Vol. 6 No. 3, November (2023)
**JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND TOURISM EDUCATION**
**ISSN: 2659-0794 (PRINT) ISSN:2659-0808(ONLINE)**
Content Available at: **https://jeate.net/index.php/Jete/issue/archive**

# State of Education, Literacy Level and Gap between Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Ikhizamah, Gerald Uche** | A | Department of Sociology<br>University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria |
| **Egidi, Stephen Achuen** | B | Department of Sociology<br>University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria |
| **Ejah, Blosson Uwere** | | Department of Zoology and Environmental Biology<br>University of Calabar- Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. |
| **Ikhizamah, Gerald Thelma** | | Department of History and International Studies<br>University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. |

**Keywords**
State, Education, Literacy, Gap Geopolitical and Nigeria.

**Correspondence**

**Received: 21/11/23**
**Revised: 24/11/23**
**Accepted: 25/11/23**
**Published: 30/11/23**

**Abstract**

The article presents a critical assessment of 'state of education, literacy level and gaps between geopolitical zones in Nigeria'. Literacy has been acknowledged as an important instrument through which any country can attain socio-economic and political development. Disparities in literacy are pronounced in Nigeria. Literacy is useful at the individual level in inculcating humanistic etiquettes and social relationships. The state of education and literacy levels across the geopolitical zones in Nigeria presents a multifaceted landscape characterized by various challenges and disparities. Nigeria, with its diverse population and geopolitical divisions, faces significant gaps in educational access, quality, and attainment among its regions. Several challenges like Infrastructure, insecurity, poor leadership style and Socioeconomic Factors have created the Nigerian literacy gaps. Hence, the paper recommends Community Engagement and Awareness: Engaging communities to promote the value of education, particularly for girls, and challenging cultural norms that hinder access to education is vital in closing the gaps that is existing. Also, the paper recommends effective systems of Nigerian educational trust fund to bridge the Nigeria literacy gaps.

## Introduction

Education is an important factor influencing a person's behaviour and opportunities. Historically, in 1850 Nigeria came under the British rule, but obtained its independent in 1960. The Nigerian educational system had steadily switched in 1982 to the American system though British examinations like: General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level and Advanced Level, were offered at high schools until 1989 (Murtala, Yusuf, Babangida, Usman, Idris, 2013). In 1999, the introduction of Universal Basic Education within National Policy on Education (NPE) set a platform for educational gaps in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education (NPE) introduced free and compulsory education for the first 9 years, which comprised primary and junior secondary education. The NPE was revised that later accommodated 6 years of primary education for children, 3 years of junior secondary education and 3 years of senior secondary education, this is called 6-3-3 system. The educational gap in Nigeria is also linked to the quality of education offered from primary, secondary and teritary within the geopolitical zones of the country.

According to the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) 35 % of the nation's adult population are illiterate. This is the function of the individual's location and geopolitical zones. Literacy level of citizens is critical to national development because it is tied to the quality of life of the people. According to NMEC, literacy rate is the percentage of people from the age of 15 and above who can read and write simple statements on their everyday existence. For instance, according to the Nigerian National Commission for Mass Literacy; Nigeria literacy rate for 2018 was 62.02%. While 2008, it was 51.08%. In 2006, it was 19.12% in 2003, it was 70.20%, and 15.43% increase from 2003. From the data above, it shows that there is rise and fall over the Nigerian literacy rate. Literacy rate varies from one state to another and from one geo-political zone to the other in Nigeria.

## Evaluating the state of education and literacy level in Nigeria

Literacy has been identified as an important instrument through which any country can attain socio-political and development. It is on this belief that government and people of Nigeria have taken the issue of increasing literacy rates among children and adults as a project { Murtala, Yusuf, Babangida, Usman, Idris, 2013}. Nigeria, prior to independence in 1960, had a history of Quranic schools in the North and Missionary schools in the south. All of these promoted mostly religious literacy with its root in colonialism. Hence, between 1952 and 1960 when Nigerian was practicing regional system of government the level of literacy gap was based on regional difference. Each region embarked on policies aimed at developing the education sector within each region. For instance, the Western and Eastern regional governments provided Universal Primary Education (UPE), the Northern Regional Government opted for free primary and adult literacy in an attempt to fight its War against literacy and each region adopts it literacy programme based on it peculiarity. Education is seen as a viable tool for socio-economic and demographic transformation.

**Distribution of Literate Population by Age Groups and Sex - National**

| Age Groups Nigeria | Both Sexes | Sex | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Males | Females |
| 6 - 9 | 6,927,539 | 3,664,812 | 3,262,727 |
| 10 – 14 | 11,475,145 | 6,125,671 | 5,349,474 |
| 15 - 19 | 11,886,674 | 6,241,532 | 5,645,142 |
| 20 - 24 | 10,410,997 | 5,207,988 | 5,203,009 |
| 25 - 29 | 9,105,457 | 4,483,180 | 4,622,277 |
| 30 - 34 | 6,660,211 | 3,469,292 | 3,190,919 |
| 35 - 39 | 5,220,013 | 2,844,373 | 2,375,640 |
| 40 - 44 | 4,199,406 | 2,485,927 | 1,713,479 |
| 45 - 49 | 3,062,875 | 1,911,692 | 1,151,183 |
| 50 - 54 | 2,435,519 | 1,566,270 | 869,249 |
| 55 - 59 | 1,255,721 | 825,407 | 430,314 |
| 60 - 64 | 1,184,445 | 792,615 | 391,830 |
| 65 - 69 | 562,455 | 375,683 | 186,772 |
| 70 - 74 | 550,721 | 383,614 | 167,107 |
| 75 - 79 | 249,451 | 169,050 | 80,401 |
| 80 - 84 | 288,472 | 184,877 | 103,595 |
| 85+ | 276,475 | 183,753 | 92,722 |
| Total | 75,751,576 | 40,915,736 | 34,835,840 |

**Source**: census priority table of National Population Commission, 2022

**Adult Literacy Rate in Nigeria by Geo Political Zone**

| **Geo Political Zone** | **Male** | **Female** | **Both Sexes** |
|---|---|---|---|
| North Central | 65.0 | 1 47.3 | 56.4 |
| North East | 49.8 | 4 42.0 | 33.0 |
| North West | 39.7 | 23. 0 | 2 31. 0 |
| South East | 80.7 | 67.5 | 73.8 |
| South South | 81.1 | 66.7 | 74.0 |
| South West | 75.5 | 62.6 | 69.1 |
| **NATIONAL** | **65.1** | **50.6** | **57.9** |

**Source:** National Literacy Survey (NLS), 2019

The above analysis shows the adult literacy level within the geo-political zones in Nigeria. The National Literacy Survey (NLS), indicates that the literacy level in North Central is 65 percent for man and 147.3 for females. While in the North East, the survey shows that 49.8 percent males and 4 42.0 percent for female population within the zone. In North West, 39.7 percent

males while 23.0 percent females were literate. In South East, 80.7 percent males and 67.5 percent females were literate. In South South, 81.1 percent males and 66.7 percent females were literate. South West, 75.5 percent males and 62.6 females were literate (Murtala, Yusuf, Babangida, Usman, Idris, 2013). From the above survey, the gap shows that the South-South Geo-political Zone has the highest males who are literate while the North Central have the highest females whon are literate. The National Literacy Survey has been conducted to provide relevant information necessary to monitor the pattern of youth and adult literacy rates, as well as determine the magnitude of drop out among children aged 6-14 years. Based on the literate survey 3 million children aged 6 – 14 years had never attended any school.

This represents 8.1 per cent of population of children in that age group. Also about a million children aged 6 – 14 years dropped out of school. This represents 3.2 per cent of population of children in that age group that ever-attended school. The study revealed that only 30.2 per cent of the adult population was aware of the existence of any literacy programme in their geo-political zones. About the same small proportion (32.5 per cent) of the adult population was aware of the existence of any literacy centers as well. Comparative analysis among the states shows that states in the North had relatively higher level of awareness of literacy programmes. From the literacy survey, at least, 84 per cent of the Nigerian population had attended one type of school; formal or non-formal. The percentage of the population ever attended schools was higher in urban (91.4 %) than in the rural area with 80.7 per cent. The survey reveals that gender variation still existed in school attendance as females' attendance (81.2 %) was lower than that of males' with 88.1 per cent in Nigeria Geo-political Zones (Akindubi, & Owoeye, 2018).

On the otherhand, In the past 7 years, Nigeria's illiteracy levels have dropped from 38% to 31%, indicating a 7% change between 2015 to 2022. However, at this rate, Nigeria would need an average of 21 years to achieve 94% youth literacy rates. The Nigerian government has made some efforts to improve access to education, with programs like the mass literacy programs as well as the school feeding program to improve enrollment but positive results have been slow in coming (Aderinoye, 2002). UNESCO's latest global education monitoring report stated that out-of-school children in Nigeria have increased to an estimated 20 million (Ampene, 2018).

**Status of Literacy in Nigeria**

According to the National Bureau of Statistics 2021 literacy survey, the southern geopolitical zones, 9 in every 10 young women are literate. While 4 in every 10 women are literate in the Northeast and North-West geopolitical zones. In fewer than 3 women in every 10 are literate. Children from the South-East and South-West geopolitical zones are two times more likely to enter primary school at age 6 than children from the North-East and North-West zones. Children from the three southern geopolitical zones are twice as likely to make the transition from primary to secondary school as those from the North-Central zone. In Nigeria, as in other parts of the world, primary education remains the bedrock of literacy skills acquisition; however, non-formal education is also an essential component of the educational system in Nigeria and some other African countries (Everett, 2012).

For instance in Nigeria, as at independence in 1960 a total of 15,703 primary schools with an enrolment of 2,912,618 children were established. This formed the basis of literacy within this era though with variation amongst the geo-political zones. By the year 1996 the number of primary schools had risen from 15,703 in 1960 to 40,055, an increase of 255%. School enrolment had reached 14,078,478 (Abdullahi, Danjuma; Abdullah, John, 2014). Clearly, the literacy rate among female is low. The 2006 National Census indicates the level of literacy among male and female children population in rural and urban areas which varies between 40.9% and 82.6% among male while that of female ranges between 14.6% and 74.7%. With regard to adult population aged between 15 and above, the level of literacy ranges between 14.6% and 62.8% for female while that of male ranges between 40.9% and 81.3% the variation occurs across the six geopolitical zones of the country (Nigerian National Population, 2006).

**Geopolitical Analysis of Nigerian Literacy Level**

There are gaps and differences in literacy levels of Nigerian across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. For instance, Northwest Zone: This region faces numerous challenges, including low literacy rates, limited access to quality education, and a high number of out-of-school children. Factors such as poverty, cultural norms, and security issues have contributed to these challenges, especially for girls' education. Northeast **Zone:** Security concerns, particularly the Boko Haram insurgency, have severely disrupted education in this region. Schools have been attacked, leading to the closure of educational institutions, displacement of students and teachers, and a significant impact on literacy rates and educational attainment.

**North Central Zone:** While comparatively better off in terms of education compared to the Northeast and Northwest, this zone still grapples with challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and inconsistent educational policies. Southeast **Zone:** Known for its emphasis on education, the Southeast boasts higher literacy rates and better access to schools compared to some northern regions. However, infrastructural deficits and occasional educational disparities within states persist. **Southwest Zone:** Often regarded as one of the most educationally advanced regions, the Southwest has a relatively higher literacy rate and better educational infrastructure. States in this zone have made considerable investments in education, leading to improved access and quality.

**South-South Zone:** Despite the presence of oil wealth in some states, educational challenges persist. Issues such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and a lack of quality teachers have affected the overall education landscape in this region. Nigeria operates a federal system of government with a central government and thirty-six States. Geographically, the states are located within six geo-political zones namely; North Central, North East, North West, South East, South-South and South West. There are comparative advantages in literacy rate in each of these zones (Akpan-Atata, 2013). Overall, Nigeria has a lower than expected level of educational achievement given its moderately high per capita income that manifest across the geoploitical zones of the country. Among the six geo-political Zones in Nigeria, South East had the highest literacy rate. While South West had the highest literacy rate. North West had the least literacy rate, whereas North Central had the least literacy rate (NBS, 2020).

## Theoretical Framework

### Human capital theory

Woodhall, (1997), propounded the theory. Human capital theory builds on the assumption that education is highly influential and necessary in improving the productive capacity of a population. Human capital theorists argue that an educated population is a productive population. The theory lays emphasis on how education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human, which is a product of intrinsic abilities and investment in human beings. The provision of formal education is seen as an investment in human capital, which proponents of the theory have considered as equally or even more worthwhile than that of physical capital (Woodhall, 1997). Human capital theory is the most influential economic theory as it sets the framework for government policies. Based on the assumptions of the theory, the theory is relevance to the educational policies of Nigerian Geo-political Zones to close the educational gaps and enhances the literacy level of her population. The shortfall of the theory is that the theorist never recommended the approach to close the educational gaps in the zones. However, the theory is apt to the study.

## Conclusion/Recommendations

Bridging the gap in education and literacy levels between Nigeria's geopolitical zones requires concerted efforts, sustained investments, and a commitment to addressing the multifaceted challenges affecting the educational landscape in the country. Nigeria does not have accurate numbers of people who need literacy to enable her plan accordingly to enhance socio-economic development of the country. A national assessment of literacy levels and practices is critical if Nigeria is to present a realistic account of its Universal Basic Education achievement across the six geo-political zones of the country. It is evident from the status of literacy in Nigeria that there are variations of literacy levels amongst Nigerians in each geo-political zone. Specifically adult literacy rate is about 56.9% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020) meaning that almost half of the Nigerian population are illiterates despite a number of programmes put in place to address adult illiteracy. Based on this the paper recommends that Nigeria needs to show more commitments to improve on her effort to make literacy available to all in Nigeria. Nigerian ministry of education should collaborate with International bodies like the World Bank to establish National Educational Trust Fund to promote literacy. The paper recommends further **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Engaging communities to promote the value of education, particularly for girls, and challenging cultural norms that hinder access to education is vital in closing the gaps that is existing.

## References

Abdullahi, Danjuma; Abdullah, John (2014)."The Political Will and Quality Basic Education in Nigeria" (PDF). *Journal of Power, Politics, and Governance. 2 (2): 75-100.*

Aderinoye, R. (2002). Literacy assessment practices (LAP) in selected developing countries Nigeria case study. Discussion document prepared for ILI/UNESCO LAP 2nd Experts' Meeting. Paris: UNESCO.

Ajibade B. O. & Odebode T.O. (2018), "Effects of Professional Courses on the Attainment of Career Goals" 3rd Muslim Management Science Student *Association Seminar, Ekiti State University, Ekiti State. Pp 2-3:5.*

Akindubi, J.D. & Owoeye, V.O.(2018). "Knowledge Driven Growth and Economic Diversification: Lessons for Nigeria.

Akpan-Atata E. A. (2013). Information types and repackaging skills for researchers and academics in the Third World. *African Journal of Educational Research and Administration. 6. (1) 115-120.*

Ampene, E.K. (1980). "The fruits of literacy" Adult Education in Nigeria, 5, 1-5 Bhola, H.S. (1983). The promise of literacy: Campaigns, programs and project. Reports of the international seminar on campaign for literacy.

Everett, N. (2012). Education for liberation: behind Cuban's education success. Irish: Centre for global education.

Murtala, A., Yusuf, A. , Babangida, L., Usman, A., Idris, A. H. {2013}. Comparative Study Of The State Of Literacy in Nigeria and Cuba. *European Scientific Journal. 9 {19}.1857 – 7881.*

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2010). National Survey, 2020. Abuja: National Bureau of Statistics.