


Winter 2013

# Correlation Between Literacy Rates in Africa and Latin America and Economic Stability

Shawn Jordan

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.du.edu/geog\\_ms\\_capstone](http://digitalcommons.du.edu/geog_ms_capstone)

 Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), and the [International and Comparative Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Jordan, Shawn, "Correlation Between Literacy Rates in Africa and Latin America and Economic Stability" (2013). *Graduate Student Capstones*. 29.

[http://digitalcommons.du.edu/geog\\_ms\\_capstone/29](http://digitalcommons.du.edu/geog_ms_capstone/29)

This Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Geography & the Environment at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact [jennifer.cox@du.edu](mailto:jennifer.cox@du.edu).

Correlation Between Literacy Rates in Africa and Latin America  
and Economic Stability

Shawn Jordan

GEOG 4993

Capstone

Winter 2013

University of Denver



## Table of Contents

Proposal Abstract	1
Background & Research Question	1
Literature Review	1
Methods, Data and Study Area	1
Conclusion	1

## Proposal Abstract

Literacy rates in Africa and Latin America are on different ends of the spectrum. Africa is home to some of the poorest countries in the world and Latin America is not too far behind. Literacy rates generally correlate to wealth as a country. The plights of Africa and Latin America are a no different. In general, Africa has some of the lowest literacy rates in the world and has been the place for horrific fighting for decades. This epidemic has hit the women and children especially hard. Women in Africa have an illiteracy rate of 50% (allafrica.com 2010). This is something that cannot continue in the world. Until this is fixed, the people of Africa will not be able to reach their full potential.

Latin America, on the other hand, has relatively high literacy rates for developing countries (CIA 2011). This is a model that the governments in Africa and the world can learn from. People in both areas face many of the same issues. The successes by the people of Latin America can be a goal for all third world countries to achieve. With the improved literacy rates the people of Africa might begin to limit the violence that has gripped the area for so many years.

## Background & Research Question

In the U.S. and in other countries around the world, education is essential to reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth. No country has achieved rapid economic growth without investing in education and reaching an adult literacy rate of at least 40 percent (Basic Education Coalition 2009). Quality education equips people with the knowledge, skills and self-

reliance they need to increase income and expand opportunities for employment. Education has played a tremendous role in the growth of the world's modern industrial societies, including major economic booms in the U.S. and Western Europe in the mid-1900s and the Asian Tigers in the 1980s (Basic Education Coalition 2009). For example, South Korea rose from post-war economic ruin to become an economic dynamo today, partly due to its educational achievements.

Not only is one-fifth of the world's adult population illiterate, but also 100 million children are not attending primary school (UNESCO 2004). This is a "severe violation of rights and a brake on all aspects of development", says UNESCO's fourth Education for All report. The report estimates an additional US\$2.5 billion needs to be spent each year if goals to achieve a 50% improvement in adult literacy are to be reached by 2015. UNESCO says governments and aid agencies must allocate more cash for youth and adult literacy programs, as well as expanding quality primary and lower-secondary education.

While there is increasing backing for universal primary education, literacy is not high on the agenda of countries that give aid to other countries. As Americans have come to realize, literacy is crucial if individuals are to participate in political, social, and economic life. In Africa, improved literacy rates could help to improve health, family planning, and HIV/AIDS prevention.

The economic instabilities in the world today have been a burning issue for quite some time. It is the primary duty of every head of the state to secure the lives of its citizens. Ensuring financial security of the citizens along with securing the future of the nation is one of the topmost priorities of the government. However, as the recent economic turmoil did not spare even the most prosperous and wealthy nations, one can imagine the hardships that the underdeveloped and the third world countries are facing.

Africa has been a war torn volatile area for decades. Almost 20% of adults around the world are unable to read or write. However, the figure in Africa is almost twice the average. Africa as a whole has many strong regional differences within the continent. West Africa has lower literacy rates than the Southern portion of the continent. While literacy skills have the power to transform individual lives and whole communities, the number of people who are unable to read and write at present poses a major barrier to economic development in Africa. The UN says those people lacking access to education are often the most disadvantaged and marginalized populations (UNESCO 2004). A high percentage of these people are women and girls, indigenous populations and people with disabilities. Today one in five adults in Africa are illiterate and many of them are women (UNESCO 2004).

While Latin America has been a little unstable it has not suffered like Africa. One result of this might be literacy rates. The more educated the population, the harder it is to force them into fighting wars. There have been many efforts underway to help the African people learn to read while the individual countries have not really focused on the issue whole-heartedly. Latin America, on the other hand, has made it a focus for each country, which is evident in the high literacy rates. My research is based on finding literacy rates of the countries within both Africa and Latin America and comparing the this along with the economical stability of these countries. The goal is to find if there is a direct correlation between literacy rates and the wealth of a country.

Children respond strongly to a welcoming, caring environment regardless of their background; feeling cared for will greatly alter a child's performance, prompting academic accomplishments and increased effort as well as the growth of healthy interpersonal (Sedena-Santana, I. 2000). In addition, children who participate with their families to celebrate their

cultural traditions and background have been proven to have better childhood behavior, improved academic achievement, an improved sense of identity, and enhanced ability to adjust to varying circumstances (Olson, A. 2010). This is where the driving force in the changes that need to take place will come from. As we all know, children are the future and without the ability of the children to learn in a stable situation. Librarians can help to facilitate this participation by encouraging families to read folklore from their cultures, to celebrate their rituals, and to share their folklore with others. Many of these folklores are told to children from parents and elders.

Being able to accept and support Latino cultures and experiences is essential for a children's librarian in today's world. Nearly one out of six residents in the United States, or approximately 46.9 million people, identify as Latino (U.S. Census 2008). While the majority of Latinos in the United States are Mexican or of Mexican descent, a librarian must be extremely careful to pay attention to the cultural diversity demographics within the Latino population they serve.

### Literature Review

The percentage of the school age population in African countries that make it into school is among the lowest in the world and this is especially challenging at the primary school level (Global Literacy Project 2008). Throughout most of Africa a severe lack of funds coupled with a lack of adequate teachers, classrooms, and learning materials adversely affect the educational environment. This will be one of the main efforts in this research. The fact that so many children are not attending school is one of the main focuses of this type of study. Without the children attending school and succeeding then the countries themselves will not be able to adequately function on the world stage.



Since the 1950s, education went from being a requisite of national identity to being recognized as an instrument of power, an important factor of development, the dispenser of human resources, and the guarantor of the continuity of the entire local scene. Important post-World War II education meetings have included the Regional Seminar on Adult Literacy and Education in Rio de Janeiro in 1949 and the Seminar in Primary Education in Montevideo in 1950. Other important meetings took place during the 1950s. In 1979, the Declaration of Mexico set the goals for the Major Project in Education in Latin America. Towns are no longer able to absorb part of the rural work force and most people who subsist on the peripheries of cities have nothing to do there. Among educational problems are teachers who do not have sufficient education, school programs that are not relevant to their students, and the large gap between community life and the scholastic milieu. Yet people are optimistic about changes. The conditions for success are of an ethical and political order. Only in a framework of greater equality will it be possible to make progress. International Literacy Year is a stimulating challenge and signifies the moment of truth for Latin America (Roca 1990).

There are three main efforts in the literature review. The first is the literacy rates in Africa. The second is the literacy rates in Latin America. The third is the correlation between literacy rates and a country's overall wealth. Although similar types of studies have been (Florida Literacy Coalition 2008); I intend to find if a Latin America model will work for Africa by reviewing the CIA Factbook literacy rates.

### Methods, Data and Study Area

The primary methods of this research will incorporate spatial analysis to determine literacy rates by country by mapping the literacy rates from both UNESCO and the CIA World

FactBook. Economic data from the CIA World Fact Book will also be incorporated to determine if there is a correlation between the two. This will be conducted for both Africa and Latin America. Population data will also be taken into account to ensure total populations do not skew the results. This will be broken down as well to display the disparity between men and women as well as the disparity between the different areas within Latin America and Africa.

In South Africa an integrated methodological approach is being used to draw on the benefits of the language experience approach. In line with this research effort within the country, the program wants to enhance the visual literacy and perceptual skills students need to be able to understand a range of graphics. It is also aimed to develop automaticity by addressing the mechanics of reading, phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationships and word analysis (Kharri Gude 2011). Illiteracy problems in Latin America cannot be faced successfully without taking into account what happens at the beginning of their primary school education. Almost all children enter primary school, but some of those children from marginal sectors of the population repeat the early grades one or more times and leave school without ever completing. A lack of promotion and low retention constitute the evidence of a deeper problem. Traditional school practices make the beginning of literacy more difficult precisely for those children who are more dependent on school help.

### Conclusion

Education is the cornerstone of success in society. Without efforts to increase literacy rates and education in Africa, the area will never reach its full potential. This thesis has several goals; the first is to determine the literacy rates for each country in Africa and Latin America. The second is to compare the two with the thought that the countries in Latin America have higher literacy rates. The third is to correlate literacy rates and a given countries wealth. The

belief with this is Africa might be able to stop the constant warring and improve the life of the population. While Latin America has had multiple dictatorships and coups, the literacy rates have been steadily improving.

The results of this project will not incorporate the outside factors, which affect literacy rates. This will simply be a study of the literacy rates between the two regions. The shocking thing to many people might be how high the literacy rates are in Latin America. This study is also designed to show the disparity between Africa and Latin America. The hope is to find a way to establish a better educational system in Africa with hopes that stability will return and living conditions will improve.

## Reference List

- allAfrica.com (2010). *Africa: Empowering Women Through Literacy Empowers Us All*. Retrieved February 7, 2011, from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201009090006.html>
- allAfrica.com (2009). *West Africa: Combating World's Lowest Literacy Rates*. Retrieved February 6, 2011, from <http://allafrica.com/stories/200904240007.html>
- AyudaTec (2010). *Special Technology for Special Children in Need*. Retrieved February 2, 2011, from [http://www.ayudatec.org/why\\_latina\\_merica](http://www.ayudatec.org/why_latina_merica)
- Basic Education Coalition (2008). *Building Economic Growth through Basic Education*. Retrieved February 13, 2011, from [http://www.basiced.org/wp-content/uploads/Factsheets/Economic\\_Growth.pdf](http://www.basiced.org/wp-content/uploads/Factsheets/Economic_Growth.pdf)
- BBC News (2005). *Illiteracy 'hinders world's poor'*. Retrieved February 9, 2011, from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/4420772.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/4420772.stm)
- Bokoko, B. (2010). *Bisila Bokoko African Literacy Project*. Retrieved February 9, 2011, from <http://bbalp.org/>
- Butagira, T. (2009). *Horning Literacy Skills of The Hapless*. Retrieved January 15, 2011, from <http://in2eastfrica.net/horning-literacy-skills-of-the-hapless/>
- Castro, F. (1991). *Castro Speaks on Literacy in Melena del Sur*. Retrieved December 19, 2010, from <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1991/19911109-1.html>
- Catherine, A. (2010). *Latin American Economic Policy | Latin America Education*. Retrieved January 22, 2011, from

[http://www.streetdirectory.com/travel\\_guide/137832/computers/latin\\_american\\_economic\\_policy\\_\\_latin\\_america\\_education.html](http://www.streetdirectory.com/travel_guide/137832/computers/latin_american_economic_policy__latin_america_education.html)

CIA (2011). Literacy. *The World Factbook*. Retrieved January 22, 2011, from

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html>

CREFAL (2009). *Latin America and the Caribbean:*

*Gender Illiteracy, Patterns of Inequalities in Adult Education*. Retrieved February 27, 2011,

from

[http://www.crefal.edu.mx/biblioteca\\_digital/temas\\_especializados\\_epja/alfabetizacion/illiteracy\\_adults\\_gender\\_latinamerica.pdf](http://www.crefal.edu.mx/biblioteca_digital/temas_especializados_epja/alfabetizacion/illiteracy_adults_gender_latinamerica.pdf)

Deng, S. (2010). *Zimbabwe Tops Africa's Literacy Rate*. Retrieved January 10, 2011, from

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/culture/2010-07/14/c\\_111953488.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/culture/2010-07/14/c_111953488.htm)

Duffield, C. (2009). *UN: Improve literacy in Africa*. Retrieved February 9, 2011, from

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthetnews/2009/09/090918\\_witn\\_literacy.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthetnews/2009/09/090918_witn_literacy.shtml)

DuPont, S. (2009). *Mobiles and Literacy in West Africa*. Retrieved February 17, 2011, from

<http://ndn.org/blog/2009/09/mobiles-and-literacy-west-africa>

Elizabeth, M. (2011). *Literacy Statistics*. Retrieved February 16, 2011, from

<http://www.educationbug.org/a/literacy-statistics.html>

Ethiopian Review (2010). *The Literacy of Our Region: North East Africa*. Retrieved January 22,

2011, from <http://www.ethiopianreview.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=23804>

Ferreiro, E. (1992). Children's Literacy and Public Schools in Latin America. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 520(143-150). Retrieved from

<http://ann.sagepub.com/content/520/1/143.abstract>

- Fidzani, B. (2006). *VI. SubSaharan Africa Information Literacy State-of-the Art Report*. Retrieved January 5, 2011, from [http://www.jesuslau.com/docs/publicaciones/doc2/UNESCO\\_state\\_of\\_the\\_art.pdf](http://www.jesuslau.com/docs/publicaciones/doc2/UNESCO_state_of_the_art.pdf)
- Fisher, S. (2002). *Political Changes Affecting Reading Habits in Latin America*. Retrieved February 3, 2011, from <http://advance.uconn.edu/2002/021014/02101402.htm>
- Florida Literacy Coalition (2008). *Literacy and Poverty*. Retrieved February 1, 2011, from <http://www.floridaliteracy.org/refguide/poverty.pdf>
- Foundation for West Africa (2007). *New Textbooks for Sierra Leone*. Retrieved February 11, 2011, from <http://www.tfwa.org/edus3.html>
- Global Literacy Project (2008). *Africa Literacy Support Programs*. Retrieved January 12, 2011, from [http://www.glpinc.org/Web\\_pages/Africa\\_Programs.html](http://www.glpinc.org/Web_pages/Africa_Programs.html)
- Grogg, P. (2006). *Latin America - Education: Reading, Writing and Then What?*. Retrieved February 6, 2011, from [http://www.alterinfos.org/article.php3?id\\_article=419](http://www.alterinfos.org/article.php3?id_article=419)
- H.E.L.P. (2008). *Education*. Retrieved January 22, 2011, from <http://helpwestafrica.org/articles/education>
- Heller, M. (2005). *Scientific Literacy in Latin America: How are we doing?*. Retrieved January 22, 2011, from <http://www.educoas.org/Portal/en/tema/tinteres/temaint55.aspx?culture=en&navid=36>
- Horstead, K. (2009). *The Cold Truth About Female Illiteracy in West Africa*. Retrieved February 5, 2011, from <http://www.suite101.com/content/write-for-your-rights-a179868>
- Huebler, F. (2008). *International Education Statistics*. Retrieved February 8, 2011, from <http://huebler.blogspot.com/2008/05/literacy.html>

- International Bureau of Education. (1990). *Literacy in Latin America: Progress, Problems, and Perspectives. Literacy Lessons*. (Report No. Geneva, Switzerland).
- Kaplan, I. (2009). Tanzani -- Educattion. *African Studies Center*. Retrieved February 17, 2011, from <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/NEH/teeducation.htm>
- Kha ri Gude (2011). *Literacy in South Africa*. Retrieved February 15, 2011, from <http://www.kharigude.co.za/index.php/literacy-in-south-africa>
- LationStories.com (2009). *U.S. Department of State People Profiles Latin American Countries*. Retrieved January 26, 2011, from [http://latinostories.com/Latin\\_America\\_Resources/Latin\\_American\\_Country\\_Profiles.htm](http://latinostories.com/Latin_America_Resources/Latin_American_Country_Profiles.htm)
- Literacy (2011). World. *CIA World Factbook*. Retrieved February 1, 2011, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html>
- Medicine Encyclopedia (2009). Latin America - Literacy. *Medicine Encyclopedia*. Retrieved February 11, 2011, from <http://medicine.jrank.org/pages/965/Latin-America-Literacy.html>
- Medicine Encyclopedia (2009). Latin America - Demographic Background, Literacy, Living Arrangements, Economic Activity And Retirement, Pension Policy. *Medicine Encyclopedia*. Retrieved January 11, 2013, from <http://medicine.jrank.org/pages/969/Latin-America.html>
- MUNFW (1997). *Access to Education*. Retrieved January 20, 2013, from <http://www.munfw.org/archive/47th/3rd2.htm>
- Nations Online (2007). *Countries of the Third World*. Retrieved January 3, 2013, from [http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/third\\_world.htm](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/third_world.htm)

- Okon, A. (2010, August). A Regional Outlook of the Literacy Situation in West Africa. *West Africa Insight*. Retrieved from <http://www.westafricainsight.org>
- Okpala, A. (1997). *On economic instability in African economies*. Retrieved January 20, 2013, from <http://www.allbusiness.com/government/654654-1.html>
- Olson, A. (2010). *Breaking Through Cultural Barriers: Using Latin American Folktales in Literacy And Library Programming*. Retrieved January 15, 2013, from <http://morpholiteracy.com/2010/05/26/breaking-through-cultural-barriers-using-latin-american-folktales-in-literacy-and-library-programming/>
- Oxfam (2009). *West Africa's Literacy Crisis Needs Focus and Funds*. Retrieved December 10, 2012, from [http://www.oxfam.org.hk/en/news\\_922.aspx](http://www.oxfam.org.hk/en/news_922.aspx)
- Pearce, C. (2009). *From closed books to open doors-West Africa's literacy challenge*. Retrieved January 16, 2013, from <http://www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/west-africa-literacy-challenge/09.04%20Closed%20books%20-%20West%20Africa's%20literacy%20challenge.pdf>
- Ray, B. (2006). *Literacy is key to addressing Africa's woes*. Retrieved January 7, 2013, from <http://www.fsu.edu/news/2006/04/05/african.literacy/>
- Seda-Santana, I. (2000). *Literacy research in Latin America: Context, characteristics, and applications/Investigación sobre alfabetización en América Latina: Contexto, características y aplicaciones*. Retrieved January 5, 2013, from [http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art\\_index.asp?HREF=/articles/handbook/seda/index.html](http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art_index.asp?HREF=/articles/handbook/seda/index.html)
- South America Headlines (2009). *Peru's literacy programme reaches out to its indigenous peoples*. Retrieved January 6, 2013, from



<http://southamericaheadlines.com/peru/perus-literacy-programme-reaches-out-to-its-indigenous-peoples/>

The Foundation for West Africa (2007). *New Textbooks for Sierra Leone*. Retrieved December 23, 2012, from <http://www.tfw.a.org/edus3.html>

The Literacy Project (2009). *Caribbean, Latin America, North America*. Retrieved January 19, 2013, from <http://librarian.lishost.org/?p=1952>

The Washington Post (2006). Voices of Culture in Latin America. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/interactives/latinamerica/latinAmerica.html>

Trading Economics (2010). *Literacy rate; youth male (% of males ages 15-24) in Latin America and Caribbean*. Retrieved January 18, 2013, from <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/latin-america-and-caribbean/literacy-rate-youth-male-percent-of-males-ages-15-24-wb-data.html>

U.S. Census Bureau (2008). *Population Estimates: National Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2008*. Retrieved December 15, 2012, from <http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2008-asrh.html>

UNESCO (2004). *Literacy*. Retrieved December 20, 2012, from <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/>

UNFPA (2008). *Indigenous Women in Latin America*. Retrieved December 10, 2012, from <http://www.unfpa.org/rights/indigenous.htm>

UNICEF (2010). *Education*. Retrieved December 21, 2012, from [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/southafrica\\_statistics.html#67](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/southafrica_statistics.html#67)

Wow.gm (2008). *SOUTH AFRICA: School safety influences literacy rate*. Retrieved January 10, 2013, from <http://wow.gm/africa/south-africa/johannesburg/article/2008/2/14/south-africa-school-safety-influences-literacy-rate>