenage mothers has been noted with many of them on the average recorded having failed to graduate from secondary school. Daughters born to all adolescent parents are more likely to become teen mothers themselves, while boys born to teen mothers are three times more likely to serve a time in prison. The worldwide concerted effort to salvage this unacceptable trend is informed by the resolution of the fifth conference on adult education (CONFINTEA V) in Hamburg held in July 1997, which stated that universal basic education is a major means of helping people to actualize their individual and collective potentials irrespective of their age and or circumstances. It was also resolved that education for all is not only a right, but it is also a duty and responsibility of the state and society. Although quality basic education is widely seen as a basic human right that also promotes economic and social development UNICEF (1999), observes that gaining access to it has remained an illusion and serious struggle for many people in Africa including women and children.

Amongst other issues in basic educational provision in many parts of Africa, the discrimination against girls is the largest impediment to achieving universal education. The Federal Government of Nigeria has therefore taken it in her strides to enhance the implementation of her National Policy on education (2004), which incorporates Universal basic education (UBE) with nine year duration (six year primary school and three year junior secondary education). In addition the policy caters for all forms of dropouts and persons who could not gain access to formal education by providing self-education through the non-formal education (NFE) system that is composed of correspondence courses, radio and television lessons, evening programmes, weekend programmes and holiday courses. The major objectives of the NFE system include:

- (i) To provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who did not complete school or have never had the advantage of formal education.
- (ii) Provide functional and remedial education for young people who did not complete secondary education.
- (iii) Provide education for different categories of completers.
- (iv) Provide in-service on the job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers.

- (v) Give adults citizens of the nation the necessary aesthetic cultural and civil education (FGN Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004)

NFE is an organized educational activity outside the regular structure of formal education system that focuses on serving the needs of various groups that do not attend regular school programmes. It has the potential of filling the education gap that exists between the participants and the place they desire to be. Non-formal education is therefore a dynamic force for change in developing countries (Comb, 1973). The NFE focus groups include all adults who are school leavers, dropouts and illiterates in various respects. The programmes are organized and implemented as approved by government agencies and regulatory bodies. They are usually adapted to the unique needs of the participants in order to maximize learning opportunities and minimize other elements that often occupy formal school operations.

Although non-formal education is a term that is interchangeably used with community education and life-long learning, non-formal education in Nigeria has the following characteristics: It takes place outside the formal school system, it is attended mostly by adults, and most of its programmes focus on early school leavers. Subjects are offered to meet specific educational needs of recipients and the delivery is often community based. Teaching methods tend to be participatory and usually follow traditional or indigenous learning styles (in line with various school subjects and topics, and are taught as outlined in the syllabuses used also in the formal school system). Through this process, the recipients of education by the NFE system are enabled and capacitated to sit main streaming examinations which are approved and organized by government agencies.

The products of NFE in Nigeria are therefore prepared and equipped for employment and educational advancement with a view to meet societal expectations. In non-formal settings human relationships are more informal. Roles of facilitators and participants are less rigid and often switched rather than in formal schools where student – teacher and teacher – administrator roles are hierarchical and seldom change in the short term. The focus is more on practical skills and knowledge, while schools often focus on information that may have delayed application. NFE has a lower level structure and therefore more flexible than schools (Mc Anamy and Mayo, 1980). The programmes cover literacy, basic education subject, primary health, issues in reproductive health such as pregnancy, and environmental issues. Agriculture, fishing, rural development and others also form part of the programmes. NFE complements formal education, the two are therefore not in competition and will never substitute for each. The overall goal is actually the same: teaching and learning to improve lives of participant and contribute to development of communities and nations. The essence of non-formal education is to address the shortfall of the education system as it has the potential to teach people the skills that are relevant to development of both, urban and rural communities.

Various methods of NFE include correspondence courses, radio lessons, television programmes, evening and holiday and weekend programmes. The National policy on education recommends correspondence courses as a low cost method of mass education to help school dropouts continue their education. It provides sufficient educational opportunities at various levels to people including teenage mothers who have the ambition to improve their educational needs (Nzeneri, 2008). Correspondence courses are used at home through the content of books and exercises that are sent by surface mail. The courses cover a variety of school subjects which are essential for school dropouts to engage in formal studies

to bridge the educational gap, prepare them for main stream examinations for the award of certificates.

Radio is another NFE means of reaching programme participants. It is the process of sending and receiving messages through electro-magnetic waves. Although the messages disappear literally into the atmosphere, the radio can arouse attention and deliver short simple messages. A combination of correspondence and radio courses is a successful conventional learning media because of the supplementary roles each plays and both have had extensive use in many African countries. Evening courses as the name implies are organized for persons who cannot attend to such learning exercises during the day because of other engagements. It was started by the Methodist church and the Church Missionary Society preachers in Nigeria in the 19th century (Omolewa, 1981). It is a means of delivery remedial programmes that are focused at preparing people to sit public and private examinations of various types and levels. Holiday and weekend programmes are NFE method that are organized and conducted during vacations. Such NFE methods are popular among persons who cannot fit into formal school programmes but are eager to prepare for government approved examinations. Teenage mothers find vacation period programmes indispensable to prepare for government approved examinations in which they did not participate on account of premature motherhood, or sub-bar education resulting from poverty, discrimination or ill health (UNICEF, 1999).

Steps taken in Nigeria to correct some educational imbalances emanating from afore mentioned problems include the encouragement given to prospective participants of NFE to return to school through deliberate radio, television and holiday or evening programmes that are mounted by both government and private agencies. Such agencies include the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) continuing education center (CEC), which organize and conduct radio extra moral programmes to reach out as far as possible to both urban and rural or slum inhabitant; the Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS), which is called University of the Air that offers regular radio lectures for adults in specific topics in the arts and sciences; and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education equally offers instructional television in science subjects for secondary schools (Nzeneri, 2008). Other opportunities available to person who have diverse educational needs include continuing education centres (CEC) that are managed by tertiary institutions in Nigeria such as Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, University of Lagos (UNILAG), Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), among others. Cole (1996) identified the following ways in which NFE and formal education work together

- (a) Sharing buildings and facilities
- (b) Sharing staff by involving teachers in both programmes
- (c) Providing entry prerequisites for the formal education system.

Problems associated with NFE courses offered by these agencies revolve around the fact that they are stretched in contents and length resulting in duplication and fragmentation. Added to this is lack of common standards that makes regulation difficult. All NFE ventures are most often based on the asynchronous delivery theory propounded by Wingard in Ayaogu (2010). It reduces the adverse effect of the problems by stating that NFE facilitators and students are not required to have real time contact with facilitators on regular basis because NFE programmes are not time and location dependent. Although the national policy on education (FGN, 2004) in Nigeria does not stipulate enrollment of teenage mothers in regular schools, these group of learners are catered for by the provisions of adult and non-formal education in section 6 of the policy if they are hindered by discrimination, and other forms of social stigma. The provisions have been in operation for over 20 years since 1977 and they

were reviewed for better and more relevant programmes since 2004. Against this background, this study examined the appropriateness of these programmes for increasing the ability of teenage mothers to study school subjects and cover topics in subject areas with the ultimate aim of passing mainstream examinations organized by regulatory bodies such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC). Passing these examinations qualifies the NFE participants to obtain certificates and other credentials for self-actualization and employment as well as further education. Location and instructional grouping of the teenage mothers were used to examine variations in their perception of influence of the NFE programmes on their academic attainment. Teenage mothers located in Enugu North, Enugu East, Enugu West and Nsukka local government areas of Enugu State were regarded as urban dwellers because they had access to electricity and public water supply. Others were used as rural teenage mothers. Radio, correspondence and evening programmes were the major instructional groupings also used to determine variation in perception.

The philosophy of education in Nigeria is based on turning individuals into sound and effective citizens by providing equal educational opportunity for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. This philosophy further adds that government will do everything possible to discourage the incidence of dropouts at the primary level of education and cater for dropouts and persons who could not access formal education at the appropriate time through the provision of non formal system for self education by correspondence courses, radio and television lessons, Internet linkages, evening programme and holiday courses. Although considerable efforts have been made by the federal and state government to put these provisions into effect in collaboration with UNICEF and other agencies, there are observable instances of gender discrimination and obnoxious issues of alienation of pregnant teenagers especially in remote parts of Nigeria. Many pregnant teenagers are still easily given into marriage, while others resort to begging or sex work as a means of livelihood. A dearth of research findings actually exists concerning the availability and usefulness of NFE programmes as provided by the National Policy on Education, towards enhancing of the educational attainment of teenage mothers. The problem of this research is that stakeholders are desirous to observe and note the effectiveness of correspondence courses, radio lessons, and evening courses in enabling this group of learners to attain sufficient academic progress to earn an acceptable living in Enugu State Nigeria especially in the rural areas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to determine:

- (i) The perceived extent of influence of correspondence courses on ability of teenage mothers to study basic school subjects.
- (ii) The perceived extent of influence of radio lessons on the ability of teenage mothers to coversubject topics.
- (iii) The perceived extent of influence of evening courses on the ability of teenage mothers to sit and pass mainstream examinations.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Enugu State, Nigeria using the descriptive survey research design, which described variables in relation to the population of the study as they appeared. Enugu State has a population of 3,257,298 (2006 Census). It is located in the south eastern part of Nigeria and its population is two and half times the national average. Enugu State people are Igbo by ethnic grouping and there are 17 local government areas in the State, and there are 466 urban and rural communities. The United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) (2002) observed that as one of the eastern states, Enugu has very high literate class

above 65% of the country's percentage. The Enugu State Ministry of Gender Affairs estimated the official (reported) cases of female school dropouts for reason of unintended teenage motherhood at 8,143. This number is different from the illiterate teenage mothers. Table 1 shows the distribution of this target population by local government between 2000 and 2009. To accommodate the social stigma usually associated with population of teenage mothers, purposive sampling technique was adopted to raise a sample of 814 respondents by taking 10% from each population of teenage mothers per local government area, by instructional group and location (Table 2).

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents According to LGA

S/N (Sample)	LGA	Population	10%
1	Enugu North	235	24
2	Enugu South	623	62
3.	Enugu East	246	25
4.	Nkanu East	695	70
5.	Nkanu West	683	68
6.	Udi	318	32
7.	Ezeagu	634	63
8.	Udenu	445	45
9.	Awgu	394	39
10.	Aninri	585	59
11.	Isi Uzo	622	62
12.	Nsukka	394	39
13.	Igbo Eze North	683	68
14.	Igbo Eze South	165	17
15.	Igbo Etiti	294	29
16.	Uzo Uwani	494	49
17.	Oji River	633	63
Total		8,143	814

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Programmes and Location

S/N	Type of Programme	Total of Respondents	Urban LGAs	Rural LGAs
1	Correspondence courses	103	40	63
2	Radio lessons	15	15	-
3	Evening Program	649	195	454
4	Television lessons	13	13	-
5	Holiday Courses	34	12	22
Total		814	275	539

Structured interview was used to obtain information from the respondents on the account of its appropriateness for human population and for social survey, Adamu and Johnson (1985). The items were structured to provide answers to the three research questions raised and the responses were measured with a four points scale (very high extent - VHE; high extent – HE; low extent – LE; very low extent - VLE). A pilot test with 20 respondents that did not

participate in the study showed that by application of Cronbach's alpha, 0.79 was obtained as the coefficient of reliability of the research instrument.

The instrument was administered to 814 respondents in the seventeen local government areas of Enugu State. Ten social welfare officers of the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare provided assistance in locating the respondents and to conduct the interviews. The welfare officers were trained by the researchers to ensure uniformity in the method of data collection. 100% contact was recorded with the 814 respondents in the local government areas. Mean statistics (\bar{x}) and standard deviation were applied to answer the research questions and t-test was used to test the H_0 using the following decision rule. Based on the four points scale, mean scores less than 2.50 were regarded as low extent, while mean scores that were 2.50 and above were regarded as high extent. t values less than the critical t meant that the null hypothesis was not rejected while t values equal to or greater than the critical t meant that the null hypothesis was rejected.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the perceived extent of influence of correspondence courses on teenage mothers' ability to study school subjects?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviations of perceived influence on teenage mothers' ability to study school subjects through correspondence courses

N = 103

S/N	ITEMS	VHE (4)	HE (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	X	SD	DECISION
1	Many subjects are taught in the programme as when you were in the formal school	2	13	67	21	1.96	1.21	Low
2	Learning materials are provided in all subjects	12	58	25	8	2.72	1.46	High
3	Printed materials are provided in all subjects	71	14	8	-	3.42	0.69	High
4	Tests and assignments are sent with written notes for easy reference and guide	32	59	12	-	3.19	1.8	High
5	Written assignments are marked and returned to learners in all subjects	18	78	7	-	3.11	0.42	High

Grand mean = 2.88

Table 3 shows that teenage mothers perceived a low extent of influence in item 1 with mean score of 1.96, which means perceived low level of influence of correspondence courses on teenage mothers' ability to study school subjects, but agreed with items 2 to 5 with mean scores of 2.72, 3.42, 3.42, 3.19 and 3.11 respectively, which signifies perceived high level of influence. The grand mean of 2.88 indicates a perceived high extent of perception of influence of correspondence courses influence teenage mothers' ability to study school subjects.

Research Question 2: What is the perceived extent influence of radio lessons on teenage mothers' ability to cover subject topics.

Table 4: Mean ratings and standard deviation of teenage mothers' perceived influence on their ability to cover subject topics through radio lessons.

N = 15

S/N	ITEMS	VHE (4)	HE (3)	L E (2)	VLE (1)	X	SD	DECISION
1	Topics taught are in line with the prescribed syllabus for the man stream examination	3	7	5	0	2.87	0.71	High
2	Time allocated to each subject is enough to cover topics	0	0	13	2	1.87	0.75	Low
3	Only listening to the radio without seeing or questioning the facilitator enables understanding	0	0	14	1	1.93	0.26	Low
4	Tests and assignments are regularly done	0	0	0	15	1.00	0	Low
5	Tests and assignments are sent with enough notes to clarify topic taught	0	0	13	2	1.86	0.35	Low

Research Question 3: What is the perceived extent of influence of evening programmes on teenage mothers ability to cover subject topics?

Table 5: Mean ratings and the standard deviations of perceived extent of influence of evening programmes on the teenage mothers' ability to sit main stream examinations

S/N	Items	VHE (4)	HE (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	X	SD	Decision
1	Many subjects are taught as when you were in formal school	149	312	188	-	2.94	0.26	High
2	Practical lessons are enough to enable you take practical examinations	0	130	302	217	1.86	0.52	Low
3	Contents of subject topics taught cover the syllabus for the main-stream examination	375	146	128	0	3.38	0.53	High
4	Time allocated to teach each subject is good to enable you understand the topics	0	402	202	45	2.55	0.62	High

Grand mean = 2.68

High

Table 5 shows that teenage mothers perceived high extent of influence in items, 11,13, and 14 with mean scores of 2.94, 3.38 and 2.55 respectively, but they (teenage mothers) perceived low extent of influence in item 2 with mean score of 1.86. The grand mean of 2.68 shows a high extent of influence of evening programmes on the ability of teenage mothers to sit and pass mainstream examinations.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of teenage mothers in urban and the rural communities regarding the influence of correspondence courses on their ability to study school subjects.

Table 6: t-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of teenage mothers in urban and rural communities regarding the influence of correspondence courses on the study of school subjects

Group	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-Critical	Decision
Urban teenage mothers	40	3.12	1.10	101	2.94	1.96	Rejected Ho
Rural teenage mothers	63	2.64	1.23				

Table 6 reveals that t-calculated which is 2.94 is higher than the t-critical (1.96), at 0.05 level of significance and degrees of freedom of 101. Since the t-calculated is higher than t-critical which was used in accepting a significant difference at the 0.05 level of significance, and in keeping with the decision rule, there is no reason to accept the null hypothesis. Significant difference does exist between the mean responses of teenage mothers in the urban area and those of the rural areas on the influence of correspondence courses on the study of school subjects.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of teenage mothers in correspondence courses and evening programmes regarding the influence of these non-formal educational programmes on their ability to sit mainstream examinations.

Table 6: t-test of difference between the mean ratings of teenage mothers in correspondence courses and evening programmes regarding the influence of these non-formal educational programmes on their ability to sit mainstream examination

Type of Programme	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-Critical	Decision
Correspondence course	103	2.88	1.25	750	4.17	1.96	Rejected H _o
Evening programmes	649	2.68	0.43				

Table 7 shows that t-calculated is 4.17 at 750 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value is higher than the critical value (1.96), the null hypothesis was rejected, which states that there is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of teenage mothers at the correspondence courses and those of the evening programmes on the influence of these non-formal educational programmes on sitting mainstream examination.

Findings

1. Teenage mothers who received correspondence covers perceived high influence of the programme on their ability to study basic school subjects (2.88 grand mean).
2. Teenage mothers who received radio lessons perceived a low influence of the programme on their ability to cover school subjects topics (1.91 grand mean).

3. Teenage mothers who participated in evening programmes perceived high influence of the courses on their ability to sit and pass mainstream examinations (2.68 grand mean).
4. There was significant difference in the mean perception scores of urban and rural teenage mothers regarding influence of correspondence courses on ability to study school subjects.
5. There was significant difference in the mean perception scores of teenage mothers in correspondence courses and those in evening programmes, on ability to cover subject topics.

DISCUSSION

The first finding of this study is that the teenage mothers who received correspondence course perceived high influence of the programme on their ability to study school subjects. This implies that correspondence courses cover subjects which are also taught in the formal school system. This justified Omelewa's (1981), assertion that the only problems associated with correspondence course include delay in delivery of material, and inability of the programme to satisfy participants in countries (like Nigeria) where postal services are poor, otherwise it ensures satisfactory coverage in terms of number of subjects and materials that are delivered.

The second findings of the study disclosed that not only that radio lessons as a non-formal educational programmes lack participants (low patronage), it also does not have significant influence on the ability of the participants to pursue their educational goals. Although Taylor (2003), agreed that the radio remains a very viable means of information delivery worldwide, because of its wide-reach, he also agreed that time and timing of programmes have remained one of its major constraints to its wide listeners.

On evening programmes or what is commonly called night schools, the teenage mothers perceived high influence of evening programmes on their ability to sit and pass mainstream examinations. This finding coincided with Omelewa's (1981), assertion that the objective of evening programmes was to prepare private candidates for various examination approved and recognized by government for the purposes of employment and educational advancement.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have far reaching effect on educational administrators and policy makers. The perceived low influences could be attributed to slow paced infrastructural development including epileptic power supply and poverty levels that may not permit availability of electronic gadgets for participants to be actively engaged in transmitted educational programmes. It is however encouraging to note the perceived high influence of correspondence programmes, which implies the need for enhanced provision of appliances like laptops and modems to make the internet more easily accessible to users of this means of instructional delivery

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that:

- Non-formal education agencies should intensify the utilization of correspondence and evening lessons by establishing more outlets for prospective participants to enrol towards the enhanced human capital development, and to accomplishment of education for all by 2015.

- Many modern technologies improve and guarantee better personal relationship between participant and facilitators. These include the use of Internet by and other close-knit connections and networks for interpersonal interaction, use of CD-Rom to access stored learning materials by learners and facilitators, use of pocket computers and other mobile devices through wireless servers.
- It is important to establish agencies of alternative education beyond the recommendations of the government to include charter schools, independent schools and mobile schools to accommodate participants that may be home or hospital bound to promote the current trend of inclusive learning.

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