

LOW LITERACY AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN IGBO-ORA, AN AGRARIAN COMMUNITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: Learning to read and write is a fundamental right. Yet official figures by the National Bureau of Statistics indicate that 38% of African adults are illiterate. This study ascertained the level of literacy of Igbo-Ora community and the effects on community development. Mixed methods of survey were applied. A questionnaire of 32 items was used to collect data and information on the literacy level and socio-economic development of the community. The instrument applied for the National Assessment of Adult Literacy as applied by the National Center for Education Statistics in one of its studies was modified and applied. It provided the basis for a measure of the literacy level of the sampled 25-year-olds and above. It measures the prose, document and quantitative types of literacy. The 750 copies of the questionnaire were randomly distributed and were returned and analysed via this framework. Additionally, three Baales were interviewed on the history and level of literacy of their parts of the community. The high level of illiteracy demonstrated has enormously affected the socio-economic development of the community. This study argues for sustainable literacy for sustainable development. It recommends that to enhance the literacy level, all governments must make logical guidelines, as well as improve funding for the relevant agencies of governments saddled with the execution of the mass literacy programme. Similarly, literacy-inclined groups and other related NGOs must increase their activities and drives to highlight the significance of literacy. Furthermore, the State Universal Basic Education Board must strengthen its efforts to ensure no child is left out of the mass literacy initiative.

Keywords: Community development, Igbo-Ora, sustainable literacy, sustainable development.

Background

Learning to read and write is a fundamental right. Yet, 38 % of African adults, that is, about 153 million are illiterate (Zhang, 2005; Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2014). Africa is the only continent where more than half of parents are not able to help their children with homework due to illiteracy (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009). Traditionally, literacy is understood as the ability to read, write, and use arithmetic. In contemporary scholarship, this definition has been expanded to include the ability to use language, numbers, images, computers, and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture or a community (Barton, 2017; Latchem, 2018). Mujahid (2017), a freelance writer has this to say to describe literacy and illiteracy in his own way, in his blog: “Illiteracy is an obstacle to a better quality of life. As a social canker-worm, it has yielded several uncalled and inconsequential stigmatizations among humanity, both in the past and present, thereby leading to series of unimaginable and uncontrollable violence or crises. Undoubtedly, several people in the world have derailed in their respective pursuits, one is considered a vulnerable being, is exposed to numerous maltreatments or

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abuses, including: humiliation, stigmatization, molestation, intimidation, extortion, drug abuse, just to mention but a few.” He concluded that “the dangers of illiteracy cannot be over emphasized. Illiteracy has led to social, economic, cultural, religious, and political mayhem at various levels of human endeavor.”

Apart from Cape Verde, UNESCO (2009) Dakar covers countries that are among the twenty lowest ranking countries in the Human Development Index. Literacy rates were below 50% in Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger and Senegal. In Nigeria, individual age 15 and over that can read and write are estimated to be about 59.60% (males, 69.20% and females, 49.70) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, 2015; National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). The situation is alarming as literacy is a crucial step to acquire the basic skills needed to cope with many of the challenges children, youth and adults will face throughout their lives (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2011; Ito, 2013). The UNESCO assert that for many disadvantaged young people and adults, non-formal education is one of the main routes to learning. It goes further to stress that non-formal education reaches people in their own context and ideally in their own local languages. In Nigeria despite education being overseen by the Ministry of Education, local authorities taking responsibility for implementing state-controlled policy regarding public education and state schools, and the education system divided into Kindergarten, Primary Education, Secondary Education and Tertiary Education the challenge of low literacy level is still unabated.

Informal modes of education have also formed a foundation for tertiary education in the country for many years. These programmes and structures were decentralized and unique in their missions and practices (Sheffield, 1972; Omolewa, 2008). However, many have achieved success at promoting employment and increasing economic mobility for those who have used the programs to virtuous outcome. In addition to vocational apprenticeships, the national government and various NGOs have introduced communal based strategies for increasing literacy rates among both children and adults. Like Onukaogu (1999), Omolewa (2008) assert that formal and informal literacy education received significant boost under the colonial rule, but since independence, educational funding across the board has been deficient. The informal education system has also aimed at addressing issues other than illiteracy. Those are beyond the scope of this work. Yet, despite large support for investment in adult literacy and vocational programs, small groups of politicians and funding challenges have stalled the implementation of many literacy and vocational programs, not only in Nigeria but across Africa as well (Onukaogu, 1999; Omolewa, 2007 and 2008).

However, there are no universal definitions and standards of literacy. Unless otherwise specified, all rates are based on the most common definition - the ability to read and write at a specified age. Detailing the standards that individual communities use to assess the ability to read and write, again, is beyond the scope of this work. While the information on literacy may not be a perfect measure of educational results, it is probably the most easily available and valid for international comparisons (Omolewa, 2008; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Certain level of literacy, and education in general,

can impede and or stand as impetus to the socio-economic development of a community in this rapidly changing technology-driven world (Hopkins and McKeown, 1999, 2002; McKeown, 2002). Thus, this paper examines the level of literacy within the Igbo-Ora community, and its impact on the community's socio-economic development.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study was undertaken to ascertain the level of literacy of the Igbo-Ora Community and the effects on its community development. Findings suggest recommendations for sustainable literacy for sustainable development in the community and similar societies in Southwestern Nigeria (and others where the values and cultural practices are similar).

Research Questions

The following two research questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of literacy of Igbo-Ora community?
2. What are the effects of the Igbo-Ora community's literacy level on its development?

Study Framework

Stone (2017) asserts that students, like any other learner, gain knowledge, skills, and values to address the environmental and social challenges of the community now; and for the future. He proposes that learning to think ecologically, understand the interconnectedness of human and natural systems and developing the capacity to apply the understanding so that human communities and natural ecosystems may thrive. Similarly, sustainability as defined by the Center for Ecoliteracy (2017a) is a far richer concept than simply meeting material needs, surviving, or trying to keep a degraded planet from getting worse. According to the Center, "a truly sustainable community is alive - fresh, vital, evolving, diverse and dynamic. It supports the health and quality of life of present and future generations while living within the limits of its social and natural systems. It recognizes the need for justice, and for physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural, and spiritual sustenance." The Center for Ecoliteracy cofounder, Fritjof Capra (2002) asserts:

We do not need to invent sustainable human communities. We can learn from societies that have lived sustainably for centuries. We can also model communities after nature's ecosystems, which are sustainable communities of plants, animals [including man], and microorganisms. Since the outstanding characteristic of the biosphere is its inherent ability to sustain life, a sustainable human community must be designed in such a manner that its technologies and social institutions honour, support, and cooperate with nature's inherent ability to sustain life.

Orr (2016), a Center's board member, posits that "all education is Environmental Education. By what is included or excluded, students are taught that they are part of or apart from the natural world." According to him, "schooling is everything the school does that leads to students' learning whether that learning is intended or not. Students learn from classroom lectures. They also learn from what the school offers in the lunchroom,

by how it uses resources and manages waste, by who is included in decisions, by how the school relates to the surrounding community.” Situated within this framework, the Center for Ecoliteracy (2017b) prioritized four broad areas of education food, the campus, community, and teaching and learning the rationales for which are discussed in its report/book, *Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability*. Each of these areas offers multiple avenues for educators, students, parents, and citizens wanting to engage in the transformative work of schooling and educating for sustainability.

Site Selection and Methodology

Study Site: Igbo-Ora, a town south-western Nigeria, situated about 100 kilometers north of Lagos Metropolis is an agrarian community of about 65,000 people as per the 2006 Head Count and Population Census in Nigeria (National Population Commission, 2006). Today the population can be estimated to be about 90,000 people (Aderogba, 2017). It is made up of nine quarters, namely, Igbo’le, Pako, Iberekodo, Saganun, Idofin, Igbo-Ora, Oke Iserin, Isale Oba and Isale Ogede. Each of the quarters is administered by a local chief, *Baale* and his subjects except Isale Oba, Oke Iserin and Isale Ogede that have lesser chiefs as the traditional administrative heads. The community and Idere currently constitute Ibarapa Central Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Igbo-Ora is the administrative headquarters. Agriculture is the main stake of the economy. The community is in constant touch with Abeokuta, Ibadan and Lagos Metropolis in trade and commerce. The community produces vast crops of corn, okra, cassava (in various forms) and melon, among other agricultural produce. Whatever is not consumed locally are sold to the neighbouring cities and towns, mainly Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan.

The town is the location of the Oyo State College of Agriculture which was established in 2006. The College has contributed significantly to the socio-economic and demographic development of the town. The Oyo state government has also just approved a High Court of Justice, and the Federal government just established a Police Training College in the town.

It is a curious, but little-known fact that the rate of twin births in West Africa is about four times higher than in the rest of the world. The center of this twin zone is Igbo-Ora. More twins were born here than anywhere else on earth, but nobody is quite sure why this town should be more twin prone than any other (Cable Network News, 2014; Nigerian Television Authority [International], 2013).

In the predominantly rural community, the multiple births are celebrated and have, over the generations, been regarded as special gifts from God. Twins are a blessing, with many pregnant women wishing for multiple births. For this singular reason too, many lovers of twins want to marry from/to Igbo-Ora. Central to their diet is the cassava: Research into the multiple births carried out at Lagos University Teaching Hospital suggests that a high level of a chemical found in the Yoruba women and the peelings of the tuber could account for the high level of multiple births. Hardly could one get to a household at Igbo Ora, without seeing a set of twins. The indigenes believe that a kind of okra leaves, locally known as *ewe ilasa*, can make women who eat it to give birth to twins (Nigerian Television Authority [International], 2013).

These unique attributes have brought the community into the limelight on the world globe. But the question is, to what extent would these have affected the level of literacy and socioeconomic development of its community.

Methodology: This study employed a descriptive research method because of the following: the participants are observed in a natural and unchanged environment; the research and the exercise is a pre-cursor to some future research; the data collection allows for gathering in-depth information that may be either quantitative or qualitative - allowing for a multifaceted approach to data collection and analysis; it can result in collection of rich data collected in large amounts; and it is excellent in studies of beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and habits of members of a target audience (McNabb, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Punch, 2013; Bernard and Bernard, 2013). These may influence the literacy level of the people. A self-structured and standardized questionnaire entitled *Level of Literacy and Effects on Community Development in Igbo-Ora, Oyo State in Nigeria* was used to collect data on the literacy level and socio-economic development in the community. The questionnaire contained 32 question items. It categorized data and information about the biodata, literacy level, the status of development due to the level of literacy, and suggestions for sustainable literacy for sustainable community development.

The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) as applied by the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), was modified to provide the basis for this study's measurement of the literacy level of 750 Igbo-Ora individuals. The 750 participants comprised adults aged 25+; both male and female participants were selected irrespective of religion, occupation, and educational background. The sample size per quarter was proportionately relative to the 2006 Population and Census results. Thus, the largest was from Iberekodo (14.67%) followed by Igbo-Ora (13.33%); and the smallest were from Oke-Odo and Saganun at 8.67% and 8.00%, respectively. Table 1 shows the distribution.

Table 1

Questionnaire distribution among nine Igbo-Ora Quarters

Quarter	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Igbo'le	90	12.00
Pako	95	12.67
Iberekodo	110	14.67
Saganun	60	8.00
Oke Iserin	75	10.00
Igbo-Ora	100	13.33
Idofin	85	11.33
Oke-Odo	65	8.67
Isale Oba	70	9.33
Total	750	100.00

The instrument measures how adults used *printed* and *written* information to function at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Since adults use different kinds of printed and written materials in their daily lives, NAAL measures three categories of literacy - prose, document, and quantitative - and reports a separate scale score for each of these three areas. Thus, this study's assessment questionnaire was developed to permit measurement of these three NAAL-defined literacy categories.

The questionnaire was administered with the aid of three research assistants throughout the nine major quarters of Igbo-Ora: Igbo'le, Pako, Iberekodo, Saganun, Oke Iserin, Igb-Ora, Idofin, Oke-Odo and Isale Oba. 750 copies of the questionnaire were randomly distributed; and 100.00% response rate was achieved.

In addition to the questionnaire data, the *Baales* (traditional local heads) of Igbo'le, Saganun, and Idofin were interviewed for supplementary information regarding the history and level of literacy in their quarters. Further, the Chairman of the Local Government Area (Ibarapa Central) also supplemented this study's data from the traditional chiefs. These sources succinctly describe the level of literacy of the community and detailed how literacy has influenced development over space and time.

Findings and Discussion

This section's discussion of research findings and implications is structured around its two research questions:

1. What is the level of literacy of the Igbo-Ora Community?
2. What are the effects of the community's poor literacy level on its development?

Question 1. What is the level of literacy of the Igbo-Ora Community?

The earliest literacy education efforts in this community were instituted by the missionaries and the masters of some few professions (Aderogba, 2017). Just to be able to join letters, read and write some three to five letter words in Yoruba, and read and write figures up to 100. Those who can perform these were countable. The development of these skills greatly improved with the establishment of the missionary schools by Methodist, African, Baptist, Ansar-Ud-Deen, and Naiwar-Ud-Deen missions. The Roman Catholic missions came a little later. However, these schools notwithstanding, there were many dropouts more so that there were no nearby secondary schools where the Primary School Leavers could progress their education; and secondly due to financial predicaments. Complicating these issues was the inability to understand the significance of western education by the indigenes. These lingered until the establishment of a Divisional Teachers' Training College at Eruwa; and later Igbo-Ora High School (Igbo-Ora) and Obaseku High School (Eruwa) in 1963 and 1964 respectively. There was also a formal Adult Education Programme, *Eko Agba*, that did not make any significant impact before it fizzled out. All other literacy efforts were derived from outside of the community, mainly, Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan and were [geared towards/accessible] to the limited number of people who could afford it.

The contemporary meaning of literacy has been expanded to include the ability to use language, numbers, images, computers, and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge and use the dominant symbol systems of a community and or ethos (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2012; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2015; 2017) as consolidated into three categories - Prose Literacy; Document Literacy; and Quantitative

Literacy (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011) that have also been introduced and known to the community, directly and or indirectly. Table 2 measures the level of this contemporary content and knowledge of literacy. Regardless of age and sex, Prose Literacy was 15.33%. Document Literacy was 13.47%; and Quantitative Literacy was 13.07%. On average, it is 13.96%. These were found to be far lower than the generic national estimates of Central Intelligence Agency (2014), National Bureau of Statistics (2015) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (2015) for the age 15 and over that can read and write put at 59.60% (males, 69.20% and females, 49.70) for Nigeria. Incidentally, there is no difference within and between the quarters of the entire community. However, there were more literate males than females by 16.50%.

Undoubtedly, this data suggests that the literacy level of the community is low. When viewed through the frameworks advanced by Stone (2017), Ecoliteracy (2017), Hopkins and McKeown (2001 and 2002) and McKeown (2002), inference may be made regarding literacy's role in influencing or impeding this community's development. The answers to the second research take up this issue.

Table 2

Literacy levels of the Igbo-Ora Community

Literacy Scale	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Prose literacy: Knowledge and skills needed to perform prose tasks, (i.e., to search, comprehend, and use continuous texts). Instances include editorials, news stories, brochures, and instructional materials	115	15.33
Document literacy: Knowledge and skills needed to perform document tasks, (i.e., to search, comprehend, and use non-continuous texts in various formats). Instances include job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and drug or food labels.	101	13.47
Quantitative literacy: Knowledge and skills required to perform quantitative tasks, (i.e., to identify and perform computations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed materials). Instances include balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form or determining amounts.	98	13.07

Question 2. What are the effects of the Igbo-Ora community's poor literacy level on its community development?

The aforementioned data associated with the first research question shows that the literacy level of the community is low. A substantial proportion of the community (86.04%) demonstrated inability to effectively use language, numbers, images, computers, and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge and use the dominant symbol systems peculiar to the nation at large. This has adversely affected development in the community. Table 3 illustrates this study's use of 35

predetermined selected development indicators. The following shows a sample of some key indicators:

- Assumption of urban status and attributes by the community;
- Availability and satisfaction of Medicare to all and sundry;
- Growth and development of the community in infrastructural facilities and amenities;
- Conformity with the UN's recommendation of travel distances to schools from pupils' homes;
- Conformity with the United Nations' recommendation regarding schools' student-teacher ratio;
- Pursuance of specific literacy programmes for sustainable development by the community members;
- Improvement in transport and communication networks in the last 10-15 years;
- The community sources of potable water for drinking, sanitation and production;
- Regular supply of uninterrupted electricity;
- Environmental Education (EE) and consciousness of preservation of nature (e.g. flora and fauna);
- Literacy education and practices;
- Conformity of population-doctor ratio to WHO's standard;
- Conformity of hospital bed-patient ratio to WHO's standard;
- Replacement of agricultural practices and products with industrial activities and manufactured goods;
- Enlargement and enhancement of trade, commerce, and flow of capital;
- Improvement in the number of educational institutions/learning centers, both private and public, and other related public spaces; and
- Existence of well-secured and maintained public cemeteries.

As illustrated in Table 3, none of these variable and parameters were positively agreed to by as many as 30.00% of the respondents. Of note, it is intriguing that as many as 4.00% do not even know much about their immediate environment in an instance (as many as 3.73% picked "physical planning and better environmental serenity were replacing jungle spatial pattern), because they were not literate on their immediate community. Over 30.00% disagreed regarding statement like "physical planning and better environmental serenity were replacing jungle spatial pattern that used to result from haphazard processes and activities" (30.80%); "the aesthetic is becoming more naturally beautiful by the day" (42.67%); "family planning has engendered the population to comprise more youth and able-bodied individuals than the aged" (37.60%); "the community is fast assuming urban status and attributes" (34.93%); "the community is fast experiencing growth in infrastructural facilities and amenities" (30.40%); "the community has good sources of potable water for drinking, sanitation and production" (44.67%); "postal services were functional and adequate" (34.13%); and that "Public Cemeteries were well secured and maintained" (33.60%). Conversely, the same sample strongly agreed that the rate of school dropouts is alarming (43.13%); the built-up areas remain static despite the increasing number of people - human habitation and activities (25.87%); and that "The

community remains poor and agrarian despite the presence of the ‘new development’” (38.87%). The statement that “there were no indications that there will be better growth and development in the community in the nearest future” was agreed to by 28.93%, and as many as 43.60% strongly agreed with that too. 89.87% strongly disagreed to the statement that “there was regular supply of uninterrupted electricity” in the community. Strongly agreed and agreed were 0.00% each.

Table 3

A Measure of Selected Development Indicators in Igbo-Ora

Selected Development Indicators	Likert Scale				
	SA DK	A	D	SD	
Physical planning and better environmental serenity were replacing jungle spatial pattern.	10.27	37.47	30.80	17.73	3.73
The aesthetic is becoming more attractive by the day	14.40	26.13	42.67	14.80	2.00
Family Planning has engendered the population to comprise more youth and able-bodied individuals than the aged	13.87	15.73	37.60	29.47	3.33
The community is fast assuming urban status and attributes	19.20	20.07	34.93	16.13	0.67
Medicare is within reach and very satisfactory to all, meeting WHO standard	14.13	26.80	26.93	31.20	0.93
Rate of school drop-out is alarming	24.27	42.13	12.27	17.07	0.26
Student-teacher ratio in schools conforms with United Nations’ (UN) specification	23.47	20.13	36.27	5.60	1.33
Pupils-School Ratio Conforms with the UN’s Specification	18.80	20.53	37.47	21.47	1.73
Distance to schools from pupils’ homes pupils conforms with the UN’s Recommendation	13.47	15.87	36.13	34.53	0.00
The community is fast experiencing growth and development of infrastructural facilities and amenities	12.53	14.80	30.40	41.33	0.93
The built-up areas remain static despite the increasing number of people-human habitation and activities	25.87	28.27	28.27	16.13	1.46
Community members pursued literacy programmes for empowerment and sustainable development	14.80	21.47	48.40	14.27	1.06
Transport and communication networks have improved tremendously in the last 10-15 years	15.73	20.40	36.80	25.06	2.00
There was regular supply of uninterrupted electricity	0.00	0.00	10.13	89.87	0.00
The community has good sources of potable water for drinking, sanitation and production	2.13	4.53	44.67	48.27	4.00
There was environmental education and consciousness for preservation of nature (e.g. flora and fauna).	13.07	16.40	28.53	40.13	1.87
There were Gender Biased Education for sustainable development	2.80	2.13	50.00	42.80	2.27
There were more religious places of worship for Muslims and Christians and both faiths are becoming more recognized.	37.60	39.20	15.73	6.00	1.47
There were excellent literacy practices and ample opportunities for all to be literate	13.20	13.87	28.40	43.87	0.66
There was mutual/peaceful co-existence among members of the community	29.46	45.60	13.47	11.33	0.13
Postal services were functional and adequate	4.27	6.93	34.13	54.67	0.00
The community remains poor and agrarian despite the new developments	33.87	42.53	10.40	13.20	0.00
Population-doctor ratio was in conformity with World Health Organization’s (WHO) standard	9.47	13.20	37.73	42.80	3.20

Hospital Bed-Patient Ratio was in conformity with WHO's standard	11.60	13.60	32.67	41.47	0.66
Unemployment was becoming more obvious and required urgent attention	28.40	29.07	28.13	14.13	0.27
There were more elites in the community than hitherto	18.00	22.13	28.00	31.20	0.66
Agricultural practices and products were being replaced by industrial activities and manufactured products	16.27	17.07	34.13	32.53	0.00
There were more white-collar jobs than hitherto	13.33	15.60	25.33	45.33	0.40
Government was making its impact felt in many respects	9.07	14.67	37.46	38.00	0.80
There were more job opportunities than hitherto	12.26	14.40	38.53	34.40	0.40
Trade and commerce had been enlarged and enhanced and capital flow has increased	13.60	22.80	28.93	34.53	0.13
There were more educational institutions/learning centers, both private and public, and other public spaces springing up	12.53	14.40	32.27	39.73	1.07
The community and the indigenes benefited from the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes of the surrounding institutions	0.00	0.27	21.73	67.07	12.93
There were no indications that there will be better growth and development in the community in the nearest future	1.17	15.73	28.93	43.60	0.00
Public cemeteries were well secured and maintained	0.26	13.87	33.60	52.27	0.00

Note: SA = Strongly Agreed; A = Agreed; D = Disagreed; SD = Strongly Disagreed; DK = Don't Know.

The *Baale* of Saganun, like his Igbo'le counterpart felt abrasive with the low level of literacy and what the community had lost/missed in terms of socio-economic development as a result:

Our fathers told us there was a university and a Hospital that would have been established here in Igbo-Ora. We lost the battle of hosting the Local Government Area Office for several years and not until the whole state became fractionalized and Igbo-Ora and Idere became a Local Government Area. Come to think of it, what has developed where: Electricity, pipe born water, roads, hospitals and maternity homes, schools and colleges, industries, or what? The commonest white-collar job here is teaching service. Well, the few people [literate] that we have, worked and we have overburdened them; and they struggled enough to attain what were possible within their abilities. But, to sum it up, we have limited number of literate people; However, improved literacy can make our lives better.

As stated by the former President of United States of American, in his speech during the 1994 celebration of International Literacy Day, "literacy is not a luxury; it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens." The urgency of this assertion is clear with regard to the Igbo-Ora community's needs for every literacy opportunity for betterment. Other global voices amplify the critical role the literacy plays in a community's life and future prospects. For example, Kofi Annan (2014) similarly asserted in his speech on literacy to the Assembly of the United Nations that "literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a basic tool for daily life in modern society. It is a wall against poverty, and a building block of development. Literacy is a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity." It is in this spirit that all communities, like the Igbo-Ora, need to wake up to build the bridge between the misery and the hope.

Furthermore, as highlighted for all of Nigeria in 2014 by Ezenwo Nyesom Wike (2014), at the opening of 2014's International Literacy Day, he sounded an alarm regarding the number of adults who cannot read and write in Nigeria, in his speech, which was

estimated at 60 million, (35.29%) of the country's population (estimated at 170 million) and made a call for massive literacy education as the answer. Some recent UNESCO (2012 and 2015) statistics for the world show that 774 million (11.06%) adults still cannot read or write with women comprising two-thirds of them (493 million, that is, 63.70%). Among youth, 123 million were illiterate, of which 76 million (61.79%) were female. In as much as this represents a positive stride, literacy for all is still a yet-to-be-accomplished objective in substantial parts of the world including the Igbo-Ora community in spite of the efforts by all tiers of governments to address rising illiteracy level. There has not yet been a sustainable, progressive increase in the community's literary level.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ability to use language, numbers, images, computers, and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge and use the dominant symbol systems of the culture (community) is ridiculously low: The current literacy level, put at 13.96% of the community's population, and throughout Nigeria, would obstruct the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) if not promptly improved. Whereas literacy is vital to the achievement of every growth index, the objective of meeting the national mark of drastically reducing illiteracy in the Igbo-Ora community seems largely unattainable the way things stand. The challenge going further thus centers on the need to address the educational needs of the whole community: school children, youth, women and men in the community need to significantly improve their literacy levels. Incidentally, to successfully confront poverty, disease, religious fanaticism, political chaos, ethnic bigotry, gender discrimination, and economic depression among social challenges bedevil the country, efforts must be made by all to enhance the literary level in the community and, more broadly, in the country. Critically, all levels of government - federal, state and local - need to make logical guidelines for literacy development, as well as improve funding for the relevant agencies of governments saddled with the execution of the mass literacy programme. Similarly, literacy-inclined groups and other related NGOs must step up activities and drives to increase awareness of literacy's significance. Additionally, the State Universal Basic Education Board must also strengthen efforts to ensure no child is left out amidst the mass literacy initiatives.

The government needs to strictly observe both the essence and value of the Child Rights Law, which outlaws denial of school access of any child. It is the opinion of this research that, come what may, the following measure must be taken to uphold this law and ensure sustainable literacy education:

- innovative and creative learning solutions that can be utilized to make education resources available in a sustainable manner across schools in the community (and the entire nation);
- curriculum including skill development, that will enhance the learning experience for every level of education, and delivered in innovative ways;
- books and writing materials made available in a sustainable manner (e.g. by income generation assets) for all levels of education; and

- Technology platforms, tools, and ancillary facilities and amenities, including the internet, to be used as educational tools to support more effective, and accessible learning.

The community must be engaged in co-creating solutions to provide educational infrastructure and facilities within its locality. Several activities relating to concerns over low literacy level must take place as part of the awareness. These may include but not limited to literacy day projects, particularly regarding technology and literature, which must be promoted by various organisations, such as age group organizations and religious associations, including churches and mosques.

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