

## ASSESSMENT OF ADULT LITERACY FACILITATORS' COMPETENCIES: NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVES

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### Abstract

This study investigated the competencies of adult literacy facilitators (ALFs) in shaping adult education programmes (AEPs) in Enugu State, Nigeria, drawing perspectives from stakeholders including adult learners, ALFs, and adult education administrators (AEAs). The research explores the perceptions of these stakeholders on ALFs' competencies, considering variations based on teaching expertise and adult learners' educational levels. Three specific objectives, three research questions were posed while three hypotheses were formulated and tested. A descriptive survey design was employed, involving 277 respondents from the three stakeholder groups. An 80-item structured questionnaire was adapted from the study of Bernhardsson and Lattke (2011) and had previously been validated. Cronbach Alpha estimate was used to establish the reliability, and reliability co-efficient of 0.94 was obtained. Frequencies, percentages, mean, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to present the data. Findings revealed a consensus among stakeholders on the importance of various competencies, suggesting a shared understanding of ALFs' roles. However, professional development emerged as a neglected dimension, with limited institutional administrative support. Adult learners prioritize certain competencies differently, indicating a need to align teaching practices with adult learners' needs. Recommendations included equipping ALFs with inclusive teaching skills, prioritizing professional development, promoting learner-centred teaching, and addressing gender disparities in educational access.

**Keywords:** adult education programmes; competencies, adult literacy facilitators; adult education administrators; professional development; Nigeria

### Introduction

The efficacy of adult education programmes (AEPs) and the results for adult learners are significantly influenced by the abilities of adult literacy facilitators (ALFs) in the field of adult education. Promoting adult learners' engagement and achievement in AEPs requires competent ALFs (Obetta & Ekwuekwe, 2018; Zagir & Mandel, 2020; Zagir & Dorner, 2022). Moreover, efforts to build curricula and enhance programmes require a thorough grasp of ALFs' competencies (Perry & Bevins, 2018; Channa & Sahito, 2022). Competent ALFs play a critical role in providing insights into the critical domains of knowledge and skills required for effective facilitation (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] Institute for Lifelong Learning [UIL], 2019). Competent ALFs tackle the complex issues impeding the growth of adult education, especially in nations like Nigeria where socioeconomic inequality is a problem (Obetta & Agboeze, 2010). Furthermore, it is impossible to exaggerate the significance of evaluating and developing ALFs' capabilities given the worldwide commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which places a premium on high-quality education for everyone (UNESCO, 2020). Programme quality is improved and participation is greatly increased by skilled ALFs (Von Hippel & Tippelt, 2010). UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL, 2016) suggested that enhancing motivation and

proficiency in providing feedback through professional development can additionally reduce dropout rates and enhance the efficacy of recruiting for adult education programmes (AEPs).

To elaborate, the viewpoints of adult learners, ALFs' teaching experience, and adult education administrators (AEAs) can be used to evaluate the competencies of ALFs. A deep and intricate concept of ALFs' competencies is formed by the viewpoints of the various stakeholders, the variety of teaching experiences, and the differing views of adult learners. Thus, the development of the competencies necessary for effective teaching and the building of the professional self are emphasized by the concepts of "professional self" and "competences", which are thought to be complementary (Obetta & Agboeze, 2010; Yeung et al., 2014). Stated differently, the competencies of ALFs ought to be recognized and enhanced in tandem with their professional identity. Despite their frequent confusion, competence and qualification are two different concepts. The concept of "competence" refers to a person's complex internal state as demonstrated by their knowledge, skills, abilities, and motivation.

In the meantime, the demand externalizes the person's internal circumstances in order for them to carry out specific duties (Zagir & Dorner, 2022). Capacity is a multifaceted concept that includes social skills, personal traits, and cognitive and perceptual abilities. Conversely, a qualification (or requirement) is an external demand based on a person's knowledge, abilities, and attitudes that calls on them to make use of their innate ability to manage particular circumstances effectively. Bertelsmann et al. (2011) stated that knowledge is the accumulation of facts, theories, ideas, and beliefs that underpin a specific comprehension of a topic or domain; skills as the capacity to execute particular processes involving the utilization of knowledge; and attitudes as the preparedness of one's physical, mental, and emotional faculties to engage in a task.

Researchers that studied the competencies of ALFs noted that these competencies may be viewed via the prism of sub-fields in adult education, including corporate and functional education, cultural and artistic education, vocational education, and social and moral education (Van Dellen & Van der Kamp, 2008; Obetta & Agboeze, 2010). Diverse sub-fields imply distinct ALF competencies. A study conducted by Bernhardsson and Lattke (2011) identified common competencies across various sub-fields of adult education, including formal basic adult education, non-formal adult education, and work-related training and development, in countries such as Austria, Sweden, Denmark, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Italy, France, and Portugal. The study revealed nine domains of common competencies among ALFs, encompassing subject expertise, communication skills, effective teaching methods, learner support, personal and professional development, facilitation of engaging learning experiences, analysis of learning processes, self-assessment abilities, and fostering a supportive learning environment.

Studying ALFs' competence by concentrating on their function as teachers rather than on particular adult learning sub-fields is a widely accepted method. A comprehensive research endeavour covering 27 European Union (EU) member states alongside five additional nations from the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) unveiled six specialized and seven general competencies essential for ALFs. The overarching competencies include personal development, interpersonal skills, commitment to professional growth, subject expertise, proficiency in diverse adult learning methods, empowerment of learners, and adeptness in managing group diversity and heterogeneity (Buiskool et al., 2010; Research voor Beleid, 2010; Zagir & Dorner, 2022). Thus, determining the needs of adult learners, creating the learning process, supporting their personal growth and knowledge acquisition, overseeing and evaluating the learning process, offering advice or counselling, and developing programmes are among the specialized competencies. ALFs' competencies in the USA encompass the

ability to: design and implement evidence-based instruction of high quality; track and assess student progress using data; effectively communicate to inspire and involve learners; and uphold professionalism while continually enhancing knowledge and skills (American Institutes for Research [AIR], 2014). The competencies essential for ALFs in their instructional roles include needs assessment, subject-specific expertise, programme design, pedagogical proficiency, monitoring progress, adult learners' support, communication, administrative support, personal traits, and professionalism. Additionally, Wahlgren (2016) emphasized four core competencies crucial for ALFs in teaching roles: subject knowledge, consideration of learners' prior experiences, fostering a conducive learning atmosphere, and engaging in continuous reflection for both professional and personal development.

In Enugu State of Nigeria, there is an adult literacy project in each of the 17 local government areas. Establishing, overseeing, monitoring, and regulating adult education programmes (AEPs) in the state is the responsibility of the State Agency for Mass Literacy, Adult, and Non-Formal Education (SAME) (Oyigbo et al., 2020). The task of eliminating illiteracy as quickly as feasible falls to SAME, which is a division of the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC). The local government's adult education administrators (AEAs), which are made up of coordinators, alternate coordinators, and supervisors, are in charge of overseeing, monitoring, and managing the programme's daily operations. AEAs need to ensure that ALFs possess essential competencies, including the ability to assess learners' needs, design learning processes, facilitate knowledge acquisition, foster adult learners' development, monitor and evaluate learning progress, provide guidance or counselling support, and develop programmes, all aimed at aligning with the agency's objectives. Enugu State's AEAs are vital in attracting adult learners and managing ALFs' professional development programmes. On the other hand, it appears that the state and local government entities are unclear about the authority held by ALFs.

Despite the fact that ALF professional development ought to be a top goal, several nations—including Nigeria—have not taken a systematic approach to it (UIL, 2019). The disjointed training for its ALFs' professional growth reflects this tendency (Andersson et al., 2012). Thus, even though there ought to have been legal frameworks, ALFs' professional growth has been viewed as an individual responsibility (Milana & Larson, 2010). Due to this, a large number of ALFs that join the area lack expertise in adult education learning and teaching (Gedviliene et al., 2018; Kusic et al., 2015; Paulos, 2015). While ALFs typically require a higher education degree in teaching, adult education centers (AECs) occasionally hire elementary or secondary school teachers as facilitators. However, this practice is sub-optimal as teacher education often lacks a focus on adult education-related didactics (Zagir & Dorner, 2022). But there have not been enough possibilities for ALFs to continue their professional growth (Yembuu, 2019). This deficiency appears to be exacerbated by a lack of a competence profile for ALFs, inadequate financial resources, and limited experience on AEPs.

As a result, it appears that ALFs' professional development is seen as a personal obligation, a "burden" that falls on their shoulders. Even though ALFs' competences are acknowledged as being important, empirical study is still needed to determine how much ALFs' competencies have enhanced AEPs in Enugu State, Nigeria. This research should take into account the opinions of ALFs as well as other players in AEPs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine the extent to which the competencies of ALFs improve AEPs in Enugu State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. ascertain the extent to which different stakeholders perceive ALFs' common competencies in AEPs.
2. determine the extent to which common competencies of ALFs vary when their teaching expertise is considered in AEPs.
3. determine the extent to which common competencies of ALFs vary when the adult learners' educational level is considered in AEPs.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do different stakeholders perceive ALFs' core competencies in AEPs?
2. To what extent do common competencies of ALFs vary when their teaching expertise is considered in AEPs?
3. To what extent do common competencies of ALFs vary when the adult learners' educational level is considered in AEPs?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were developed to direct the analysis, and they were evaluated at a significant point of 0.05:

1. There is statistically no significant difference among the three different stakeholders' perception on the ALFs' core competencies in AEPs.
2. There is statistically no significant difference among the three stakeholders on the extent to which common competencies of ALFs vary when their teaching expertise is considered in AEPs.
3. There is statistically no significant difference between ALFs and adult learners on the extent to which common competencies of ALFs vary when the adult learners' educational level is considered in AEPs.

### **Research Methods**

A descriptive survey research design was used to collect information from adult learners, ALFs, and AEAs (coordinators, alternate coordinators, and supervisors) on the common competencies of ALFs in Nigerian AEPs. This design is suitable for collecting data on the present context, including identifying the requirements of adult learners, crafting the learning process, facilitating knowledge acquisition, fostering adult learners' personal development, evaluating the learning process, offering guidance or counselling, and designing programmes (Zagir & Dorner, 2022).

The study's population of 2,546 respondents were selected from three stakeholder groups: adult learners (2,073), ALFs (449), and AEAs (24) (Enugu State Agency for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education [ENSAME], 2024). Thus, a sample of 277 respondents (150 adult learners, 105 ALFs, and 22 AEAs) was employed. It represented 91.7% of AEAs, 23.4% of ALFs, and 7.2% of adult learners who attended AEPs in 2023. The study used a simple random sampling technique to select 12 out of the 118 adult education centres (AECs) in Enugu State, which represented 10.2% of the AECs in the state.

The researchers developed a list of potential competencies while creating the instrument for data collection. Surveys were used to gather empirical data in order to verify and improve the list of generated competencies. The survey used in this investigation was modified from one that Bernhardsson and Lattke (2011) had previously validated. The survey was modified since its goal was the same as the current study's, which aimed at acknowledging the central

role of ALFs in the investigation and pinpointing the shared competencies of ALFs in their teaching roles.

Researchers chose the first wave of the original questionnaire and made a two-phase modification based on the three-wave Delphi approach of Bernhardsson and Lattke (2011). In order to build a new version of the questionnaire, the first step was to incorporate the relevant competencies that were left out of the first wave of the original pilot. Second, the operations of ALFs at the Enugu State Agency for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (ENSAME) were compared with the new version. Consequently, a final version of the questionnaire was made, with 80 items divided into 10 domains of similar abilities.

Reliability was tested by a pilot test of the final version of the instrument with 60 stakeholders in the Ishielu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. Cronbach's alpha estimate was utilized to assess internal consistency. The survey's applicability in AEPs in Enugu State was demonstrated by the reliability coefficient of 0.94 that was achieved.

At the end, 277 copies of the questionnaire were given out by the researchers to respondents at AEAs' offices and AECs (for ALFs, and adult learners). With the assistance of three trained research assistants who were fully educated on the method of administration and retrieval of the questionnaire copies, a direct distribution strategy was employed to administer and collect the instrument. Because of this, all the 277 copies of the questionnaire that were issued were correctly completed and returned, yielding a 100% return rate.

In order to address the study issues, the results were quantitatively analyzed using statistical software (SPSS version 20). Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were used to analyze the quantitative results. For each of the three hypotheses, a one-way ANOVA was estimated at the 0.05 significance level in order to evaluate the significant mean difference between the response groups.

## Results

**Table 1**

### Biographical information of respondents

Bio-data of the respondents	Adult Learners		Adult Literacy Facilitators		Adult Education Administrators	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Sex profile</b>						
Male	28	18.67	16	15.24	2	9.09
Female	122	81.33	89	84.76	20	90.91
<b>Highest educational attainment</b>						
Primary	85	56.67	0	0	0	0
Junior secondary	45	30	0	0	0	0
Senior secondary	10	6.67	1	0.95	0	0
Vocational school	10	6.67	0	0	0	0
Diploma school	0	0	5	4.76	0	0
University	0	0	99	94.29	22	100
<b>Discipline</b>						
Majored in teaching	0	0	92	87.62	0	0
Not majored in teaching	0	0	10	9.52	0	0
Majored in adult education teaching	0	0	3	2.86	0	0
<b>Years of work experience</b>						

0-3 years	0	0	32	30.48	8	36.36
4-6 years	0	0	38	36.19	7	31.82
7 years and above	0	0	35	33.33	7	31.82

Table 1 displays the biographical information of adult education stakeholders in AEPs in Enugu State. The table indicated that 81.33% of adult learners, 84.76% of ALFs, and 90.91% of AEAs are female stakeholders. This suggests that there is relatively little male engagement. Regarding the previous educational background of adult learners, 56.67% of the respondents had only completed primary school, whilst 30% had completed junior secondary school. The percentage of responders with senior secondary and vocational education, respectively, is only 6.67%. The table also revealed that only 2.86% of ALFs majored in adult education teaching, while a smaller percentage (9.52%) did not achieve this qualification but are nonetheless employed. Furthermore, 30.48% of ALFs possess 0–3 years of experience, 36.19% have accumulated 4–6 years of experience, and 33.33% have served as ALFs in AECs for over seven years.

**Table 2**

**Differences between the common competence domains among different stakeholders**

Common competence domain	Stakeholders	N	M	SD	Sig.
Needs assessment	Adult learners	150	3.14	0.611	0.087*
	ALFs	105	3.30	0.472	
	AEAs	22	3.20	0.551	
Programme design	Adult learners	150	3.19	0.540	0.000***
	ALFs	105	3.48	0.460	
	AEAs	22	3.38	0.463	
Subject-related domain	Adult learners	150	3.39	0.474	0.668
	ALFs	105	3.40	0.439	
	AEAs	22	3.48	0.515	
Didactical-methodological Domain	Adult learners	150	3.32	0.483	0.271
	ALFs	105	3.41	0.450	
	AEAs	22	3.40	0.391	
Monitoring	Adult learners	150	3.15	0.534	0.202
	ALFs	105	3.21	0.475	
	AEAs	22	3.35	0.463	
Adult learners' support	Adult learners	150	3.37	0.444	0.616
	ALFs	105	3.31	0.494	
	AEAs	22	3.36	0.443	
Institutional administrative support	Adult learners	150	3.06	0.524	0.000***
	ALFs	105	3.39	0.427	
	AEAs	22	3.44	0.418	
Personal development	Adult learners	150	3.37	0.450	0.224
	ALFs	105	3.46	0.475	
	AEAs	22	3.36	0.470	
Professional development	Adult learners	150	3.30	0.446	0.035
	ALFs	105	3.44	0.459	
	AEAs	22	3.43	0.429	
Communication	Adult learners	150	3.16	0.530	0.051**
	ALFs	105	3.31	0.525	
	AEAs	22	3.36	0.472	

Personal qualities	Adult learners	150	3.36	0.469	0.398*
	ALFs	105	3.44	0.448	
	AEAs	22	3.33	0.472	

\*Means based on 4-point scale: 1 = not important; 2 = less important; 3 = more important; 4 = fully important.

\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.005$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Table 2 illustrates that all core competence domains hold equal significance for adult learners, ALFs, and AEAs, irrespective of their status, with mean scores ranging from 3.06 to 3.48. One-Way ANOVA analysis indicates no notable distinctions among stakeholders in core competence domains, including subject-related expertise, didactical-methodological proficiency, monitoring abilities, adult learners' support, personal development, and personal qualities. These findings suggest that adult learners, ALFs, and AEAs uniformly regard these core competence domains as vital.

The results unveiled noteworthy variations among stakeholders in common competence domains such as needs assessment, programme design, institutional administrative support, professional development, and communication. To delve deeper into these differences between the two stakeholder groups, the Tukey-Kramer Multiple Comparison Procedure was employed for further statistical analyses.

**Table 3**

**Differences between some competence domains among different stakeholders**

Domain of core competencies	Relevant stakeholders		Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.
Needs assessment	ALFs	AEAs	0.098	0.131	0.733
	ALFs	Adult learners	0.157	0.071	0.070*
	AEAs	Adult learners	0.059	0.127	0.888
Programme design	ALFs	AEAs	0.101	0.118	0.673
	ALFs	Adult learners	0.293	0.064	0.000***
	AEAs	Adult learners	0.192	0.115	0.220
Institutional administrative support	ALFs	AEAs	-0.057	0.113	0.871
	ALFs	Adult learners	0.327	0.061	0.000***
	AEAs	Adult learners	0.383	0.110	0.002***
Professional Development	ALFs	AEAs	0.005	0.105	0.999
	ALFs	Adult learners	0.142	0.057	0.036**
	AEAs	Adult learners	0.137	0.103	0.378
Communication	ALFs	AEAs	-0.051	0.123	0.908
	ALFs	Adult learners	0.144	0.067	0.081*
	AEAs	Adult learners	0.195	0.120	0.235

\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.005$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Table 3 indicates notable disparities between ALFs and adult learners regarding the significance of core competence domains, including needs assessment (Sig. 0.070 < 0.10), programme design (Sig. 0.000 < 0.01), institutional administrative support (Sig. 0.000 < 0.01), professional development (Sig. 0.036 < 0.05), and communication (Sig. 0.081 < 0.10). These results imply that ALFs tend to prioritize these domains to a greater extent.

Further analysis from the study unveiled a notable contrast in the core competence domain of institutional administrative support between AEAs and adult learners (Sig. 0.002 < 0.01). These findings suggest that AEAs place a higher priority on these domains.

**Table 4****Differences in common competences of ALFs when their work experience is considered**

<b>Common competence domains</b>	<b>Work experiences as ALFs</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Subject-related domain	0-3 years	32	3.48	0.454	0.473
	4-6 years	38	3.35	0.493	
	7 years and above	35	3.37	0.360	
Didactical-methodological domain	0-3 years	32	3.46	0.477	0.614
	4-6 years	38	3.36	0.480	
	7 years and above	35	3.42	0.395	
Adult learners' support	0-3 years	32	3.39	0.482	0.452
	4-6 years	38	3.24	0.505	
	7 years and above	35	3.32	0.495	
Institutional administration support	0-3 years	32	3.36	0.453	0.684
	4-6 years	38	3.36	0.437	
	7 years and above	35	3.44	0.398	
Personal development	0-3 years	32	3.56	0.464	0.211
	4-6 years	38	3.36	0.554	
	7 years and above	35	3.48	0.373	
Professional development	0-3 years	32	3.47	0.522	0.587
	4-6 years	38	3.38	0.480	
	7 years and above	35	3.47	0.373	
Communication	0-3 years	32	3.31	0.549	0.752
	4-6 years	38	3.26	0.574	
	7 years and above	35	3.35	0.453	
Personal qualities	0-3 years	32	3.48	0.405	0.769
	4-6 years	38	3.40	0.498	
	7 years and above	35	3.44	0.437	

Table 4 illustrates the disparities in common competencies among ALFs categorized by their experience levels (0-3 years, 4-6 years, and 7 years and above). Both the One-Way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test findings indicate no significant variance in the importance levels of these core competence domains. The study implies that regardless of their teaching experience, the significance of core competence domains for ALFs remains consistent, underscoring their on-going importance.



**Table 5**

**Differences in common competences of ALFs when adult learners' educational level is considered**

Common competence domains	Educational attainment of adult learners	N	M	SD	t-test	
					t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Needs assessment	Primary education	85	3.16	0.59	0.616	0.539
	Others	65	3.10	0.63		
Programme design	Primary education	85	3.20	0.55	0.243	0.808
	Others	65	3.17	0.53		
Subject-related domain	Primary education	85	3.41	0.50	0.671	0.503
	Others	65	3.36	0.44		
Didactical-methodological Domain	Primary education	85	3.35	0.49	0.872	0.385
	Others	65	3.28	0.48		
Monitoring	Primary education	85	3.11	0.58	-0.985	0.326
	Others	65	3.20	0.46		
Adult learners' support	Primary education	85	3.37	0.48	0.181	0.856
	Others	65	3.36	0.39		
Institutional administrative support	Primary education	85	3.03	0.56	-0.653	0.515
	Others	65	3.09	0.47		
Personal development	Primary education	85	3.39	0.45	0.712	0.478
	Others	65	3.34	0.45		
Professional development	Primary education	85	3.30	0.45	0.203	0.840
	Others	65	3.29	0.45		
Communication	Primary education	85	3.18	0.51	0.457	0.649
	Others	65	3.14	0.56		
Personal qualities	Primary education	85	3.40	0.45	1.051	0.295
	Others	65	3.32	0.50		

Table 5 reveals differences in common competences of ALFs among adult learners with primary education and other levels of education, including junior secondary, senior secondary, and vocational school. The t-test revealed no significant difference in adult learners' perceptions of common competence domains of ALFs, indicating that their educational attainment does not significantly influence their perceptions. It implies that adult learners' educational attainment does not affect their prioritization of common competence domains required by ALFs.

**Table 6****Core competences among the common competence domains**

Competence domains	Adult learners		ALFs		AEAs		Rank
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Needs assessment	79	52.6	75	71.4	17	77.2	4 <sup>th</sup>
Programme design	86	57.3	77	73.3	19	86.3	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Subject-related domain	86	57.3	44	41.9	6	27.2	5 <sup>th</sup>
Didactical-methodological domain	119	79.3	97	92.3	20	91	1 <sup>st</sup>
Monitoring	56	37.3	22	20.9	5	22.7	8 <sup>th</sup>
Adult learners' support	82	54.6	41	39	9	40.9	6 <sup>th</sup>
Institutional administrative support	26	17.3	15	14.2	7	31.8	9 <sup>th</sup>
Personal and professional development	59	39.3	43	40.9	11	50	7 <sup>th</sup>
Communication	118	78.6	82	78	14	63.6	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Personal qualities	39	26	29	27.6	2	9	10 <sup>th</sup>

Table 6 reveals ALFs' most important competences are didactical-methodological, followed by communication and programme design, as agreed upon by all stakeholders. The AEAs ranked programme design as the second most important competence domain, followed by communication as the fourth. Adult learners and ALFs ranked competence in needs assessment fourth, and subject-related domain fifth. On the other hand, AEAs ranked competence in needs assessment third, and personal and professional development fifth. More than half of adult learners considered the core competence domains of didactical-methodological, communication, programme design, needs assessment, and subject-related expertise as highly significant. These domains entail ALFs' capacities to motivate, inspire, mentor adult learners, provide insights into future learning prospects, and empower them to assume responsibility for their learning processes.

**Discussion**

The findings of the study were discussed under the following sub-headings:

**Common competences for adult literacy facilitators (ALF):** The study's conclusions demonstrated that each of the three stakeholders—adult learners, ALFs, and AEAs—identified each common competency domain as having similar significance. According to the hypothesis, there was no discernible difference in the significance of common competencies between adult learners' varying educational level and years of teaching experience. This implies that these competencies may serve as a common framework for understanding the capabilities of ALFs. The observations of Research voor Beleid (2010), and Bernhardsson and Lattke (2011) regarding the shared competencies among ALFs, which encompass their instructional responsibilities, support the findings.

**Professional development as a neglected dimension:** The study's findings highlighted the core competencies perceived within common competence categories. These encompassed the didactical-methodological domain, communication, programme development, needs assessment, and subject-specific expertise. These findings of the study are consistent with Wahlgren's (2016) research, which suggested that crucial competencies for any ALF include "adult needs assessment", "subject-matter expertise", and "programme planning and teaching methods". Additionally, studies by Akkerman and Meijer (2011) indicated that professional development competence is fundamental, emphasizing the balance between competence and professional growth. However, contrary to these assertions, neither ALFs nor adult learners in

this study viewed professional development as a pivotal competence within the realm of adult teaching and learning. Professional growth and development are frequently seen as a private duty of ALFs, with little to no institutional assistance.

***Adult learners' perspective on core competences needed by ALFs:*** The study's conclusions demonstrated that there were significant discrepancies between the perspectives of adult learners and their facilitators. Proficiency in evaluating the needs of adult learners was seen more crucial by their facilitators than by the adult learners who were taking part. Thus, even though learning needs assessment is regarded as a fundamental pedagogical premise in adult learning and teaching, adult learners may believe that their facilitators are more essential than their own learning requirements (Zagir & Dorner, 2022). This suggests a return to an educational culture that might not support a learner-centered approach (Yembuu et al., 2015) and might thus disregard the acquisition of skills necessary for reflective practice (Zagir & Dorner, 2022).

The study's findings further illustrated how assessing learning needs assists adults in understanding their own learning preferences, focusing on what they wish to learn, their preferred learning methods, and their motivations for learning. As individuals' perception of their learning needs significantly impacts their decision to enrol in AEPs, acquiring these skills (both for ALFs and adult learners) could consequently enhance adult learner participation (Zagir, 2014). Both the assessment of adult learners' requirements and the alignment of programme design with those needs could be covered in professional development programmes.

The study's further findings demonstrated that adult learners did not value the professional development competency of their facilitators over other domains, nor did they think that communication skill was crucial. This is fascinating because, Kopsen (2014) affirmed that communication potentially plays a crucial role in engaging adult learners in the educational experiences.

***The importance of motivating and supporting adult learners:*** Even though they would most benefit from such opportunities, the study's findings also demonstrated that persons with lower levels of education participated in adult education programmes at a lower rate. Men are often encouraged to engage more in education as they typically have lower levels of education attainment compared to women (National Statistical Office of Mongolia [NSO], 2020). However, there is also a prevalent belief that men may not necessarily require education to thrive in the society. Consequently, in situations where parents cannot afford to educate all their children, they tend to prioritize their daughters' education over their sons (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). This may be one of the reasons daughters with education gain status in the families of their husbands. It implies that in order to draw in and assist a larger number of adult learners, ALFs must have certain competencies. The study's results supported this notion, with adult learners assigning excellent ratings to the competency domain of assisting fellow adult learners. There are also inspiring and encouraging resources for adult learners in this topic.

## **Conclusion**

The study evaluates adult literacy facilitators' competencies in Enugu State, revealing shared perceptions and divergence among stakeholders. It highlights the importance of common competence domains like didactical-methodological skills, communication, programme design, needs assessment, and subject-related expertise for effective adult learning. The study found a significant oversight in recognizing professional development as a crucial aspect of adult learners' competencies, with both recognizing it as an individual responsibility rather than an institutional commitment.

Adult learners and ALFs differ on the importance of needs assessment, highlighting a potential gap in pedagogical approaches. Addressing this requires promoting reflective practice and empowering learners. The study emphasizes the need for adult learners, especially those with lower education, to be motivated and supported, highlighting gendered dynamics in educational access and the need for inclusivity.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. State agency for mass literacy, adult and non-formal education (SAME) should equip ALFs with competencies to create inclusive and accessible learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of adult learners. This will include fostering a supportive and motivating atmosphere that encourages participation and engagement across all demographic groups.
2. State governments and policymakers should prioritize initiatives that provide comprehensive support for ALFs' professional development, including training programmes, mentorship opportunities, and access to resources. Institutional frameworks should be established to foster a culture of continuous learning and collaboration among ALFs.
3. The adult education administrators (AEAs) should make efforts to promote learner-centred teaching that prioritizes the assessment of adult learners' needs and preferences. Training programmes for ALFs should incorporate strategies for effectively engaging adult learners in the learning process, fostering autonomy and empowerment.
4. The adult education administrators and policymakers should address gender disparities in educational access by implementing targeted interventions to support the educational needs of men, particularly those with lower educational attainment. Strategies should be developed to challenge societal norms and perceptions that prioritize education for women over men.

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