

ABSTRACT

The research attempted to identify the major factors associated with achievement among adult literacy students.

The main factors investigated were the personal characteristics of the students like sex and age; environment-related characteristics like locale and employment status; the students' learning-related environment constituted by the type of class attended, attendance and their teachers' classroom behaviour; the student's previous exposure to schooling and his/her value oriented characteristics like modernism, motivation and media exposure. Some or all of these characteristics were presumed to influence achievement in literacy.

A sample of 172 students were selected using a stratified random sampling procedure. The sample came from three parishes Kingston, St. Andrew and St. Catherine and was representative of students attending adult literacy classes organized by the Jamaica Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) Foundation.

A standardized objective test with Reading and Numbers Sub-Tests was used to measure achievement in literacy. The various student characteristics were obtained through an orally administered questionnaire and the teacher behaviour was measured using a time-interval classroom observation check list.

Contingency relationships between pairs of independent variables were tested using Chi Square Statistic. The inter-relationships between variables were examined using simple and biserial correlations. Predictors of achievement were isolated by the use of Step-Wise Multiple Regression procedure.

The investigation revealed that achievement in literacy is associated with previous schooling, motivation, modernism and locale of the student. These four variables collectively accounted for approximately 29% of the observed variance. The results showed that attendance and teacher behaviour were contingent on locale. Attendance was found to be significantly different in the different types of JAMAL Classes. Significant degree of correlations at .05 level between modernism and attendance, previous schooling and motivation, age and media exposure as well as age and locale were observed.

The results of the research suggest that the vast majority of the JAMAL student population is below 25 years and had at least some previous schooling. JAMAL is carrying out a reclamation work salvaging many that were not made literate by the formal school system. Further, JAMAL is instrumental in modernising the values of the participants. Greater JAMAL activity in the larger urban population centres is also evident. The results further indicate that the belief that literacy acquisition will enhance economic improvement opportunities is a key motivator.

On the basis of the findings it would be reasonable to recommend a greater emphasis on literacy education in the more rural areas of the country, intensified mobilization of more of the productive age-groups in the society, creation of better economic improvement opportunities for the new literates and the provision of better training facilities for literacy instructors. Need for further research in the field cannot be over-emphasised.