

UNIVERSITY OF PORT-HARCOURT

**ADULTS IN BATTLE: ANY HOPE OF
VICTORY?**

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE

BY

PROFESSOR I.S. NZENERI

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DEDICATION

This inaugural lecture is dedicated to God our creator; to the
adults who face challenges;

AND

To my Late Parents:

Mr. Abraham Nzeneri Okwuo and

Mrs. Marymagdalen Nzeneri Okwuo

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely thank God for His countless blessings to me and my family. The Lord has blessed us immensely in our academic and other life challenges. He is always there for us, to guide and protect us in times of need.

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Prof. I.S. Nzeneri

PROTOCOL

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Heads of Departments and Directors

Colleagues and Students of Unique Uniport

Distinguished Guests and Gentlemen of the Press

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Preamble

Inaugural lecture, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, is essentially an academic ceremony which is expected to be a special occasion for a new professor to be introduced to his/her professional chair. It also provides the new professor an opportunity to make a public statement or declaration of what he is professing. This inaugural lecture, however, is not

coming as early as expected since the lecturer has been in this professional chair - for at least half a decade. “I hope the inaugural lecture comes early enough to imitate the practice in the University of Port Harcourt” (Nwodo 2002).

Let me re-iterate here that funds are supposed to be made available for the professional chair a professor is about to occupy for anticipated further research he/she has in view. In the University of Port Harcourt, perhaps due to the fact that no funds are allocated specifically and routinely for research to any professional chair, the prevailing trend of our inaugural lectures has been for lecturers to feel free to discuss any aspect of what they have been working on (Ejizu 2008). Let me at this point, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, join ranks with my academic colleagues who have presented their inaugural lecture, in exercising my freedom to choose for presentation an aspect of my work in the discipline of Adult Education, which relates to adults challenges in knowledge (wisdom) acquisition, for advancement of adults’ life and their society.

May I salute the Vice-Chancellor and the University authorities for offering me this opportunity to express my joy for the honour of presenting the 71st lecture in the series of this Unique Uniport’s inaugural lectures. This lecture is the 8th

lecture from the Faculty of Education and the 2nd from the Department of Adult and Non-formal Education.

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, may I pay tribute to the professors from the Faculty of Education who have delivered their inaugural lectures in this University. The first inaugural lecture from the Faculty of Education came from Professor Otonti Nduka (1986) in the area of philosophy of education; followed by Professors B.O. Ukeje (1988) of blessed memory in Education Administration, Professor Edward Ezewu (1991) also of blessed memory in sociology of Education; Professor B.A. Eheazu (1998), the first lecture in the discipline of Adult and Non-formal Education; Professor J.O. Enahwo (2000), in Educational Planning; Professor B.S. Okeke (2001) in Educational Management; and Professor J.D. Okoh (2005) in Philosophy of Education. Adult and Non-Formal Education has again taken its turn by this lecture.

This lecture which is the second inaugural lecture from the discipline of Adult and Non-formal Education of the University of Port Harcourt is fulfilling to me coming as it were, few years the Department was given full accreditation by the National University Commission (NUC), the period I served the University as the Head of that Department.

As a Professor of Adult education who is interested in the challenges of adults especially where millions lack the opportunity to exercise their rights to education which will enable them resolve other life challenges. It is therefore not a coincidence that the topic of this lecture is “ADULTS IN BATTLE: ANY HOPE OF VICTORY?”. I have chosen this topic to enable me share with the audience, the challenges of the adults, the misconceptions of, “the Adult” and “Adult Education”, the relevance of Adult Education in the life of the adults and the society, and my humble contributions in the aspects of adult literacy.

The Battle Begins

The lives of adults are full of changes and challenges which require acquisition of adequate, appropriate and qualitative education (Knowledge and skills) to handle. The first adults (man and woman) that lived on this Planet Earth were faced with life challenges and they required knowledge (wisdom) to overcome these challenges. The Holy Books tell us that the Creator instructed man, in his happy state in the garden, on what he should do to maintain his happy state. The man at the time was interacting with his creator whom he

could not physically see or touch, and so he was gaining knowledge through the process of adult distance education.

The adult man and woman faced greater life challenges when their relationship with the Creator was severed because they did not do what was expected of them in their search for knowledge or wisdom (ie education). The Book of Genesis Chapter three says that the serpent tempted the woman to eat the forbidden fruit in the garden. In search or desire for more wisdom and empowerment, perhaps, “the woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes and desirable for gaining wisdom, so she took some and ate and she also gave some to her husband and he ate it (Gen. 3:4).

The adults’ life challenges increased when they lost the state of happiness as the Creator pronounced His judgement and verdict in the following verses of (Gen 3:14-19):

The Lord God said to the serpent...I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers...To the woman He said: I will intensify the pangs of your child bearing, in pains shall you bring forth children...To the man, He said...cursed be the ground because of you, in toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life...

Faced with this challenge, the first adults acquired knowledge on how to gather and eat food without harm, protect their lives from wild animals, harsh weather conditions and developed their technologies for life improvement. This process of knowledge acquisition for meeting adults' life needs was through in-formal adult education (i.e by trial and error) and the situation was non-formal and self-directed learning. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, we can see that the first education that man had for resolving life challenges is "Adult Education". There is need to briefly inform here, the origin of formal adult education:

it was in 1920 that the first Department of Adult Education was established in the world; this event which occurred in the United Kingdom marked the beginning of the formal and systematic study of the knowledge area distinctly known today as Adult Education (Biao 2005:2).

The initiators of this discipline went further to organize and rally pioneers who in their efforts in conducting research and developing curricula contents for undergraduate and graduate training programmes, to which adult literacy is a critical content programme, advanced the frontiers of adult education. These efforts were aimed at helping adults overcome their life challenges through problem-solving activities. It is not the

purpose of this lecture to attempt a history of the evolution of the discipline of adult education but to consider it in relation to situational problems of the adult.

The Adult

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, the concept “Adult” is central in our profession, yet it is the most misinterpreted and most misunderstood in our noble and challenging field. Generally people are not comfortable about being old or being addressed as old people and so the hatred of this concept. Many students in adult and non-formal education strongly desire that the concept “adult” be deleted from all their programmes and be substituted by a better alternative, since for them, “the adult” tends to suggest “Old People” who are no longer physically and mentally functional. This is a serious misconception. The professionals in this field have not, till now, found such a substitute during their teaching and research experiences.

An adult is a person who is physically and psychologically matured and he/she is socially, economically, politically, culturally and environmentally responsible (Nzeneri, 2002). Two key words in this definition are maturity and responsibility.

Some authorities and scholars (Bown 1979, Nzeneri 2008, Ibeh 2008) see an adult as one who has achieved full physical development and is expected to have the right to participate as a responsible home maker, worker and member of a society. The adult is not only matured but responsible in all his engagements, agreements and undertakings. Both maturation and life responsibilities are characterized by lots of life challenges for the adult. The adult here is one who is full of activities, physically and mentally, contrary to its misconception.

In the advanced countries, an adult is one who has attained the voting age of twenty-one (21) years or more, and in developing countries like Nigeria he is one who has attained the voting age of 18 years. Hence, the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 1976) recommend that an adult is a person regarded as an adult by the society he belongs. Bown (1979), reported by Nzeneri (2008) warned that even in culture and law recognition may be given to stages in the attainment of adulthood. In some societies, the age-grade system separates the young from the adults while in law, people may impose adult responsibilities to any person the society considers fit, irrespective of age or social status.

Adulthood is divided into three stages (Nzeneri 2002, 2008) and these are: young adulthood (15-24 years), middle adulthood (25-65 years) and late adulthood (65 years and above). Erickson (1963) reported by Ukpong (2000) and Nzeneri (2002 & 2008) indicated the challenges of each of these stages:-

- i) Early adulthood is characterized by tension between commitment to self and others and avoidance of intimacy.
- ii) Middle adulthood is characterized by being creative and productive for self and others and being non-productive and self loving.
- iii) Late maturity is characterized by tension between integrity (ie appreciation of one's continuity with the past, present and future) and despair (ie finding no meaning in life, loss of faith in self and others).

Each of these stages is associated with specific changes and challenges (ie life battles), which require adequate training in knowledge and skills to overcome. These challenges cannot be resolved in a society with majority of its population remaining illiterates and literacy is a crucial and central programme of adult education. The adult encounters series of challenges as he/she passes through these stages in life.

Adult Education and its Relevance in Adults' Life Challenges

Vice Chancellor, Sir, I have often been embarrassed by new entrants into adult and non-formal education and those outside this field who demand the meaning and relevance of adult education to adults' life. My simple answer to these persons, however, is that adult education is an essential tool for resolving life problems and as such it is indispensable to all. All of us are in it directly or indirectly, and we all benefit from it formally, informally or non-formally. It is necessary at this stage to find out what this adult education is.

UNESCO, in her international conference in Nairobi, Kenya (1976) as reported in Nzeneri (2002: 161) defined adult education as:

The entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and method, formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in the schools, colleges and universities as well as apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitude or behaviour in the two fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

This definition reveals the meaning, content and scope of adult education and it has also greatly influenced many nation's philosophy of education, such as Nigerian's National Policy on Education (NPE 1977, reviewed 1981, 1998 reprinted and 2004).

In adult education, the people their society regards as adults, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society (5th International Conference on Adult Education CONFINTEAV, 1997).

Adult education from the point of view of developing countries like Nigeria, places emphasis on literacy education in the sense that several hundreds and thousands of the people are illiterate. In the developed world, emphasis is placed on remedial, continuing and leisure education for self-actualization. In a summary note, Nyerere (1978) in his address to the participants on the international conference on "Adult Education and Development" defined adult education as something which is not only concerned with 'agriculture' or 'health' or 'literacy' or 'medical skills', but something more than these. These, to him, are separate branches of adult

education that are related to total life a man is living and to the man he is and will become. Nyerere as reported by Nzeneri (2002:161) exposed the scope and clients of adult education as it affects all by saying that:

Adult education (covers) many of the subjects learnt at school, for those who never had the opportunity. It applies to every one of us, without exception. We can all learn more, those who have never been to school, those who have just attended primary school and those who have attended secondary school or university. There is much more that every one can learn about our work and what areas of knowledge that they were not taught when they were in school.

This definition reveals the involvement of “every one of us without exception” in adult education and its relevance to all, for life improvement and adjustment. It equally reveals that we are all illiterates in the areas we have no knowledge about, which are relevant to the live we are living. This leads us to new battle zones of illiteracy ie computer, technology, internet, environmental issues, ageing, retirement and death problems.

The scope and complex nature of adult education was revealed by Liveright and Haygood (1978) quoted by Eheazu (1998) and Nzeneri (2000:162) who classified it into the following areas of concern:-

- i) Remedial education is making well the deficiencies many people experience through non-acquisition of certain levels of formal schooling;
- ii) Vocational, technical and professional education. These are concerned with either preparation for work or the recurrent needs for updating and refreshing knowledge or skills;
- iii) Health, welfare and family life, including guidance education. These are concerned with physical and mental health, family problems, parenthood, social security and consumer education;
- iv) Civic, political and community education – these include instructions about national and international matters; and
- v) Self-fulfilment education this embraces all aspects of education mainly for the enjoyment of the individual.

These areas of adult education have revealed its complex nature and its concern in all aspects of individuals' lives for life itself is complex. Hence Nzeneri (2008) defined adult education as education for life (i.e life-long). "Adult education is learning about anything at all that helps us to understand the environment we live in, and the manner in which we can use and change this environment in order to

improve ourselves” (Nyerere reported by Gayfer 1974:130). Adult education covers all forms of education - formal, informal and non-formal education as mentioned earlier (Nzeneri 2002:162).

Formal Adult Education is consciously planned and systematically organized or arranged programme of activities in which students are registered, and they follow specified syllabuses/courses either on full-time or part-time bases. It is hierarchically organized and the programmes are usually provided within walls of social agents of education like schools, colleges and universities. In these places students follow series of lessons on set subjects/courses and their achievements are measured from time to time by tests, examinations, seminar presentations and finally lead to award of certificates.

Informal Adult Education is accidental or unintentional learning that is gained in day-to-day life experiences. This form of education is gained through private reading of books, magazines, other printed materials; through listening to radio and television sets, music, conversations, media messages; watching ceremonies, rituals and other forms of recreation. Okedara (1981) as reported by Nzeneri (2005:41) outlined the following basic characteristics of informal education:-

- i) absence of any form of planning;
- ii) absence of stated goals, purposes or objectives;
- iii) the learning programme is accidental in nature;
- iv) it involves life-long experiences;
- v) there is lack of awareness of what brings rich experience of what is to be learned on the part of the learner.

Generally, informal adult education is acquired accidentally, incidentally and unintentionally. For instance a person who accidentally puts his finger into the fire experiences that fire burns. This education is achieved through trial and error like the newly married virgins who learned to do the “something” by playing with each other.

Non-Formal Adult Education- is organized educational activities outside the formal school system. It is also called “out-of school education”. It involves such educational programmes as cooperatives, agricultural extension, community development education, environmental education etc. In these programmes, admission criteria, staff, course content, media, time units and facilities are adapted for particular students to enable them maximize the attainment of learning objectives and minimize their constraints. Specifically, non-formal education does the following:-

It covers training and instruction outside formal school system, and ranged from individualized apprenticeship to national literacy. It may be vocational as provided in the craft training centres in Nigeria, designed to provide employment opportunities for young school leavers, and for other unemployed persons or the girls' vocational centres established in many African countries which train girls in vocational skills and prepares young women for marriage and business. (Eheazu 1998:22; Nzeneri 2002:163).

Non-formal adult education also involves social and political education like leadership and citizenship training centres which can be found in Plateau and Rivers State of Nigeria. In all these forms of education, the major concern of adult education, Nzeneri (2005) emphasized is how to help adults contribute to, participate in and promote individual, community/society and national development.

Many adults irrespective of their previous levels of education are returning to adult education in order to improve their lives, income, ensure job security, and to participate meaningfully in the socio-economic, political and cultural life activities and challenges in their society.

Adult education is noted to play critical roles under difficult situations like periods of wars, intrigues, confusion or

anarchy in resolving situational problems. For instance, during the period of industrial revolution and the period of “Anomie” (anomaly) in the United Kingdom in the 18th century, adult education provided Sunday Schools and vocational education (Mechanics’ Institute) to resolve the situational problems. Eheazu (1998:3) presented an idea of this situation by saying that:

The strongest and desirable role Adult Education can and does play (is) in redressing injustice, deprivations, and oppression suffered by victims of pseudo-egalitarianism and insincerity of purpose in the provision made for the general good in education training and functional learning.

Adult education is therefore a tool for resolving situational problems. The field of adult education is continually expanding because of obsolescence of knowledge and skills. It is worthy to note that UNESCO’s “Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) provided solid ground for interest in functional education and adult literacy. Interest is re-kindled in the eradication of illiteracy by Education For All (EFA) through the Jomtien Conference of 1990. EFA’s target was to reduce world illiteracy rate to 25% by 2015 which is 5 years from now. From the above discussions on adult education and its scope, we are well informed as to what it is

and what it does in promoting the individual development and that of his/her society.

The Challenges of Illiteracy

The greatest obstacle in adults' life challenges (as revealed in many International Conferences like the EFA, the Fifth International Conference in Adult education CONFINTEA v, (1997), United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), General Campaign for Education (2004/2005) and Abuja call for action (2007)) is illiteracy and its scourge on its victims.

Our 21st century is characterized by an upsurge of information technology which dictates the pace of development and surely we have not stopped talking about technological transfer. A century where communication and infrastructural facilities such as telephones, fax, and computer networking are tools that are turning our world into a global village, where classrooms may no longer play prominent roles as major access to education.

These characteristics are challenges to adults and are not possible in an environment where majority of a nation's population especially the adults who are in the production sectors are illiterate. Illiteracy is associated with

underdevelopment, instability, low productivity, low income, poor health, high poverty and moterlity rates. Fundamentally, high illiteracy rate correlates highly with underdevelopment indicators (poverty, malnutrition, ill health etc.). Based on these ills, the chairman, national commission for mass literacy, adult and non-formal education in Nigeria, Eke (1992) reported by Nzeneri (2007:1) maintained that:-

A cursory look at the political climate of the world shows clearly that regions of mass illiteracy are generally regions of instability, economic and political underdevelopment. Economically the illiterate is on the periphery, politically he is completely in the dark.

Illiteracy, therefore, is a serious impediment to both individual and national development, an impediment for human liberation, freedom from exploitation and superstition. The latest UNESCO General Monitoring Report (GMR) based on Education For All (EFA) reports that “overall illiteracy rates are highest in the countries with the greatest poverty” (Hinzen 2008:3). The link between illiteracy and poverty is equally observed at household level with the literacy rate of the poorest house-hold substantially lower than those of the wealthiest. Table II shows that advanced countries have higher literacy rates while developing countries have very low literacy rates.

An adult illiterate is a person whom the written word or symbol in any language conveys no meaning and he/she cannot use it in any form of communication (Nzeneri 2007, Egonu 2010). An adult illiterate cannot with understanding read and write simple statements or compute simple figures based on his/her day-to-day life activities. He/she cannot engage in any activity in which literacy is required for effective functioning in the society (Nzeneri, 2007, Ibeh 2008, Egonu 2010).

Adult Basic Education (ABE) is literacy education that is parallel to the first years of the school system (Bown 1979) and education beyond this literacy stage is post-literacy. A newly literate person is called a neo-literate. Functional literacy involves integrating literacy training to the needs of the society, economic development and socio-cultural awakening.

Illiteracy today, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, can no longer be limited to traditional illiteracy, concerned with inability to read, write or numerate (compute figures) but must be extended to include those who are illiterate in computer, internet and handset usage, new challenges in science and technology, environmental issues, and so on. It is unfortunate to indicate here that in institutions of higher learning like ours,

some eminent scholars belong to these groups of illiterates. This is because they have not done what is expected of them by humbling themselves to learn the new areas of knowledge that have not been taught to them either formally, informally or non-formally. All adults, irrespective of their various levels of education are challenged in this battle of total eradication of illiteracy since its scourge affects all life activities and challenges.

It is a fact, that an illiterate cannot meaningfully engage in any meaningful dialogue because he/she lacks necessary information from printed materials, media, internet etc to resolve life challenges. All illiteracy stakeholders must be concerned in its eradication. Hence Allen (1980:107) and Nzeneri (2007:2) stressed on the global concern for eradication of illiteracy by saying:

The world congress of Ministers, Banks, Economists, and Financiers, International youth organizations (and) world leaders have spoken out against the ills of illiteracy and pledged their support for its eradication.

Pledging their support for illiteracy eradication by governments should not be mere wishes but must be actualized by total commitment by investing adequate resources (human, material and financial) into literacy.

This is a challenge for all adults all over the world and it should be handled both individually and collectively. On the International Literacy Day of September 7 (2001) at Washington, DC, UNESCO was quoted as saying:

In the world today there are about 1 billion non-literate (illiterate) adults.

- (i) This 1 billion is approximately 26 percent of the world's adult population.
- (ii) Women make up two-thirds of all non-literates.
- (iii) 98 percent of all non-literates live in developing countries.
- (iv) In the least developed countries, the overall literacy rate is 49 percent.
- (v) Africa as a continent has a literacy rate of less than 60 percent.
- (vi) In sub-Saharan Africa since 1980, primary school enrolment has declined, going from 58 to 50 percent
- (vii) In all developing countries, the percentage of children aged 6-11 not attending school is 15 percent.

The need for gender equity cannot be over stressed here for there is gender disparity in terms of adult learners enrolment and access to literacy education. UNESCO (1996) revealed that functional literacy level was 62.5 percent for males and 39.5 percent for female (Aji, 2003). These statistics demonstrate the realities of adults illiteracy challenges nationally and internationally. Each of the above comments has much implications for Nigeria and other developing countries; the children of school age that are not in school and

those that drop-out of school add to existing number of adult illiterate figures.

Ogili and Nzeneri (2001) in line with Eheazu (1998) lamented that Nigeria is among the nine (9) populous countries which UNESCO in 1990 identified as accounting for 73% of world's illiterates. These countries and their figures are shown in table I.

TABLE I: TEN COUNTRIES MAKING UP 73% OF WORLD ILLITERATE (1990)

Country	Illiteracy Rate in 1990(%)	Number of Illiterates (millions)	Proportion of world total (%)
INDIA	51.7	280	29.1
CHINA	26.5	222	23.1
PAKISTAN	65.1	43	4.5
BANGLADESH	64.7	42	4.4
NIGERIA	49.2	29	3.0
INDONESIA	22.9	27	2.8
BRAZIL (except Brazil)	18.7	18	1.9
EGYPT	51.5	16	1.7
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF	46.0	15	1.5
IRAN	72.8	10	1.0
SUDAN			
SUB-TOTAL (10 COUNTRIES)		702	73.0
OTHER COUNTRIES		261	27.0
WORLD TOTAL		963	100

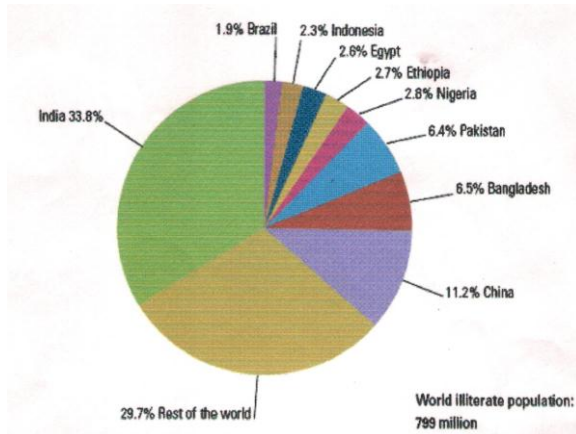
SOURCE: UNESCO OFFICE OF STATISTIS (1990)

Table I shows the percentage illiteracy rate by 1990. The number of illiterates are in millions and the proportion of

world total in percentages. All the highly populated countries, in table 1, except Brazil, have high illiteracy rates.

Figure I below illustrate Nigerian's position in the world illiteracy map for 2000-2004.

Figure 1: Word Adult Illiterate Population, Percentage by country, 2000-2004



Source: UNESCO, 2004, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005: Education for All, the Quality Imperative. Statistical Annex, Table 2. Paris: UNESCO.

Table II presents the current sampled literacy rates of United Nations' Development programme UNDP (2009:171) in which developing countries demonstrate how illiteracy rate correlate highly with underdevelopment.

TABLE II: LIST OF COUNTRIES BY ADULT LITERACY RATE IN 2009.

COUNTRY	LITERACY RATE	COUNTRY	LITERACY RATE
Georgia	100.0	Norway	99.0
Cuba	99.8	United Kingdom	99.0
Ukraine	99.7	Ireland	99.0
Russia	99.5	New Zealand	99.0
Hungary	99.4	Sweden	99.0
Poland	99.3	United States	99.0
Australia	99.0	Italy	98.9
Belgium	99.0	Spain	97.9
Canada	99.0	Argentina	97.6
Denmark	99.0	Greece	97.1
France	99.0	Venezuala	95.2
Germany	99.0	Portugal	94.9
Japan	99.0	Brazil	90.0
South Korea	99.0	Iran	82.4
Libya	84.2	Ghana	57.7
Gabon	84.0	Togo	53.2
South Africa	82.4	Morocco	52.2
Botswana	81.2	Cote d'Ivoire	48.7
Tunisia	74.3	Gambia	42.5
Kenya	73.6	Senegal	39.3
Egypt	71.4	Mozambique	38.7
Tanzania	69.4	Ethiopia	35.9
Nigeria	69.1	Sierra Loene	34.8
Zambia	68.0	Benin	34.7
Cameroon	67.9	Guinea	29.5
Angola	67.4	Niger	28.7
Uganda	66.8	Chad	25.7
Sudan	60.9	Mali	24.0
Burundi	59.3	Bukina Faso	23.6

Source: Extracted from UNDP Report (2009: 171)

From these statistics in table II, we observe that 31% of Nigerians are illiterate out of estimated population of 140 million, and that literacy has positive influence on the development of individuals and the society. Today, the emerging global issues in education are issues of access, equality and equity, quantity and quality at all levels of education. Literacy is imperative for national survival.

The Powers of Literacy

The pronouncements and declarations on international conferences EFA, (1990) UNESCO (1997), United Nations' literacy day 2006 and 2007; the 12 international bench-marks on "writing the wrongs" against adult education and identifying quality adult literacy programmes, as well as international workshop on Abuja's call for Action (2007) stress the importance and powers of literacy. Literacy is the direct opposite of illiteracy. It is defined to include literacy (ability to read, write and communicate) and numeracy (ability to compute figures or do simple arithmetic) involved in a person's day-to-day life activities. A literate adult is a person who can read, write, communicate, carryout basic computation and understand simple written and computed statements on his/her day-to-day life activities. Currently emphasis is placed on functional (ie skill or work oriented) literacy. Literacy is not acquired by chance or magic but through learning. Literacy is a deliberate effort that is sustained either by individual or group of individuals to attain desirable knowledge, habit, skills, attitudes or behaviour for life improvement. (Nzeneri, 2007).

From reflections on tables I and II above, and UNESCO's international literacy day (2001) comments and statistics on adult illiteracy, there are clear evidence that literacy has lots of benefits (powers) and it acts as key for individual and national development, socially, economically, politically and culturally. Literacy education is the key that unlocks the door to modernization; there is high correlation between it and standard of living and it is a fundamental human rights of children, youths and adults in the 21st century, and not a privilege of few individuals (Ogili & Nzeneri 2001). In our research findings, Ogili and Nzeneri (2001) aptly show that the dangers of illiteracy in the 21st century for Nigeria are immense, they are here with us and they need urgent attention if improvement of our economy and democratization process are to be meaningful and sustainable; then literacy is the key. The United Nations' Literacy Decade (UNLD 2003-2012) was lunched in February 2003 to mobilize and sensitize citizens for political will and resources required for learning needs of millions of illiterates in the world. UNLD (2003) came as a realization of the powerful impact of literacy in improving or advancing the life of individuals and those of the society. It is powerful in terms of empowering people and fostering sustainable development, social justice, democracy and gender equity. UNLD (2003 – 2012) was not only concerned with meeting the learning needs of illiterates in the world but drew attention of member nations on the need to achieve specific targets and hence the themes within the decade:

- Literacy and Gender (2003 – 2004)
- Literacy and Sustainable Development (2005-2006)

- Literacy and Health (2007-2008)
- Literacy and Empowerment (2009-2010)
- Literacy and Peace (2011-2012).

In view of what literacy can do, Freire's (1970)

consciousness (awareness) approach to adult literacy means:-

- an instrument of liberation;
- an instrument for sorting out social injustices,
- a political transformation process;
- ability to decode the myth behind one's socio-economic and political backwardness;
- a dialogue process that establishes a horizontal relationship between the educator and the educatee making both of them partners in search of knowledge (Aderinoye 1997, Nzeneri 2007 & Ibeh 2008:198).

The powers of literacy is recognized in the 5th international conference of UNESCO (1997) on adult education in Hamburg, Germany where in No 1 of its declaration, it reaffirmed that “only human-centered development and a participatory society based on the full respect of human rights will lead to sustainable and equitable development”. It also reiterates that “the informed and effective participation of men and women (the adults) in every spare of life is needed if humanity is to survive and to meet the challenges of the

future”. Number 2 of this declaration centered on adult literacy, saw literacy as the basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapidly changing world; literacy is a fundamental human right, it is a necessary skill in itself and one of the foundations of other life skills. Literacy is conceived as a catalyst for participation in the socio-economic, cultural and political activities. It is a serious challenge (battle) for those who lack the opportunity to benefit from it, especially the rural women and the under privileged adults.

Some of the neo-literate (ie the newly literate) adults at the adult education centres in Port Harcourt like St. Andrew’s Diobu, Sangana among others, whom I interviewed during one of my research on literacy about their feelings after becoming literate, expressed their great joy in what literacy has done in their lives, such as ability to read and write simple letters, read road signs, medical prescriptions, directions and most importantly they were no longer afraid of letters, figures or symbols used in literacy and numeracy. They joyfully indicate that “we are now able to read newspapers, short stories and religious books or tracks”. They expressed great signs of joy in their liberation, they could comfortably sign their signature and not shamefully thumb-print in the bank to collect their money,

they can now happily record their sales, credits and determine their profits or loss on daily basis.

Reflecting on a similar feeling on the tremendous possibilities of what literacy holds for adults and youths in terms of opening new opportunities of reading and accessing information from various media, a literate women from India was reported by Ghose (2009:163) as saying:-

I have struggled a lot to become literate, to live with dignity, I have got respect now. I am a journalist. Who has heard of a woman being a journalist in Chitrakoot? That too a kol (ie tribl) woman. And that too a woman who had recently learnt to read and write.

This woman is a mother of five and has a violent husband that gave her little support to participate in adult literacy. In the midst of these challenges she became literate. With her acquired literacy skills she became a wonderful journalist, publishing a local newspaper in her local language which has made her popular. Many people may have one thing or the other to say about the transformative influence of literacy in their lives and the battles they went through to achieve literacy. The above reflections on the challenges of illiteracy and the powers of literacy demands our looking at the literacy efforts in Nigeria and what the government, agencies and people have done in this struggle of eradicating illiteracy in the country.

Literacy Efforts in Nigeria:

The origin of literacy education in Nigeria came through religious organizations whose objective was to make their converts literate. This was aimed at enabling the converts read their religious books and literature materials. The traditional literacy (of reading, writing and arithmetic), some times called the 3Rs – came to Northern Nigeria in the 11th century through Muslim traders and teachers while in the south the Christian Missionaries like the Portuguese in the 16th century, followed by other Christian dominations, dominated literacy education efforts in the southern parts of Nigeria.

These religious organizations could not embark on extensive mass literacy campaign that would benefit all Nigerians, especially the adults. The Muslim teachers provided the people in the North and some of their believers in the south-west Koranic and Arabic literacy while various Christian dominations like the Baptist Mission, the Roman Catholic and the Seven-Day-Adventist etc. established evening classes and Sunday Schools for their converts in Southern Nigeria.

The publication of the “Mass Education in African society” document in 1943 influenced some attention to adult literacy education in Nigeria. The mass education programme took effect in 1946 with Major A.J. Carpenter as the first Mass

Education Officer in Nigeria. His focus was more on literacy education in many Nigerian languages. The vernacular language newspapers, the “Irohim” in Yoruba language and the “Gaskiya Ta Kwabo”, in Hausa language newspaper were produced to promote literacy in the language of the people. The programme, on the whole did not achieve much, probably because of high wastage and dropout rates caused by participants.

The Eastern Provinces experienced the Udi Hill experiment which combined literacy education with community development efforts. It was used as a means for socio-economic and political advancement. This experiment was organized in 1942 by Mr. E.R. Chadwick and it was popularly known as the “Day-Break” in Udi (Ogili and Nzeneri 2001:138). The programme turned many literate in Igbo and English languages and by mid-1950s, many projects in community development and adult literacy were launched in Udi. There was no newspaper publication in Igbo language as we had in Yoruba and Hausa languages as earlier indicated. This has negative influence in the spread of Igbo literacy among the people.

Some statistics of illiteracy rates of some West African colonies in the 1960s & 1970s and percentage illiteracy rates

of men and women shown in tables 3A and B illustrate the extent of colonial governments' efforts on literacy in the West African colonies.

Table 3A: Percentage adult illiteracy rate of people in 9 selected West African countries for people of 15 years and above

Countries	1960 Illiteracy %	1974 Illiteracy %
Ivory Coast (Now Cote d'Ivoire)	91	80
Liberia	91	85
Sierra Leone	93	85
Togo	90	88
Senegal	95	90
Mauritania	95	90
Mali	95	90
Ghana	75	n.a
Nigeria	75	n.a

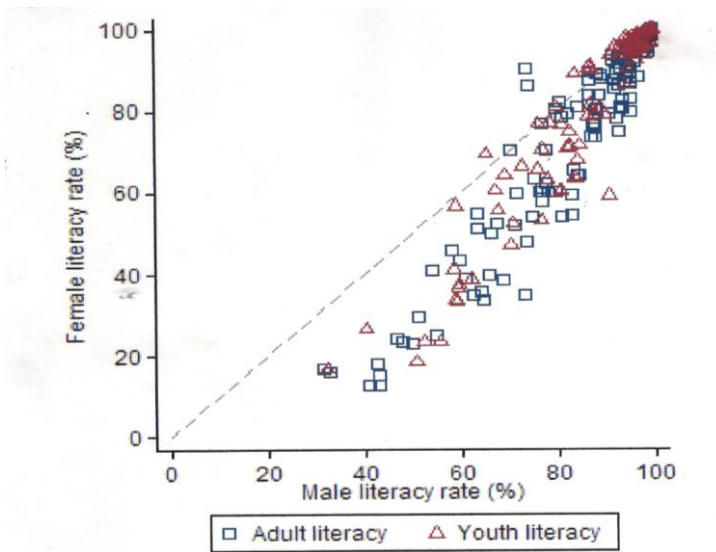
Table 3B: Percentage illiteracy rate for men and women in six selected West African countries from 1970s.

Countries	Men Illiteracy %	Women Illiteracy %
Liberia	86.1	95.8
Sierra Leone	90.4	96.1
Senegal	89.6	98.1
Mali	96	99.5
Ghana	70	90
Nigeria	76	94

Source for tables 3A & B: UNESCO Documents for 1970s, (Hagan 1979:186). Tables 3A and B show the illiterate rates in Nigeria and some other colonies of West Africa during the influence of colonial master's efforts in literacy.

Figure 2, compares the male and female literacy rates in 135 countries, the male is plotted along the horizontal axis and female on the vertical.

Figure 2: Male and Female Literacy rates



Source: UNESCO Institution for Statistics, Data Centre, June 2007.

The end of 2nd World War witnessed several constitutional changes in Nigeria. These include the McPherson's 1951 Constitution which gave powers over education, health, among others to regional governments. The regions by 1950s embarked on educational development policies on both formal and adult education.

The Western (1954) and Eastern (1958) regional governments launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme respectively as a means of eradicating illiteracy.

The North on the other hand opted for primary and adult literacy education. This action did set the pace for adult education efforts in Nigeria. From the period of National independence of 1960 till 1977 more than a decade and a half, the Nigerian government overlooked and neglected Adult and Non-Formal Education in both the National policies and development plans. It is worthy to note that the National Curriculum Conference of 1969 at Ibadan resulted to the 1999 national conference on education which gave birth to the National Policy on Education in 1977. This has been reversed in 1981, 1998 and 2004 and the most current policy on education is the 2004 publication of the Federal Ministry of Education. These documents have a section for mass literacy, adult and non-formal education.

The Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE), established in 1971 is an association of adult education professionals and practitioners. I am not only a member of this association but I have served it for years as a national officer, contributing to its decisions and literacy efforts in Nigeria. The NNCAE has worked in collaboration with governments and Non-governmental Organization (NGOs) to establish adult education units, agencies in the states, Department in Federal Universities; organized annual national conferences and documented research findings through its journal of adult education in Nigeria. It partners with international organizations and donor agencies in promoting adult and non-formal education in Nigeria.

Nigerian government's involvement in international organization's meetings and conferences (like the Universal declaration of Human Rights 1949, Education For All (EFA) 1990 and Dakar World Forum (2000), made her to recognize adult education and literacy as vehicles for successful eradication of illiteracy and for making Nigeria a literate society. The government's efforts which came in the form of decrees, policies, actions and pronouncements witnessed the following events:

- i) Establishment of adult education unit in the Federal Ministry of Education in 1974.
- ii) The launching and implementation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 to promote literacy and reduce illiteracy from the grassroots.
- iii) The inclusion of Adult Education in the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977 and revised in 1981 and 2004.
- iv) Setting up Adult and Non-formal Education Agencies in Kano (1980) and Bauchi (1986) states respectively. Other states of the Federation established theirs between 1988 and 1993. Rivers State Agency for Adult and Non-formal Education was established in October 23, 1991. I have for several occasions organized meetings with Rivers State agency for re-activation of NNCAE branch in the state and to promote adult education activities in the state.
- v) The launching of the first post-independence era ten-year (1982-1992) mass literacy campaign by the Federal government of Nigeria in September 8, 1982. The government declared every 8th September of every decade year a mass literacy day to sensitize and

mobilize people on the ills of illiteracy and powers of literacy.

- vi) The 1990s could be described as the “golden age” of literacy education in Nigeria (Aderinoye 1997, Nzeneri 2007, Ibeh 2008) because the period witnessed the promulgation of decrees establishing the following commissions:-
 - a) The National Mass Education Commission (NMEC) in 1990 for the purpose of combating illiteracy through mass literacy campaigns.
 - b) The National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) in 1993 to take care of basic literacy in the formal education system.
 - c) The National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1993 designed to cater for the educational needs of migrants. All these commissions were established with the objective of combating illiteracy in Nigerian society (Nzeneri 2007, Ibeh 2008).
- vii) The current Universal Basic Education (UBE) of 2004 was planned to provide basic education needs of the children, youths and adults. Unfortunately, Mr. Vice Chancellor, UBE gave little or no attention to adult education and adult literacy in the provision of basic

education needs of the adults who are voiceless in their battle of life. Kano State government in 1980 established the first post-independence mass education (Fasokun 2008). Its agency for adult and non-formal education got UNESCO's 1983 award for her efforts in adult literacy.

The general purpose for establishing these commissions and their strategies was that the efforts of each should complement the efforts of the others in combating illiteracy in Nigeria. Beautiful policies are made but the issue is their implementation and committed efforts to achieve literacy success.

May, I observe, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, that despite these laudable efforts and objectives behind establishing adult education units, the launching of the mass literacy campaign, the establishment of the commissions and the current UBE, all designed for total eradication of illiteracy, illiteracy still remains a serious problem in Nigeria today. Active participation of facilitators and adult learners has remained very low. This trend makes people wonder whether the illiteracy eradication programmes do exist in Nigeria and whether there is any hope of eradicating illiteracy in Nigeria.

Aderinoye (1997) quoted by Ibeh (2008: 179) observed that:-

Despite the laudable objectives behind the establishment of these commissions, the usual Nigerian factor of inadequate funding, poor coordination and lack of effective implementation strategies have continued to rear their ugly heads in the noble fight against illiteracy through these commissions.

A reflection on the survey of literacy situation in some sampled states in Nigeria shows that the hope of achieving total eradication of illiteracy is fuggy and clouded with uncertainty. In the Dakar World Forum in 2000, number 4 of the declaration stressed the achievement of 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic education for all adults.

The Education For All (EFA) draft report of the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) 2005 revealed the literacy situation in seven sampled states in Nigeria on table 4A.

Table 4A: Literacy situation in seven selected states in Nigeria, modified by finding percentage illiteracy.

States	Projected population 15 years and above	Literates	Illiterates	Percentage Illiteracy (%)
Adamawa	1133498	3383931	795105	70.1
Anambra	2748822	1662459	1186363	42.0
Borno	2614308	643378	1970930	75.4
Benue	2848694	1332058	1516636	53.2
Bayelsa	1182452	705448	477004	40.3
Abia	1399394	565101	834293	60.0
Akwa-Ibom	2334528	1580389	754139	32.3
Grand total % illiteracy rate				53.3

Source: EFA Draft Report FME 2005 in Aderinoye 2008:359

Table 4A generally shows that more than 50% of some Nigerian states' population is illiterate after so many centuries of religions organizations' involvement and over seven decades of government intervention in literacy efforts in Nigeria. The fact remains that no nation can make progress if majority of its population is neglected and left behind without functional literacy education. Table 4A shows that most Northern States have higher illiteracy rates. This may be blamed on the prevailing phenomenon of the "Almajiri" which is anti western education; Child labour by pastoral norms militates against child education that is capable of reducing

adult illiteracy etc. Efforts, no doubt, are made to stop these practices, we are yet to see results of these efforts. This is probably why with all our endowments in natural and human resources, Nigeria still remains on the fringes of socio-economic, political and infrastructural development. Women are more illiterate than men.

Table 4B shows adults’ literacy rate for men and women in Nigerian urban and rural areas for the year 2003.

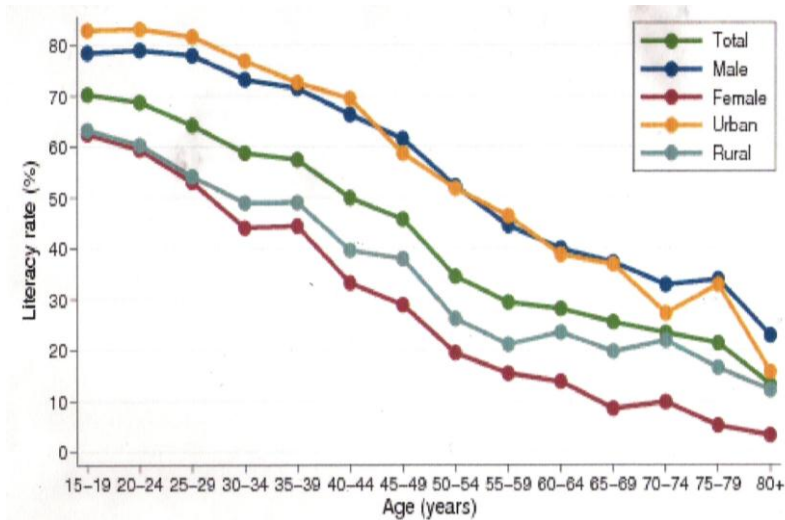
Table 4B: Male – Female Literacy Rate for Urban and Rural Areas

Category	Percentage literacy rate
Male	67.3
Female	43.7
Urban	70.9
Rural	46.8
Total	55.5

Source: Nigeria Demographic & Health Survey, 2003.

Table 4B shows that literacy rate is low for women and the rural areas. It is higher for men and urban areas. Figure 3 presents a true picture of table 4B. The feminists should agree with me that if a woman develops, the family develops, and with the family, so does the nation since the family is the nucleus of society (Chukwuma 2004).

Figure 3: Shows Adult Literacy rate in Nigeria by age, gender and area of residence in 2003.



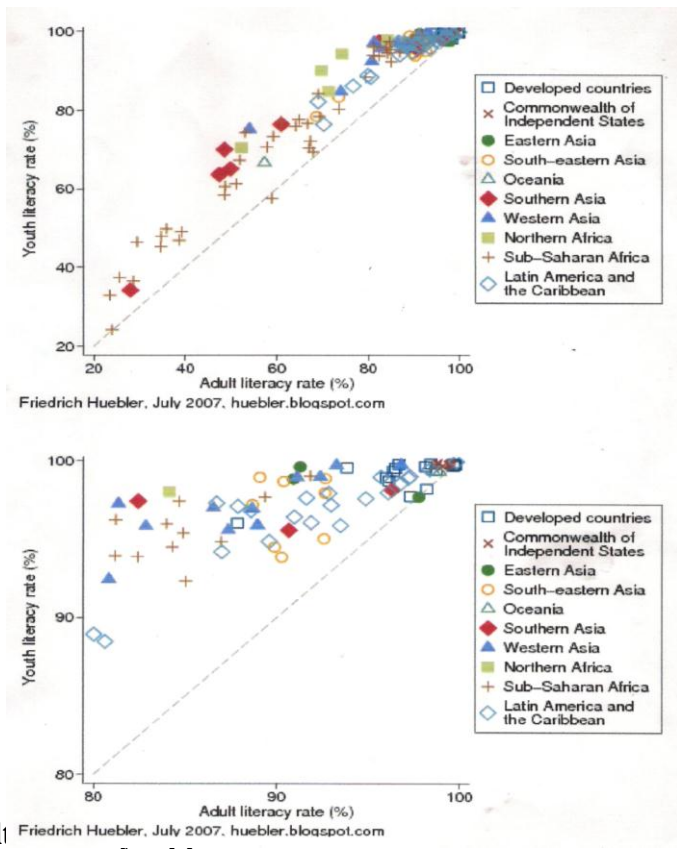
Source: Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2003.

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the federal, state and local governments in Nigeria have made some efforts towards adult education aimed at reducing discrimination and marginalization of women in favour of gender equity and equality by establishing the Ministry of Women Affairs which now partners with EFA plans for girls' education.

Apart from all these efforts, there has always been concentration on children and youth education. The adults who

are in the nation's development sectors are completely neglected and denied educational rights. These people need education for immediate improvement of their lives, not only in Nigeria but the world over. A clear indication of this is illustrated in figure 4, which shows the extent of attention given to youth and adult education in the world.

Figure 4:



Adult

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I have taken this audience through brief evolution of adult education, the misconcepts (Adult and Adult Education), the relevance of adult education to us all, the challenges of illiteracy, the powers of literacy and Nigerian efforts in the struggle to eradicate illiteracy. What remains for me now is to briefly inform this audience about my little and humble contributions towards this battle of eradicating illiteracy.

In my many years of teaching and research in adult education, literacy and community development, I have observed that adult education and literacy are not in governments' (federal, state and local) priority list. This denies adult education government's commitment, sufficient budget allocation, provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure; provision of qualitative and quantitative human and material resources. This has gone a long way to frustrate most of the efforts towards achieving total eradication of illiteracy in Nigeria which should not be allowed.

I have through publication of my books, journal articles, chapters in many university books, meetings, conferences, workshops and training of middle and high level manpower contributed in the struggle against illiteracy and in the promotion of literacy. In my handbook on Adult

Education: principles and practices, which is a resourceful material for lecturers, and students in many Nigerian University Adult Education Departments, I carefully and logically developed six literacy teaching models or techniques to facilitate adults access to literacy learning. Adult literacy instructors and those in training can use any of them or re-blend two or three of them for effective teaching and learning of literacy, for non-literate, neo-literate and post-literate adults.

One of these models is the alphabetic technique which is prominent in the Each-One-Teach-One (EOTO) or Fund the teaching of one. This model is considered cost-effective for mass literacy education implementation. The next technique I always loved to use as an alternative to the alphabetic technique is Paulo Freire's Conscientization technique. This has recently been re-branded Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)/Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Technique (REFLECT).

The Alphabetic Technique

What I did with my Andragogical Teaching Practice students was to use this model as a means to motivate illiterate, semi-illiterate and neo-literate adults to learn, in adult literacy centres like St. Andrews, State School Sangana, St. Thomas

adult education centres, and Academic power training institute etc.

Our process involved going to these centres to dialogue with literacy instructors and learners (participants) on issues relating to literacy programme – the enrolment figures, number of literacy classes, environmental conditions, quality of teaching staff, time for literacy classes and major problems of learners. We also discussed such other issues as availability of reading materials, primers, scheme of work and dropout rates.

This dialogue assisted us in assessing and analyzing the extent of participants' problems and to plan how to modify their existing teaching technique (the alphabetic technique) to satisfy the needs, interests and aspirations of the participants. Before the actual practical teaching of these adults, by student teachers in training, I insisted that the andragogical principles for teaching adults should be adopted because of their peculiar nature which is unlike the children. I need to reiterate here, Knowles (1970) statement that confirms the importance of this andragogical principles when he said:

The main reason why adult education has not achieved the impact on our civilization of which it is capable is that most teachers of adults have only known how to teach adults as if they were children (Nzeneri 2008:138).

Andragogy is the art and science of teaching adults. It is based on the following principles:-

- i) Adults' self-concept moves from dependent to self-directing individual.
- ii) The adult has accumulated reservoir of life experiences which serve as resource for learning
- iii) Readiness to learn is oriented towards adults' developmental tasks or responsibilities.
- iv) Time perspective of the adult learner moves from post-poned to immediate application of what is learned, and
- v) Adults' orientation moves from subject-centered to problem/learner centeredness.

Participatory Activities: The actual practical literacy session begins with introducing the English alphabets, vowels and consonants to illiterate and semi-illiterate adult thus:-

Vowel Alphabets – Aa Ee Ii Oo Uu

The instructor drills learners in producing actual pronunciation of the vowels and for learners to master them.

Consonant Alphabets are presented in this chart as follows:-

Bb Cc Dd Ff Gg Hh Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Pp
 Qq Rr Ss Tt Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz.

The instructor drills adult learners in the pronunciation of these consonant alphabets – before engaging them in the full and active participation in building and identifying word roots and how to develop or form words thus:-

Using these vowels a e i o u first and attaching to them these consonants b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x y z We have this chart:-

ab(le)	ac	ad(d)	af	ag- as	at	al(l)	etc	az
eb	ec	ed	ef	eg -				ez
ib	ic	id	if	in	is	it	etc	iz
ob(ey)	oc	od(d)	of(f)	og -	on	or ok	etc	oz
ub	uc	ud	uf	ug – us(e)				uz

The instructor engages adult learners into full practical commitment of building or forming words using the above roots eg if we add le to ab, it gives us able, ad plus d gives add etc. This guides them build many words, phrases and sentences by themselves. They can do this by using short story books, primers, small dictionary, newspapers, diary etc. to find words and phrases using these roots.

The joy of the learners is that they have known how to originate the words which they use in literacy reading. Each

individual forms word, phrase and sentence charts or on note books. These are brought for group or class discussion or dialogue to select appropriate words, phrases and sentences that are meaningful, relevant and concerned with their day-to-day life activities – socially, economically, politically, culturally and environmentally. These are used to develop their literacy reading materials where reading materials are scarce or unavailable.

The next step in building words, phrases and sentences is to use the consonants first and then combine them with vowels thus forming this chart displayed here:-

ba(d)	ca(t)	da	fa(t)	etc	za
be	ce	de	fe(el) -	he me	etc ze
bi	ci	di	fi(II) -	ki(II)	etc zi
bo(dy)	co	do(nt) fo(r) -	go(t) no(r) (t) to	etc	zo
bu	cu(p)	du	fu(II)	etc	zu

The instructor/facilitator guides and leads the participants to identify words, phrases and sentences by using these word roots, i.e. go, go in , fat, fat cat, he goes in, he kills the fat cat etc.

The compiled practical individual word, phrase and sentence charts or on note books are brought for class dialogue

to select relevant and meaningful ones that are relevant to participants day-to-day life activities. These along with the former are used to plan literacy reading materials for adult illiterates, semi-illiterates and neo-literates.

The generation of the words, phrases and sentences using the word roots interests, motivates and raises learners' enthusiasm to learn and discover more. It also gives them the sense of commitment in searching for more knowledge. It is not only their full participation that is involved, it makes use of their self-directed learning, use of their accumulated life experiences in searching for the words that are related to their needs. What is learned is utilized in their places of work, environment, socio-economic and political life. This technique makes them fully motivated to explore all available materials – newspapers, magazines, short and interesting story books, novels, dictionaries etc in discovering words used in building their phrases and sentences.

Some alphabets can be added to some word roots either in front of or behind to form our required word i.e. “he” plus “s” before it gives us “she”, “go” plus “a” before it gives us “ago” and “as” plus “k” after it is “ask” etc. This can form another full assignment for practical problem-solving activities. These activities should be moderated, directed and

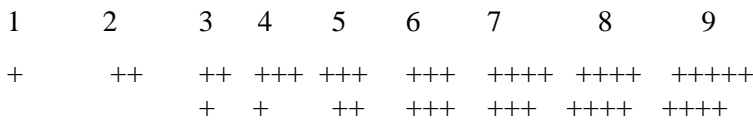
guided by a qualified adult facilitator to ensure the quality of learners learning through self-directing and discovery. From these practices, the mysteries of words, phrases and sentences are demystified.

This technique can be used in the teaching of any other languages (Igbo, Latin, Yoruba and Hausa) which are alphabet-oriented. Igbo language like Latin has additional form of modified vowels *ì* *ọ* *ù* where they are used, they indicate words with short sounds. Latin language has *i* *ó* *ú* indicating words with short sounds in their pronunciation. I encourage people and learners to write short and interesting story books, letter writing, write local or evening news on daily events and if possible organize translating the Holy Bible or Koran into the local or vernacular languages of the people. This encourages full participation and understanding; as well as having access to information on peoples' situational life activities – socially, economically and politically. This also helps to ensure that our local languages are kept alive.

The Adult Education Department of this University has been fully committed to teaching and research in environmental adult education and environmental literacy to ensure that people are well informed about their attitudes and behaviour that guarantee environmental safety and

sustainability which are important issues in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Numeracy: I have through various approaches and practical activities promoted the reading, writing and computing of figures (numeracy), such as making the learners critically examine and master the numerals (1-9) and to associate them with objects or pictures representing them. The important thing is to associate them with their **unit values**. After dialoguing with the learners, this chart of figures is designed and put on the display board thus:-



Each star or cross (+) in the chart stands for a **unit** of a named person, animal, object or thing which is commonly used in the learner's life activities. The figure two (2 ++) stands for two units and figure nine (9 +++++++) stand for nine units.

The adult illiterate (non-literate), semi-illiterate (can read but not write or vice versa) and the neo-literate (newly literate) have already known how to calculate their items of trade, agricultural inputs and outputs, money realized from daily sales etc. And so they can add (+), subtract (-), multiply (x) and divided (\div), yet they lack understanding of the

mathematical rules/principles which frustrate their calculation or computation of figures/numbers and record keeping.

Through class activities and discussions guided by the instructor (facilitator) the participants are led to identify that when one more unit is added to nine units, the entire number becomes a single bundle of one ten and zero units. The learners are also guided to identify the place value of numbers and to discover that when nine bundles of tens are added to a bundle of one ten the entire becomes one bundle of one hundred. When nine bundles of one hundred each is added to one bundle of a hundred the entire becomes a bundle of one thousand.

This is the most important aspect of numeracy required in day-to-day recording of the adults which must be practicalized and mastered.

Our findings show that adults who thoroughly understand and master the place value of numbers feel very comfortable computing or recording figures or numbers. Learners were assigned to practice these daily life activities:-

- i) Write down the dice faces (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). Throw the dice twenty four (24) times and find out the number of times each face occurred. Do the same when you throw it seventy-two times etc.

- ii) Look up on the wall clock or your wrist watch and tell the time of the day. Do this often and learn to tell the time.
- iii) Look at the sports column of a local newspaper and identify the number of sports people play. List them in your notebook and write down the number of people that play in each team.
- iv) Assemble all the money for each day's sells and write down the number under each denomination (N5, N10, N20, N50, N100, N500 and N1000). What is the total sells for the day? Remove all the N1000 and N500 denominations from the total daily sells and find out what is left, etc.

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, interest in numeracy/mathematics has been destroyed in our school system because of the methods of teaching and assessing learner's performance. In most cases unqualified instructors are made to teach numeracy or mathematics and they look at the answers and crook the answers. Their concern in assessing performance is to mark the answer without determining the steps used in arriving at the answer. This has frustrated many and made learners to hate figures. I have tried to revive this interest among my innumerate learners through my principle of practicalizing

mathematics and this is based on my step-by – step approach before arriving at the answer and each correct step attracts marks. Many of my certificate, PGDE, B. Ed, M. Ed and Ph.D, candidates who passed through me (the Post- literate candidates), including some of our University staff here, got their interest in calculation of figures and in statistics revived by this step-by-step approach. This approach requires miss-no step so as not to confuse the learner. It is then that the learner becomes happy to practice on his/her own after being armed with “step – by-step” approach. This principle in numeracy, mathematics or statistics is properly documented in my book “An introduction to research methods and statistics”. This assists the adults struggling to understand, document, record or compute figures in arriving at correct answers and/or cross-checking to be sure the figures are correct.

Functional Literacy: This is work-oriented, socio-economic-oriented literacy programme. I used my NGO, called “DE ONE’S FASHION” to promote literacy and numeracy among illiterate and semi- illiterate youths and adults. Through this vocational programme these group of adults and youths were taught how to measure and keep records more accurately. They learnt to measure different peoples’ sizes, determine cloth lengths, colour, design types and then write them down as well

as the names of customers and their addresses. The youths and adults who participated in the scheme learnt to sew different designs of clothes for people, for themselves and their friends. They also sewed school bags, beddings, table cloth etc to make little money and get themselves self-employed after the programme which lasted for a minimum of eighteen months. This helped to reduce unemployment problems and it promoted literacy and numeracy among youths and adults.

Mr. Vice- Chancellor, I have for years served the National commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) at the University of Port-Harcourt Center as its coordinator under my Director Professor B.A. Eheazu. NCNE was established to provide education to nomadic pastoralist and fisher folk migrants. It is on record that NCNE has in collaboration with many national and international organizations provided literacy education to adults (men and women), youths and children of the nomadic groups of migrants of this nation.

I have been privileged during the periods of my service to NCNE attended many conferences, critique workshops and various meetings aimed at providing literacy and numeracy to men, women, youths and children of migrants. This skill assists them in handling other subjects like integrated science social science and humanity based subjects. Above all, I have,

in collaboration with my Director, written social studies books 1-3 and 4-6 for the fisher folk migrant learners as well as books 1-3 and 4-6 as teachers' guides in social studies. That is, twelve books for NCNE to promote adult education and literacy education for the fisher folk migrants.

Current Literacy Problems In Nigeria:

With the above contributions and the efforts of the governments, non-governmental organizations, the state agencies and stakeholders, there is need to look at the current problems of literacy in Nigeria. A critical look at the reports of some commissions assigned the responsibility of eradication of illiteracy in this country reveals the situational problems confronting adult education and literacy in Nigeria.

Situation Report of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) recorded the following problems in her efforts to promote adult education and reduce illiteracy among the Nigerian migrants:-

- (i) Under funding and late release of approved funds to the commission.
- (ii) Unwillingness of state governments to make budgetary provisions for nomadic education.

- (iii) Indiscriminate transfer of teachers by the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) from nomadic primary schools to conventional primary schools without replacement.
- (iv) The dearth of teachers in terms of quality and quantity. There is on the average 3- teachers per school and significant (60%) lack minimum requisite qualification prescribed by government and
- (v) Inadequate supervision and monitoring of schools or centres by both local and state supervisors and inspectors.

This report reveals some true challenges adult education and literacy education are facing; policies are made without commitment and political will to implement them.

The more glaring issue on the problems and challenges of adult education and adult literacy education is clearly exposed by the 2007 annual report of the National Commission for Mass literacy, Adult and Non- formal Education. The Report which is the first in 19 years of the commission's existence indicates the following challenges and constraints (Egonu 2010:14):-

- (i) Inadequate policy framework, enabling environment and resources to run mass literacy programmes.

- (ii) Lack of political will and commitment that are indispensable for the successful promotion and prosecution of adult education.
- (iii) Inadequate infrastructure and inappropriate learning centres.
- (iv) Ill-qualified and insufficient facilitators and personnel to manage the centres.
- (v) Inadequate publicity of the importance of mass literacy education.
- (vi) Lack of incentives and inconsistent payment of stipends to facilitators.

This 2007 annual report, the first of its kind, 19 years in the life of the commission, is an indication of serious neglect, lack of commitment and willingness to promote and give priority attention to adult education and literacy in Nigeria. Government primary and secondary schools in the country are neglected and most of them are dilapidated.

The Dakar Framework for action (2000) to which Nigeria gave support in achieving Education for All (EFA) saw education and literacy as tools for environmental protection, better health and good governance; tools which empower individuals to reflect, act and make wise decisions. Can Nigeria compete favourably in the global world if this

neglect in education, and in particular adult and non-formal education continues? Can the graduands of our government primary and secondary schools be considered literate when most of them cannot read or write their names or communicate meaningfully in English and local languages? These are critical issues to be addressed. These schools are dilapidated and seriously neglected such that many parents have to send their children to private schools or overseas for their children's education. Government's withdrawal of Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) in our Educational System has adversely reduced quality teachers needed to provide quality education. There is need to re-introduce TTCs with adult education units in them and in the advanced teachers' colleges in Nigeria to promote literacy and numeracy.

The policy of general promotion of primary and secondary school pupils to the next level has not encouraged academic activities by students since no body repeats a class after failing all examinations.

My Vice –Chancellor, the literacy level considered functional in the 20th century, unfortunately is not the required level for the 21st century. He who stops learning is overtaken by obsolescence of knowledge and skills as well as being overtaken in resolving changes and challenges in adults life

battles. Obsolescence in knowledge and skills due to technological, internet, etc, challenges every adult to continue learning (post-literacy) no matter the present levels of education. Adult education and literacy encourages life- long education for all if we must be up to date in our professional callings and other life responsibilities that will enable us meet up with global demands.

The Way Forward

To be in the right track in this struggle against eradication of illiteracy as a means of equipping adults solve their life challenges, the following strategies for the way forward need to be addressed. Proper attention should be given to adult education and literacy in line with the global concern for eradication of illiteracy, such as the declaration of Education For All (EFA) and literacy for all. To achieve literacy for all (children, youths and adults) as enshrined in our National Policy on Education NPE 2004; the governments (Federal, state and Local) should live up to expectation by providing adequate funding, adequately qualified personnel and adequate instructional materials.

There is need to raise the enthusiasm or motivational level of adult literacy agents (organizers, supervisors and

inspectors) and participants (facilitators and learners). This is vital because it serves as a driving force towards achieving literacy success as experienced in Udi Hill experiment discussed earlier. Employing suitably and adequately qualified adult literacy facilitators is very vital in ensuring that the adults are taught like adults, unlike the children; by applying the theoretical and practical principles of andragogy required in sustaining adults' interest and motivation in learning.

Poor remuneration of literacy instructors and serious delay in paying their little stipend constitute serious disincentive for regular attendance to classes and effective participation in the programme. In the area of resources still, any available scarce resources for adult literacy programme should be effectively and efficiently utilized while putting in place anti-fraudulent and anti-diversion of funds by way of internal and external regular auditing of programme finances and ensuring accountability. Learning environment of literacy participants need to be conducive by providing necessary minimum infrastructural facilities which promote teaching and learning for adults.

There is need to ensure that the curriculum content of adult literacy is relevant to the needs or problems of the adult learners. Adults learners willingness, motivation and personal

commitment to achieve success depends on the relevance of literacy content to their needs or goals. Such goals or needs include ability to read and write simple sentences, letters, local newspapers, prescriptions, directions and simple calculations. The content should equally enable learners observe and maintain personal and environmental cleanliness, know their rights, duties, history and immediate environment (Nzeneri 1990:69).

Partnership with donor agencies is necessary to ensure success in literacy efforts provided they are reliable and committed towards realizing the goals of the programme. Mass literacy education, requires proper planning and implementation and this cannot be isolated from provision of appropriate infrastructural facilities to ensure effective implementation of the programme. The planning goes equally with the provision of in-service training and retaining (capacity building) of poor quality and unqualified literacy instructors in the field. Attention should be given to both the education of children and youths on the one hand and adult education and literacy on the other. This is vital because it is only literate parents who value education, monitor, support, assess and motivate their children to learn unlike the illiterate adults. There is need to ensure that adults trained in the skills of

literacy and numeracy should retain the skills by providing them follow – up adult education programmes. This helps the neo-literates not to relapse into illiteracy. To assess performance in adult literacy programme, the government should put in place accurate and systematic data gathering process in motion which is vital for necessary analysis and evaluation of literacy efforts.

A reflection on the problems in achieving total eradication of illiteracy earlier presented show that most of the recommendations here for the way forward are either lacking or neglected which in turn frustrate both the adult learners, facilitators and the programme. These frustrations (challenges) place the adults in constant struggle towards improving their lives and that of their immediate society or environment.

Conclusion

Mr. Vice chancellor, distinguished guests, it is time for me to put together by way of summary, the various aspects of discourse in this lecture. The lecture focused on the challenges of the adults in their desire to acquire knowledge or wisdom to improve their lives or solve life problems- wisdom was Solomon’s request from his creator (1 King 3:9), this is the desire of all adults to solve life problems. Adult education, the first education of adults which came in its various forms,

formal, informal and non-formal education to provide the adults necessary knowledge to solve life problems should be given priority attention.

Illiteracy with its challenges is associated with blindness, ignorance, disease and poverty. The powers of literacy as seen in its empowerment, transformation and liberation influence on the life of the adults have been properly articulated in this lecture. The global concern associated with many international conferences and workshops, pronouncements and recommendations for member nations' assignment towards eradication of illiteracy and promotion of literacy which greatly influenced member nations' initiative towards eradication of illiteracy should be sustained at all levels. Nigerian government's policies, pronouncements, decrees and establishment of commissions to fight illiteracy in Nigeria should be implemented. Lack of commitment, lack of political will and adequate resources which caused past efforts to yield little results should be properly and adequately address to ensure literacy success at all levels.

My humble contributions through research publications, practicalizing literacy and numeracy to make these meaningful and relevant to voiceless and underprivileged adult illiterates and which serve as tools for literacy

eradication and literacy promotion need to be available to many illiterates for their liberation.

This lecture has exposed the meaning, role and relevance of adult education in the life of all adults and in national development as well as in the need to participate in the battle of eradicating illiteracy. The training we have imparted to both the middle level manpower through the certificate in adult education and the higher level manpower through the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed), Master of Education (M.Ed) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in adult education are clear evidence of our struggle against illiteracy. These people have gained knowledge in the theory and practice of adult education, they have field experiences in assisting in this noble battle.

There is need, Mr. Vice Chancellor, in this struggle for full mobilization of national consciousness, we need honest, total commitment and political will which should consider illiteracy as urgent national issue. This I hope will assist us tackle illiteracy and its associated ills of poverty, unemployment, sickness etc in the society. All hopes are not lost if our country's vast natural and human resources are properly harnessed, and especially our youths who are initiative and ready to face challenges could be mobilized in the battle against illiteracy, poverty and disease. Adult literacy in both developed and developing countries should be

considered as a tool and agent of liberation, awareness creation and a sine-qua-non for individual, group and national development and for continuing education (ie life-long education) for sustained survival for all.

There is need, therefore, to appeal to all literacy stakeholders, national and international organizations, donor agencies, and well meaning Nigerians to partner with governments (Federal, state and local) in the efforts towards eradication of illiteracy, and with our cooperative efforts, adults' rights to education for all (EFE) and literacy for all will be achieved, as means and vehicle for resolving adults life challenges and responsibilities. He/she that stops learning, stops doing what he/she is supposed to do and is overtaken by changes and challenges in life, no matter the present level of education.

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