



RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Appraisal of National Teachers' Institute Programme Implementation of Mass Literacy in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The highest number of illiterates in Nigeria justifies, while the country is ranked high among the E-9 nations in the world for astronomical level of illiteracy. Illiteracy level differs among the various states and regions in Nigeria. Illiteracy is a critical problem to individual and national development. The realization of the highest level of illiteracy and its prevalence in the Northern region in the country, specifically, precipitated the implementation of National Teacher's Institute Programme (NTI) with objectives to produce quality teachers, widen access to functional literacy, among others. Study therefore focuses on appraisal of NTI programme implementation of mass literacy in Nigeria. The paper give one an insight to the illiteracy level in the country. Efforts in pre and post-colonial eras toward mass literacy promotion is also delved into. Further, the connectivity existing between the programme and mass literacy drive is also examined. Finally, some challenges that are militating against the programme and the way forwards are deeply examined.

Key word: National Teachers' Institute, Illiteracy, Mas literacy.

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INTRODUCTION

The global monitoring report on Education-For-All EFA(2012) in Egunyomi (2015), rated Nigeria, alongside Egypt as having the highest number of illiterates in Africa. This is why Nigeria is grouped among the E-9 countries in the world. The E-9 nations are China, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt, Indian, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Nigeria all of them have high number of illiterates. The number of out-of-school children, since 1999 to date has increased from 7.4 to 10.5 million (Egunyomi, 2015). Bhola (1983) observes that without literacy, development only limps on one leg. In this regard a predominantly illiterate nation is an undeveloped nation. Anyanwu (1998) notes that literacy is a necessary condition for social and economic development. Painfully, illiteracy is predominant in Nigeria. The 2010 enrolment, retention and completion rates at the various levels of education in Nigeria are disheartening and of great concern to stakeholders in the education sector. Table 1 presents the percentage of 2010 enrolment, retention and completion rates at various educational levels.

A glance at the percentages of males and females enrolment, retention and completion percentages in table (1) above, one will see that the percentages are not encouraging. Thus, reflecting that many Nigerians are still illiterate. Adeola (1988) declares that, poverty ignorance, disease and malnutrition are caused by the illiteracy level of the people. In line with this, Osunde and Omoruyi (1997) stress that ignorance, disease, high level of dependency, high poverty rate, malnutrition, under-development and other social ills are often the case in Nigeria. As long as there is denial of access to education for functional literacy, inequality, discrimination, desire for social reforms, injustice and other forms of imposed human limitations will continue to exist (Egunyomi, 2015).

Therefore, one of the programmes initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria is the establishment of the National Teachers' Institute programme in 1976 by decree number 7 of 1978 (now act Number 7 of 1978) of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. The objective of this

programme is directed towards the training of quality teachers, upgrading their skills through seminars, conferences and reducing the high level of illiteracy in Nigeria by extending or giving opportunity to people, who have been dislodged, due to one reason or the other from the formal system of education. The programme has been organized just like mass literacy campaign in 1982, orchestrated mainly to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria to a minimal level.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the appraisal of the National Teachers' Institute Programme implementation towards achieving mass literacy in Nigeria.

Table 1: 2010 Enrolment, Retention and Completion Rates of various Levels of Education in Nigeria

Levels	Enrolment rate						Retention	Completion		
	Male (M)		Female (F)		Total (M & F)		M & F	M	F	M & F
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Primary	10,998,709	41.84	9,303,000	35.39	20,30,709	77.23	89.0	69.0	72.0	70.5
Junior Secondary	2,703,938	23.26	2,306,289	19.84	5,010,236	43.10	86.0	72.0	73.0	72.5
Senior Secondary	2,201,215	21.60	1,845,222	18.11	4,046,437	39.71	88.0	89.0	89.0	90.0
Tertiary Institution	391,431	1.20	240,715	0.74	632,146	1.94	94.8	91.2	91.2	91.5

Source: National Planning Commission (2011).

NATIONAL TEACHERS' INSTITUTE (NTI)

National Teachers' Institute of Nigeria (NTI) was established in 1976 through Decree 7 of 1978, Act Number 7 of 1978 of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. The Act saddled the NTI council with the responsibility of organizing and the provision of programmes for the training, development, upgrading and certification of teachers and to provide for other matters related education.

NTI programme started in Kaduna State with the training of Grade II teachers as manpower at the primary school level of education and particularly to reduce the illiteracy level, mostly in the Northern part of the country. Gradually, the programme started in virtually in all the States of the country. The objectives of the Institute in 1996 were as follows:

1. To upgrade under qualified teachers and unqualified teachers.
2. To provide refresher and other upgrading courses for teachers.
3. To organize workshops, seminars and conference that could assist in the improvement of teachers nationwide.
4. To conduct National Teachers' Grade II examination.
5. To carry out research in conjunction with other bodies on any matter relevant to educational development in the country.
6. Formulate policies and initiate programmes at all levels of education designed to improve by way of research the quality and content of education in Nigeria
7. Assess the training programmes offered by the institutions controlled by or associated with the Institute, with a view to ascertaining the professional competence of these institutions to offer such assistance either or in co-operation in the education of teachers and perform such other functions that are necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all functions assigned to it be the Council, as contained in the decree that established NTI council.

EFFORTS IN PRE AND POST-COLONIAL ERA TOWARD MASS LITERACY IN NIGERIA

Existing literatures have shown the magnitude and growing incidence of illiteracy, particularly in the E-9 nations of the world. The illiterates have been described with many nomenclatures, such as; "the unreserved", "the neglected", "the under nourished", "the forgotten people". But to Freire (1972) as "the oppressed". Sanusi (2001) notes that Mass literacy education began with the activities of the religious bodies or organizations. They began in their attempt to make their converts to be able to read and write. Hence, they discovered, that the illiteracy level of the people most especially their converts was a barrier to the propagation of their gospels and religious doctrines. Apparently, the inability of the converts to read and write did not fast track the spread of

the gospels of the early missionaries in the country. Therefore, the missionaries introduced literacy programme, so as to make the people able to read and develop themselves in their various religious literatures doctrines documented in religious literatures.

According to Omolewa (1994), "Africans were not intimidated with the benefits of literacy". Hence, people perceived it as a phenomenon in the development of their human nature and society. Sanusi (2011) notes that, when the religious organizations started mass literacy campaign or education, they did not have it in mind that the aggressive mass campaigns would result to the development of the country. Thus, their target mainly was to make people to become literates.

According to Omolewa (1998), the art of reading and writing was an innovation brought by the traders and teachers to the parts of Northern Nigeria in the Eleventh century and by the Portuguese to some parts of Southern Nigeria in the Fifteenth century. The Muslim clerics and itinerant teachers were reading Arabic scripts. Many of them served as letter carriers between the Hausa and the Arab rulers in the North Nigeria. In the Southern part of the country, the Christian missionaries of different denominations established Sunday schools, where people were introduced to the art of reading and writing.

Indeed, the Islamic and religious bodies or missionaries did a lot towards the promotion of mass literacy education in Nigeria. Even, before the advent of Western education in the country, Islamic Literacy Centres had been established. Sanusi (2000) notes that in Nigeria literacy and numeracy education were first introduced through the Quran in the 11th century, when the then rulers of Kanem (around 1085) accepted Islam. Contacts were developed through correspondence with Tunisia in Maghrid and in 1230, Kanem embassy was established in Tunisia. Kanem became a Centre of Islamic Learning and famous teachers were sent to Mali to teach jurisprudence. Due to this, Kanem scholars achieved a very high standard in the writing of classical Arabic languages as evident by a letter written by the Chief scribe of Kanem courts.

The missionaries' efforts towards literacy promotion in Nigeria is worth nothing. As observed by Fafunwa (1974) that the period between 1842 and 1882 was marked by intensive missionary activities and expansion in Nigeria. The Church Missionary Society, the Roman Catholic Mission, the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Qua-ibo Mission, the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society and the Basel Mission firmly established themselves. As at this period, little attention was paid to the educational yearnings and needs of the people. It was solely missionaries' affairs. Sarumi (2000) described this period as exclusive Christian missionary education in the Southern, Nigeria. The efforts of the missionaries as at this period was majorly on children education, as adults were expected to participate in evangelical programmes. Hence, they were not included in literacy education and vocational training in the area of agriculture, carpentry, brick laying and joinery and offer vocational programmes which formed the contents of the missionary educational programmes. However, religion and morals were given top priority. Thus, Literacy Centres were put in place by the missionary bodies. For instance, the Roman Catholic Mission established Topo, near Badagry and Industrial School for delinquent children in 1876. It could be enthroned that mass literacy began by both Islamic and Christian religious bodies. While it started with the Islamic religion in the North, the Christian organization began it in the South.

Observable, the challenges in the provision of mass literacy education championed by both the Islamic and Christian missionaries brought the incursion of British Colonial administration into the process. Especially, between 1870-1876. The Colonial administrators assisted the missionary schools by giving them material and financial supports (Fafunwa, 1974). The first education ordinance was enacted in 1882 by the colonial administration (Ayandele, 1966; & Fafunwa, 1974). This covered West African territories of Lagos, the Gold Coast and the Gambia. This laid the educational structures and institutions which enhanced educational programmes in Nigeria as a colonized British nation. It needs to be stressed, that the educational efforts of the missionary bodies and British colonial administrators focused mainly on the Christians and pagans, than towards the Muslim communities in the South. The colonial government only built schools in the Northern part of the country in 1899, when the protectorate of the Northern Nigeria was established. Several factors motivated and stimulated the interest of Colonial masters towards mass literacy drive in Nigeria. These included:

1. The colonial administrators needed educated low level manpower for their assistance in the smooth running of their administration.
2. The need to respond to individual Nigerian who felt bad about the deplorable condition or state of educational system in the country at that time.
3. The fall out of Phelps Stoke's Commission Report of 1921, which advocated the promotion of technical industrial training, vocational training, education of the girl-child and women in development programme, community education and the promotion of both formal and non-formal forms of education and so on.

During the post-colonial era the mass literacy educational drive in Nigeria takes another dimension. There was aggressive drive to reverse the illiteracy status of Nigerian most especially, when development has been attributed to literacy. As part of the commitment of government, several policies were formulated towards the promotion of mass literacy education of Nigeria. It is worth noting that, during the administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in September 8, 1982 was always declared as Mass Literacy Day (Aderinoye, 1997).

The period, 1989-1986 was another period of serious drive towards mass literacy in the country. There was establishment of National Primary Education Commission (1993), the Nomadic Education Commission and the National Mass Education Commission (1990). All these were to ensure that high illiteracy rate is halted to a minimal and barest level in the country. However, apart then the Federal Government interventional policies at reducing illiteracy, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are not relenting in their oasis to promote literacy both in the country most especially during the post-colonial period. These include; United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), UNESCO, World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF to mention but few. Abba (2005) noted that, UNESCO has been supporting literacy projects since 1960's. For instance, in 1967, a pilot functional literacy programme was established. UNESCO has also been promoting literacy in Nigeria, through the award of prizes to meritorious institutions and agencies that have been responsible for inspiring and conducting outstanding projects on literacy. For example, the Kano State Agency for Mass Education received honourable award from UNESCO in 1983 and 1990. The Adult and Continuing Education Division of the Cross River State and Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan also received the award of UNESCO International Reading Association Literacy prize in 1984 and 1989, respectively (Adulewa, 1998). The roles of Non-Governmental Organizations and other providers of mass literacy education in Nigeria, most especially during the post-colonial period in Nigeria can be summarily put, as follows:

1. Creating a website as repository information concerning the need for literacy drive for human and social development.
2. Sponsoring media programmes on mass literacy.
3. Promoting the literacy needs of the disadvantage people such as the migrants prisoners, nomads, refuge, physically challenged people e.t.c.
4. Promoting collaboration with themselves and other agencies towards the promotion of mass literacy education.
5. Provision of adequate fund that would sustain institutional programmes in mass literacy campaign.
6. Training and retraining of facilitators needed for mass literacy programme.
7. Creating public awareness on the relevance of literacy to the socio-economic well beings of individuals and the society and hosts.

National Teachers' Institute and Mass Literacy Promotion (INTERCONNECTIVITY)

The NTI programme implementation in Nigeria, inspite of its numerous challenges, has recorded some landmark achievements. These are optly discussed as follow:

First and foremost, the programme to some extent has assisted in terms of reducing the highest rate of illiteracy in the country, most especially in the Northern part of the country, where the programme began. People who had never had the opportunity of going back to school to complete their interrupted initial formal education, through NTI programme have the chance to do so.

Moreover, NTI programme has also helped in producing, training and re-training of qualified teachers in the country. On regular basis NTI has been organizing seminars, conferences and

workshops for the teachers. This is no doubt, has helped to equip teachers with the latest teaching skills, update and upgrade them for efficient and effective service delivery. It has made educational sector a vibrant and effective one. Besides, NTI programme as one of the components of non-formal education has been giving opportunity to the people that were unable to acquire education through the formal system of education in Nigeria, due to one reason or the other.

In addition, the programme has made it possible for people to achieve their passion for education. Iwise (2005) noted that people are enrolling into educational programme, most especially the non-formal system of education for different reasons, such as:

1. Personal growth and development;
2. Social improvement;
3. Organizational improvement/effectiveness;
4. Intellectual growth; and
5. Social transformation.

NTI programme has actually opened door for the actualization of all these lofty goals. It needs to also be stated that, NTI programme implementation in Nigeria has been very instrumental to the achievability of Education For All (EFA) agender and Universal Basic Education (UBE) objectives, partly. Finally, NTI programme also gives room and chances for in-service training. Today, many of the participants of the programme are either teachers or workers from other sectors of the economy, who want to improve upon their intellect or knowledge for effective service delivery in their various work place and also for fulfilling certification requirements. It needs to be stated also, that NTI has been using programmes leading to awards of BA.(Ed), B. Sc.(Ed) in the country. Thus, portending that, teachers are not only trained for primary school level of education, but also for secondary school level.

NTI programme has helped to reduce drastically the highest rate of illiteracy in Nigeria, predominantly in the Northern part of the country. This also justifies, while the programme began in the North, specifically at Kaduna in 1976. Table 2 below presents the percentage of out-of-school children on states and regions comparison in Nigeria.

Table 2: Percentage of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria; States and Zones Comparisons

Region/State	Primary	Junior Secondary	Region/State	Primary	Junior Secondary
North Central			South East Zone		
Benue	19.0%	11%	Abia	5.9%	2.7%
Kwara	23.0%	6.9%	Anambra	3.9%	3.7%
Kogi	8.6%	29.0%	Ebonyi	18.6%	4.7%
Nasarawa	22.7%	18.1%	Enugu	14.0%	7.9%
Niger	50.0%	52.3%	Imo	4.8%	3.2%
Plateau	14.5%	15.3%			
Zonal Average	23.0%	22.1%	Zonal Average	9.32%	4.44%
North Central			South East Zone		
Adamawa	32.9%	30.0%	Akwabom	7.3%	6.5%
Bauchi	58.2%	65.4%	Bayelsa	8.4%	3.4%
Borno	73.4%	69.4%	Cross-River	9.5%	8.3%
Gombe	38.6%	41.3%	Delta	8.6%	6.5%
Taraba	31.9%	27.7%	Edo	6.9%	4.4%
Yobe	63.5%	64.3%	Rivers	12.6%	7.2%
Zonal Average	49.75%	49.68%	Zonal Average	8.88%	60.5%
North Central			South East Zone		
Jigawa	61.6%	64.5%	Ekiti	2.9%	2.9%
Kaduna	32.2%	64.5%	Lagos	4.3%	6.3%
Kano	40.0%	22.3%	Ogun	4.3%	6.3%
Katsina	55.0%	44.0%	Ondo	6.0%	2.4%
Kebbi	69.0%	63.6%	Osun	7.5%	3.3%
Sokoto	65.3%	67.6%	Oyo	23.3%	18.2%
Zamfara	76.2%	68.9%			
Zonal Average	57.04%	56.6%	Zonal Average	8.05%	6.57%

Source: FRN (2012), P6

Out-of-School Children in Nigeria; States and Zones Comparisons above, the statistics clearly show that the illiteracy level in the zones in the North is higher than that of other zones, most especially in the South-West. Perhaps, this can be a reason while the implementation of NTI began in the North in Nigeria.

CHALLENGES OF NTI AND MASS LITERACY PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

The following are the factors that are militating against the programme:

1. **Rarity of Qualified Facilitators:** Effective teaching will result to better learning outcomes by qualified facilitators. At most of the centres of the programme across the country, Nigeria, 80% of the facilitators are non-professionals in Non-Formal Education, which has its own special trained facilitators. Thus, during teaching and learning, most facilitators are using pedagogical instead of andragogical skills. This is retarding learning outcomes, positively.
2. **Poor Funding:** The sustainability of any programme depends largely on adequate fund committed into its implementation. Nigeria is a country, where funding of education is poorly done. Hence, since is inadequate funding, it affects a smooth running of NTI programme in its totality.
3. **Inconsistence in Government Policies:** The lack of stable government policies is also a problem to a successful implementation of NTI programme. Since, the commencement of the programme in 1982, Nigeria has witnessed many civilian and military governments alike. Each of this administration has its policies on mass literacy programme, which does not bring stability to the programme implementation in the country.
4. **Academic and Pandemic Corruption:** Corruption is one of the issues that permeates through the entire strata in Nigeria. Most times, fund committed to sustain NTI programme is syphoned by the officials of the programme for their personal use.
5. **Lack of Awareness:** Many people are not aware the existence of the programme. Hence, the centres of NTI programme are restricted to state capitals and Local Government Areas headquarters. This make it very difficult for the people in the rural areas of the country to be aware of the existence of it.
6. **Ignorance:** A lot of people in Nigeria do not know the benefits of NTI programme on their personal and nation development. Hence, they do not show interest to enroll for the programme.
7. **Poor Monitoring and Evaluation:** NTI programme is poorly monitored and evaluated in Nigeria. There is no functional strategy to monitor the effectiveness of the programme in terms of targets achievement.
8. **Lack of Infrastructural Facilities:** The dearth of infrastructural facilities is a serious problem that are militating against the successful implementation of NTI programme in Nigeria. At many centres of the programme, there is shortage of facilities such as, electricity supply, chairs and tables, primers and hosts, thus, affecting effecting teaching and learning.

THE WAY FORWARD

In order to achieve the lofty NTI objectives and for effective implementation of its programmes, the following measures must accorded high premium:

1. There should be adequate funding of the programmes.
2. The programmes should not be politicized.
3. The programmes should be given political will
4. Enabling environment should be provided for it thriving.
5. There should be adequate provision of materials and logistics support
6. Effective monitoring and co-ordination.
7. Public awareness should be created on the relevance of the programmes towards individuals and nation's development and so on.

If all the above suggestions are implemented, the programmes will thrive well and achieve its objectives.

CONCLUSION

It can therefore be concluded that NTI implementation in Nigeria has its strengths and weaknesses, but the former sub-merges the latter. Despite all the challenges, NTI implementation to a very large extent, significantly has positively contributed to literacy level in the country. It has offer people, who might not able to further there education to do so. Through the programme also, NTI has makes education very accessible to the people and also help to reduce of tension of not acquiring education through the formal way.

NTI programme has also been adding to the quality of instructional delivery and quality of teacher, through offering of training and retraining programme. It is also of interest that NTI has been organizing seminars and workshops, where stakeholders do come together to exchange ideas that can enhance the NTI programme implementation.

Recommendations

Having appraised (NTI) programme critically the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should commit more fund towards the programme implementation.
2. Government should synergize efforts with other providers of the programme such as Non-Governmental Organizations, religious bodies and hosts to effectively implement it.
3. Public enlightenment and sensitization should be monitored on NTI. This will enable public to be aware of its potentials to individuals and nation's development.
4. Effective strategy to monitor and evaluate the programme should be devised by government to enhance its implementation.
5. All the necessary infrastructural facilities should be provided by the government to guarantee the sustainability of NTI programme in Nigeria and hosts.

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