

## Creating learning opportunities for drivers for accident prevention on Nigerian roads

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### Abstract

The study is on creating learning opportunities for drivers for prevention of accidents on Nigerian roads. The situation of Nigerians has been x-rayed to validate the need to train drivers to reduce the incidence of road accidents and the attendant loss of lives and crippling of survivors. To guide the study, four research questions were posed to address the problems of the study. The problem was to identify the factors responsible for accidents on our roads and the training needs of drivers, including road safety officials. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and the scope was limited to Peace Mass Transit drivers who number 2,100, though 200 were sampled and the 115 copies of the questionnaire were returned. Responses elicited from the drivers showed that conditions of our roads, lack of training of drivers and road safety personnel have contributed a lot to accidents. Recommendations made by the researchers include amongst others that: The Federal Ministry of Works should as a matter of urgency, institute a task force that will be charged with ensuring that no potholes exist on our roads. Adult educators may resort to advocacy in this instance.

**Keywords:** Learning Opportunities; Drivers; Traffic; Accident Prevention; Nigerian Roads

### 1. Introduction

The carnage on Nigerian roads has assumed alarming proportions and one is left to wonder who the next victim will be. It is doubted that anyone travels today in the highway without some measure of apprehension- apprehension over this personal safety, over the general attitude of the driver, the balance of the vehicle on its wheels, the standard or quality of the tyres; apprehension over the oncoming vehicle as to whether it would crash into his own vehicle and therefore, end one's journey midway. Dominated by such fears, some commuters have even died when they ought not, at the slightest collision.

On April 7, 1983 at Okigwe expressway junction, at exactly 10.00a.m., four young men full of life were crossing from Mbanotown end of the road. A road into the Okigwe Town end in a Toyota bus, and behold, speeding through that expressway from Umuahia towards Enugu was a luxury bus at the same time. The bus came to the point of crossing the expressway junction. The image, one would venture to say was created by the ensuing collision is that of a powerful footballer hammering a shot into a yawning net. That was it; the small bus was kicked, at least a pole from the point of collision as the mangled bodies of four young men convulsed to breathlessness – a clear case of preventable accident.

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As the new millennium emerged and everyone regaled at the thought of peace that would characterize the millennium, many perished needlessly. Eight passengers perished at Opi junction close to Nsukka while fourteen passengers were extracted from the wreckage of an 18-seater commuter bus sandwiched between two heavy duty vehicles- a sad case of wrong judgement in overtaking and excessive speeding which bespeak impatience and lack of adequate driving skills that training ought to impart. Even though many of our roads do not bear appropriate road signs, it is also observed that many drivers are needed to be sign literate. According to Meyer (1998) in referring to the above of drivers and engaging in workers education for the road safety officials, they may have to fashion out programmes to ensure the vacuum is filled immediately. This has also contributed to road accidents.

It must also be observed that on the Nigerian roads, it appears that heavy duty vehicle drivers equate their ego with the size of their vehicles, whereas the smaller vehicles accept that the drivers are equally small in size. This has also contributed to road accidents. Many also feel that alcoholism has contributed to road accidents as Okoro (2000) observes. In his opinion, alcohol appears to stimulate because it lowers our inhibitions, impairs our judgment and makes us less cautious. Education for adults takes any or all forms (formal, informal and non-formal). It is a life-long process which main purpose according to Nyerere in Kobani and Alozie (2016) is the “liberation of man from the restraints and limitations of ignorance and dependency.” The achievement of social, economic and political development in a country depends to a large extent on the presence of a skilled and informed adult population. The relevance of adult education as a tool for achieving the urgent need for a skilled and functional adult population has been advanced in recent times. This implies that adult education is an imperative, not only for the effective functioning of individuals at the workplace and in their own communities, but also for the renewal of society itself (Kobani and Ogwo). In this situation more so, education of drivers on road signs, better maneuvering and decision-making on the roads is pertinent in the prevention of accidents and securing of lives.

Road literacy is a component of adult education and since adult education aims at liberating man from mental poverty, limitations and restraints, it becomes one of the most effective tools in educating, equipping and re-orientating drivers on Nigerian roads. It is against this background that the researchers felt the need for crafting learning opportunities for drivers to reduce the incidence of road accidents.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The seriousness of the problem of the carnage on Nigerian roads is underscored by the fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria deemed it expedient an agency to curb road accidents. This agency, the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) has made efforts within the limits of the ensue of its staff to accident prevention expertise, but its efforts have been negated by the scope to which road accidents have assumed despite the well-meant efforts of the commission. Rather than preventing road accidents and thereby fostering road safety, the Commission has sometimes served as a helper of accident victims and other tie, acting as an agency to salvage dead bodies from mangled vehicles involved in accidents.

Falae (1989) underscores the seriousness of the situation when he states that it is highly improbable that any family exists today within our Nigerian nation which has no experienced the anguish of the sudden loss of a beloved one as a result of accidents that could have been avoided on our motorways. And if we broaden our search, he indicated, to embrace the traditional framework of the extended family, we can go even further and state that no day passes without each such family undergoing the agony of the premature loss of one of its members.

All the above expressions show that many individuals are physically or emotionally from the problems emanating from road usage. The problem of this study is to ascertain what factors have contributed to unsafe roads and heightened accidents and to articulate the problems inherent in the potholes which infest our roads. What training needs exist that have contributed to accidents on Nigerian roads will be x-rayed.

To guide this study, the following research questions were posed:

- Why is it important to create learning opportunities for drivers?
- What categories of learning opportunities are needed by drivers?
- What factors hinder access to learning opportunities for drivers?
- What environmental factors will enhance learning opportunities for drivers?

### **1.2. Purpose and Significance of the study**

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the learning opportunities open to the drivers to reduce the incident of road accidents. The contributions of the conditions of our roads to accidents will be verified including the training needs of

the drivers before being issued with driver's license. Also, staff or agencies charged with accident prevention will be enabled to be more responsive to their functions. The study will be significant to adult educators, as well as other agencies and enable Practitioners to design programmes of learning to fill the vacuum the study will expose. Access in this case will include taking training programmes to the parks and other learning centers.

### Scope of the Study

The study identified how learning opportunities can be created for drivers to achieve road safety. The study covered the areas of the need for crafting learning opportunities, types of learning opportunities, factors that hinder access to learning opportunities and environmental factors that can enhance learning opportunities.

## 2. Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey design and the population comprised 1,500 drivers of the two major mass transits namely; Peace Mass Transit, Nsukka and Ifesinachi Mass Transit Nsukka. They both have up to 1,400 registered buses and some 100 grassroots buses. Ten percent of the populations were randomly selected for the study. This gave a total of 150 drivers. The Instrument used as the Questionnaire titled, "Learning Opportunity for Accident Prevention Questionnaire" (LOAPQ) which contained all the information needed to address the research questions. The researchers made use of research Assistants in cases where the respondents not literate enough to fill the Instrument. The Assistants were trained on the objective of the study to enable them to carry out their functions properly. The researchers collected the Questionnaire but only 115 copies of the Instrument were properly filled. The responses got from the Questionnaire were converted to raw scores and analyzed using weighted mean.

## 3. Results

The Tables below present the of the study.

### 3.1. Research Question 1

Why is it important to create learning opportunities for drivers?

**Table 1** Responses of Drivers to the Importance of Creating Opportunities for Drivers

S/NO.	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1	It enables drivers to be able to read road signs.	33	50	21	11	2.91	Agree
2	It enables drivers to be able to calculate correctly before overtaking.	57	49	5	4	3.38	Agree
3	It enables drivers to be able to master technicalities in driving.	58	42	11	4	3.34	Agree
4	It enables drivers to properly relate with passenger.	47	61	5	2	3.33	Agree
5	It enables drivers to understand the implications of over-speeding.	73	36	5	1	3.57	Agree

Table 1 above shows that the respondents agreed that it is important to create learning opportunities for drivers because they will be able to read road signs, calculate correctly before overtaking, master the technicalities in driving, relate properly with passengers and understand the implications of over-speeding.

### 3.2. Research question 2

What categories of learning opportunities are needed by drivers?

**Table 2** Responses on Categories of Learning Opportunities Needed by Drivers

S/NO.	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1	There should be workshops to retain drivers at intervals.	74	38	2	1	3.61	Agree
2	Government should establish adult education centres to offer literacy programmes for drivers.	47	61	5	2	3.33	Agree
3	FRSC should organize short-term training for drivers. There should be on-the-job	40	63	3	4	3.21	Agree
4	training for drivers to enhance their driving skills.	61	49	3	4	3.21	Agree
5	Seminars should be organized to enhance the knowledge level of drivers	73	36	5	1	3.47	Agree
6	There should orientation for newly employed drivers.	58	42	11	4	3.34	Agree

Table 2 shows the responses received on categories of learning opportunities needed by drivers. The respondents agreed that workshops to retain drivers should be organized, that government should establish adult education centers to offer literacy programmes for drivers, there should be short-term training organized for drivers, even on-the-job training to enhance the drivers' driving skills along with seminars to enhance their knowledge level and when drivers are newly employed, there should be orientation for them.

### 3.3. Research Question 3

What factors hinder access to learning opportunities for drivers?

**Table 3** Responses on Factors that Hinders Access to Learning Opportunities for Drivers

S/NO.	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1	Lack of time	73	36	5	1	3.57	Agree
2	Inability to sponsor programmes	33	50	20	11	2.91	Agree
3	Lack of cooperation from Employers	61	49	3	2	3.47	Agree
4	Domestic responsibilities	57	49	5	4	3.38	Agree
5	Strenuous nature of the driving professional	58	42	11	4	3.33	Agree
6	Lack of ability to engage in any learning process	40	63	3	4	3.21	Agree
7	Officials charged with accident prevention are not grounded in driving skills and so cannot train drivers	40	63	8	4	3.21	Agree
	Too old to learn.						
8	Pride to go back to school programme.	74	38	2	1	3.61	Agree

From Table 3, it may be seen that responses received on factors that hinder access to learning opportunities include lack of time, inability to sponsor programmes, lack of cooperation from employers, domestic responsibilities, strenuous nature of the driving professions, lack of ability to engage in many learning process, too old to learn and pride to go back to school programme.

### 3.4. Research Question 4

What environment factors will enhance learning opportunities for drivers?

**Table 4** Responses on Environmental factors that will Enhance Learning Opportunities for Drivers

S/NO.	Item statement						Remarks
1	Provision of learning materials.	40	63	8	4	3.21	Agree
2	Introduction of shift system in the driving profession.	58	42	11	4	3.34	Agree
3	Free training for drivers.	74	38	2	1	3.61	Agree
4	Provision of skills programmes after the day's job in the night.	33	50	21	1	2.91	Agree
5	Organizing programmes at the motor parks during the day.	73	36	5	1	3.57	Agree
6	Adequate payment for drivers.	74	38	2	1	3.61	Agree
7	Training commuters to cooperate with drivers	73	36	5	1	3.57	Agree

Table 4 shows the responses received on the environmental factors that will enhance learning opportunities for drivers. The respondents agreed that provisions of learning materials, introduction of shift system in the driving profession, free training for drivers, provision of skills programmes after the day's job at night, organizing programmes at the motor parks during the day, adequate payment for drivers and training commuters to cooperate with drivers will constitute healthy environment for drivers.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings from this study indicate the training needs of drivers in order to reduce the incidence of road traffic accidents. When learning opportunities are created for drivers, they can have access to education which will equip them with the needed knowledge and skills required to understand how to manage poor road conditions. It has been discovered that the potholes which infest our roads have contributed much to accidents. The Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) (2000) mentions road infrastructure as a major cause of road accidents. Mentioning a particular white paper, "A New Deal for Transport; better for everyone," ROSPA made it clear that simply building more and more new roads was not the answer to traffic growth. The emphasis was on making best use of the existing highway network, giving priority to treating the places with the worst safety, congestion and environmental records. Okoro (2000) also acknowledged that poor conditions of roads have added to road accidents. Citing poor condition of roads as "imperfect roads," he advised drivers to use good judgments and limit their speed so that they can control their vehicles and maneuver through these bad spots. It is obvious that only education can equip our drivers with these skills and knowledge.

Untrained drivers who ply the roads have also caused road accidents. The observation has been made that many of these drivers are not road-sign literate. The findings of the study have verified this fact. For this reasons, majority accepted that short-term training programme should be mounted to raise the knowledge level of these drivers and pedestrians as well. ROSPA (2000) regretted that a full driving license has been seen, particularly by young men as a sign of passage to adulthood part of personal independence and mobility. The seriousness of training youths before they start to drive was emphasized by ROSPA which opined that a better understanding about road safety should be taken to schools and colleges. ROSPA therefore, gave the information that in 1999 in England, driving examiners made some 800 presentations to schools and colleges, reaching some 125,000 students. The training needs of these drivers were highlighted in the Highway Code(1989: 25) thus:

It is amazing how many road users turn themselves into terror on the road just because they drive large vehicles like articulated lorries, locally known as trailers and tankers' or 45-seater buses, the so-called "luzury buses". Such people forget that they risk not only their own lives but the lives of their passengers as well. ...aggression and arrogance breed counter-aggression, a combination that is sure to end in fatal accident.

The study has shown that when they are properly trained, the drivers will master the technicalities in driving and be able to relate well with the passengers. They will understand the implications of over-speeding. The learning opportunities open to them includes workshops, seminars and orientation courses. Factors that hinder their access to learning opportunities include lack of time, lack of cooperation by employers and also domestic responsibilities. These factors can be taken care of by developing appropriate learning materials, shift system, organizing programmes at the motor parks during the day, including adequate payment for the drivers.

As to the training needs of the safety officials, like the Federal Road Safety Corps, workers education should be organized. When these workers are properly trained, then they can fashion out training programmes to impart knowledge to drivers. But without the possession of such skills themselves, the officials with recourse to checking papers. The study has highlighted that these categories of staff should be trained and retrained.

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## 5. Conclusion

It may be safely concluded that accidents can be prevented or reduced, if not eradicated totally when people have the needed education. One may see from the study that driving illiteracy has contributed to road accidents coupled with the fact that the staff charged with accident prevention is not properly grounded in the rudiments of driving skills themselves and therefore, not equipped to train the drivers. As Falae (1989) succinctly put it that an early and thorough inculcation of the contents of the Highway Code, must be encouraged, and in a manner that goes beyond a mere academic exercise. Schools should find a place within their curriculum for this fundamental aspect of general education.

### *Recommendations*

This poignant statement informs the recommendations hereby made as they have implications for adult education.

- The Federal Ministry of Works should as a matter of urgency, institute a task force that will be charged with ensuring that no potholes exist on our roads. Adult educators may resort to advocacy in this instance.
- All drivers on Nigerian roads should undergo a retraining exercise through seminars or workshops and a certificate of participation should be issued to them. Alternatively, before the renewal of drivers' license, it must be ascertained that the drivers has undergone a retraining session and if not, arrangements should be made to retrain such drivers.
- Special seminars should be organized to increase the efficiency level of the road safety personnel.
- Adult Education is the watch dog of the society. Where they detect a vacuum, they should endeavor to fill the gap. Adult Educators should mount training sessions for drivers in parks and for road safety personnel. This way, they will be in position to help in accident reduction.
- It is not enough to hold conferences without affecting the knowledge acquired in the improvement of the society. Then, the NNCAE should form a committee of key recommendations from conferences. This way, our mission will be matched with our vision.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

All Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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