

CURRICULUM REFORM: A WAY OF IMPROVING ADULT LEARNERS PARTICIPATION IN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMMES IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated a way of improving adult learner's participation in adult literacy programmes in Enugu State, Nigeria through curriculum reform. Specifically, two research questions were posed for the study. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The population is made up of 650 respondents of adult learners in 100 literacy centres within the six (6) education zones in Enugu State. A sample size of 325 consisting of 175 male adult learners, 150 female adult learners were used for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select adult learners. A structured questionnaire designed by the researchers was the instrument used for data collection. A reliability coefficient of 0.88 was established using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions. Results showed among others that curriculum reforms in adult education has increased learners participations to literacy programmes, increasing ability of problem solving, achieving difficult tasks, increasing accessibility of learning, creating excitement among learners and exposing learners to new learning outcomes. Analysis of variance of the responses of respondents indicated no significant difference at $P > 0.05$. The paper recommends among others that Government should provide sufficient funds and financial budgetary allocations to support adult learning so as to improve on the curriculum reform of adult education and appropriately put the physical learning environment in place which will promote adult learners' participation in the literacy programmes. Enugu State Agency for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education should constantly organize orientation and enlightenment programmes in order to enable adult learners handle and tackle social issues that could hinder or mar their active participation in literacy programmes. The adult education curriculum including teaching and learning activities in the literacy programmes should be reformed and enriched with income or economic-generating training programmes by all concerned (that is; the State government, policy makers, Agency for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education curriculum developers and other educational practitioners) to assist adult learners' engage into high income generating businesses so as to aid them in purchasing ICT tools that will improve their participation in literacy programme.

Keywords: Curriculum, Reform, Curriculum Reform, Programme, Adult Education, Adult Learners, Adult Literacy

Introduction

Curriculum plays a very important role in the spectrum of education that decides the destiny of a nation. In today's knowledge economy, an appropriate curriculum can play a vital role in improving the economy of a country. It also provides answers or solutions to the world's pressing issues and problems, such as environment, politics, socio-economic, and other issues of poverty, climate change, and sustainable development. Nigeria would require a comprehensive humanistic curriculum to promote educational system and foster national unity and harmony, equip the students with gainful living and inculcate global best practices to cope

with emerging challenges of our modern society (Oyekan, 2016; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Curriculum refers to the materials or documents used for teaching and learning, such as textbooks or instructional materials. In other words, it is a set of guidelines for what students should learn and what should be taught through the education system. While the definition of “curriculum” could differ based on its context, in essence, it is “a plan for learning” (van den Akker, 2010). Under this definition, curriculum is highly cultural and political, since it determines the vision of a society by deciding what kind of knowledge and skills are most valuable for its people and what knowledge is worth passing on. In other words, a curriculum reflects a broader social and political agreement (Amadio et al., 2016) and as the society evolves and changes, so should the curriculum.

Change or reform is needed in curriculum so as to empower learners in this knowledge based economy. Empowering them also means bringing about social change in every area of human endeavour. When curriculum reforms is mentioned, one is aiming at corrections of the existing practice in order to better the existing structures and policies so as to achieve the objectives. Curriculum reforms specifically involve change in the objectives of learning, namely which competencies, knowledge, values and attitudes should learners acquire. Attempts to review or update the “content” of knowledge, including its selection and organization and associated issues concerning student learning, are thus “curriculum reforms” (Gilbert, 2010). Recognizing the need for their curriculums to evolve with time, in recent years countries have engaged in curriculum reforms at various paces and methods in order to better prepare students for a fast-changing world. This interest in curriculum reforms has not only been sparked by the necessity to ensure that students have the skills and attitudes suited for the 21st century, but also by the potential impact of the adoption of a specific curriculum on students’ learning outcomes (Chingos, Russ & Whitehurst, 2012; Boser, Chingos & Straus, 2015; Steiner, 2017). Curriculum of any educational system of a society reflects the subjects and subject matter which the society wants to inculcate in the citizenry in order to attain its needs, goals, and aspirations. The dynamic nature of the society is reflected in the curriculum of the educational system of the society and also changes in the needs and aspirations of adult learners calls for curriculum reforms in adult education in order to meet those needs and aspirations.

Adult learners are one of the important human factors in the literacy programmes who make significant contributions to national development. They are at the Centre of every teaching and learning activity organized in literacy centers which is spearheaded by the adult facilitators or instructors. According to Aluvisia (2016) adult learners refers to matured individuals, men and women, who participate in a learning situation that will bring about changes. Nzeneri (2010) described an adult learner as anyone who consciously or unconsciously, formally, informally or non-formally engages him or herself in any adult educational programme (s) with an intent to solve life problems. Nzeneri noted further that, adult learners may constitute individuals or persons who are desirous to improve themselves and their social, economic, political, and intellectual or the cultural well-being of their society. Adult learners are people who engage themselves in one form of adult education programme or the other in order to improve their productivity, profession, knowledge or skills. Adult learners who have reached the age of 18 years and above are independent individuals who contribute to socio-economic development of the Nigerian society. Most of these adult learners are married, single and divorced men and women in the society who work hard to earn a living. Most of them are leaders in their communities, churches or any other socio-cultural activity. They are also breadwinners in their families. Given all the above facts, it is important that adult learners especially those who were not fortunate to acquire literacy at their youthful age engage in formal education setting or literacy programmes at the literacy centres in order to improve

their skills and develop their competences in their chosen careers or occupation. Full and complete development of any country requires maximum participation of adult learners as they are the major contributors to national economy.

In adult education context, participation means active enrolment and involvement in an adult education programme or class. Avoseh (2008) defined participation as generally involving sharing or taking part in something. Increasing adult learners' participation in the literacy programme will make them stand a chance of completing the learning process. Adult learners active participation in adult literacy programmes enables them to acquire the essential knowledge and skills which enable him or her to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his or her group or community and his or her attainment in reading, writing and arithmetic, making it possible for him or her to continue to use these skills towards his or her own and the community's development (Papen cited in Hundessa, 2011). Stating the contributions and importance of the adult literacy programmes which can never be overemphasized, yet, adult active participation in the literacy programmes are not significantly felt. Regards what is mostly felt all-over the literacy programmes in Nigeria, including Enugu State, reform in adult education curriculum is highly needed so as to improve adult learners participation in literacy programme. Reforming or repositioning of curriculum of adult education can improve adult learners' participation in literacy programmes in the following ways: Increase adult learners' participation in literacy programme, Motivates adult learners' participation in literacy programme and Sustain adult learners interest in literacy programme.

There is an urgent need for curriculum reforms in adult education. This is because the present curriculum content of adult education in Nigeria is too narrow and does not increase, motivate and sustain adult learners participation in literacy programmes. A cursory look into literacy program in many adult education centres in Nigeria reveals that they are merely centres for the teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetics (3Rs). The programme lack saleable skills for independent living. There is the absence of vocational and technological content as well as other curriculum innovations such as transformative learning and ICT tools which are indispensable for meaningful living and sustainable national development and transformation.

Inclusion of media managerial tools in curriculum of adult education increases adult learners' participation in literacy programmes. Managerial tools are ICT devices which help in management of adult education and literacy programme with ultimate aim of making sure that knowledge is transferred through online medium. These tools are streamlined by Nasri (2013) which include database, spreadsheet, semantic networks, communication software such as teleconferencing programmes, online collaboration knowledge construction, hypermedia construction software and computer programme language. The essence of this ICT tools is to enable the facilitators to adopt these tools in imparting knowledge and skills to the adult learners through online collaborative knowledge with the view of ensuring that leaning is achieved.

Integration of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) in literacy programmes refers to the use of computer based communication that incorporates into daily classroom instructional process. In conjunction with preparing adult learners for the current digital era, facilitators are seen as the key players in using ICT in their daily learning activities. This is due to the capability of ICT in providing dynamic and proactive teaching-learning environment (Arnseth & Hatlevik, 2012). While, the aim of ICT integration is to improve and increase the quality, accessibility and cost-efficiency of the delivery of instruction to learners, it also refers to benefits from networking the learning communities to face the challenges of

current globalization (Albirini, 2006, p.6). Moreso, utilization of ICT in teaching and learning in literacy programmes create excitement among the learners as they involve in new learning outcomes. This will go a long way to increase learners' participation in literacy programme and encourage them to become problem solvers and explore more information. In this context, Itari and Ojuah cited in Christ (2010) stated that ICT have resulted in four kinds of improvements in educational outcomes. One of this is to increase learners motivation which create excitement in learners' as they are exposed to new learning outcomes which goes beyond information generation and assimilation. Therefore, ICT can help adult learners in literacy programmes not only to achieve or learn difficult tasks, but also master advance concept. It helps adult learners to develop the ability of problem solving.

Motivation can be seen as a process by which adult learners are stimulated to get involve in programmes like literacy to improve their welfare. According to Ewelum (2016), motivation is a theoretical construct used to explain behavior of human beings. Adult learners participation in literacy programmes can be motivated through reforms in method of learning adopted in curriculum of adult education. An innovative facilitators and organizers of basic literacy programmes, therefore, needs to conscientize and create situations where higher level needs for literacy learning can be felt in order to sustain the adult learners' interest and participation. In this regard, Ugwu (2019) asserts that conscientization is all about raising peoples' consciousness about their situation which will prompt them to take action to change such situation. This strategy can be used to create awareness among adults community inhabitants to make them aware of the need to participate in basic literacy programme. According to Kobani and Alozie (2019), conscientization is the process of raising the critical level of consciousness in people, making them to ask questions on things or issues that affect their lives and therefore take appropriate action or informed decision that would change their situations in a way that they deemed to be right to improve their lives. Osho (2011) asserted that the most important purpose of oral media is to provide teaching and initiation, with the objective of imparting traditional, aesthetic, historical, technical, social, ethical, and religious values.

Adult methods of teaching and learning should be technologically inclusive in this era of fast technology. The use of digital and web technologies now represent new way of learning to which reform must be made in adult methodology because traditional teaching and learning, thinking and doing are being challenged, through the face of disruptive and constructive forces as stated by Ramdass and Masithulela (2016) in Adedokun (2018). The digital and web technologies could be synchronous where all participants are present at the same time or asynchronous where participants access course materials on their own schedule. There must be reform in the use of technology both for the educator (as, you cannot give what you don't have) and for the learners. Any method of teaching for adult learners should be such that will help individual learners to become independent and autonomous in learning. However, the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in adult education curriculum and its utilization in learning processes has enable adult learners to become more open and teaching methodologies to become more flexible, this is making adult learners more independence and self-regulating abilities in relation to goal setting and becoming self-monitoring and adaptable (Goode et al, 2007).

Another way curriculum reforms can motivate adult learners participation in literacy programmes is through reform in the content of adult education. Reforming curriculum content, therefore, would mean focusing on the general aim of adult education and the groups targeted by the specific adult literacy programme. One of the main aims of literacy is aiming at a knowledge economy and employment, with improved living for all. This is with a view to

emphasizing the societal value of knowledge in creating an open network society. Reforming the content of adult education would also mean considering the needs of the adult learners (Hans, 2007). Broek et.al (2008) identified four areas of content reform in adult education based on various reasons for engaging in adult education reform. Reform could be for people who are engaged in adult learning in order to obtain skills and competences in areas of their own-interest; it could be learning to bring in innovation and competitiveness in a knowledge economy and it could be adult learning or education as driver of employability; UNESCO (2019), is of the opinion that gaps that are likely to be filled include policies on adult education which include “infrastructure and access, government and capacity building, monitoring and evaluation” (n.p) Akpama, Ason and Erim (2011) are of the opinion that adults must be equipped “with relevant knowledge and skills if they must serve as efficacious conduits to stem the scourge of extreme poverty and hunger in Nigeria” (p. 8). Reform in the content of adult education should be informed by the needs of learners and the relevance to which what is being studied will be put. With reform in the content of adult education programmes, the learners would be enabled to apply, demonstrate and use some sets of knowledge and skills rather than to know isolated facts. New curricula should be developed for adult education with the needs of the adult learners in view. This should include the use of technology in all its forms to aid learning. It should include “the development of basic digital and mathematical skills which will enable adults in literacy programmes to acquire competences in order to adapt to labour market and to actively participate in society”. (EACE A. 2019). Reforming adult education therefore, means adapting adult education content to the needs of adult learners for greater qualitative relevance in this world of technological advancement. With content reform, adult learners will be motivated to participate in literacy programmes and there will also be increase in the number of adult learners with completed basic education and training for simple jobs and for improved competence on the job performance.

Statement of the problems

There is an urgent need for curriculum reforms in adult education. This is because the present curriculum content of adult education in Nigeria is too narrow and does not increase, motivate and sustain adult learners participation in literacy programmes. A cursory look into literacy program in many adult education centres in Nigeria reveals that they are merely centres for the teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetics (3Rs). The programme lack saleable skills for independent living. There is the absence of vocational and technological content as well as other curriculum innovations such as transformative learning and ICT tools which are indispensable for meaningful living and sustainable national development and transformation.

Poor methodology is another reason for reforms in adult education curriculum. Adult literacy programmes tend to be heavily populated when they are open, but often experience relatively low and irregular attendance rate and sometimes disappointing completion examination rate (drop out) due factors such as inadequacy of literacy materials, loss of interest in the programmes and seasonal activities undertaken by adult learners. The phenomenon suggests that a number of factors have decrease and demotivated adult learners participation in the programme and are also causes of the irregularities in the attendance and drop out before the official duration of the programme. This ugly scenario therefore calls for curriculum reforms so as to improve adult learners' participation in adult literacy programmes in Nigeria

Purpose of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

- Determine the extent to which curriculum reforms in adult education has increased learners participations to literacy programmes.

- Determine the extent to which curriculum reforms in adult education has motivated learners to participate in literacy programmes.

Research questions

The following research questions were posed for the study:

1. To what extents has curriculum reforms in adult education increased learners participations in literacy programmers?
2. To what extents has curriculum reforms in adult education motivated learners participate in literacy programmes?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis guided the study

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adult learners on the way curriculum reforms in adult education has increased learners participations to literacy programmes in Enugu State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adult learners on the way curriculum reforms in adult education has motivated learners to participate in literacy programmes in Enugu State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. In carrying out this design, the researchers conducted a field investigation by studying a sample from a given large population of adult learners in selected literacy centres in Enugu State. This is in line with Nworgu (2015) who opined that the descriptive survey design enables a researcher to collect data and describe them in a systematic manner of the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. Studies of such nature are interested in describing certain variables in relation to the population of the study. Population of this study constituted 650 adult literacy learners, which comprised 450 males and 200 female adult learners in 100 literacy centres within the six (6) education zones in Enugu State. The Zones are Nsukka Educational Zone (comprising Igbo-Etiti, Nsukka and Uzo-uwani local government areas); Obollo-Afor Educational Zone (comprising Igbo-Eze North, Igbo-Eze South and Udenu local government areas); Udi Educational Zone (comprising of Ezagu and Udi local government areas); Awgu Educational Zone (comprising Awgu, Aninri and Oji-River local government areas); Agbani Educational Zone (comprising Nkanu East, Nkanu West and Enugu South local government areas); Enugu Educational Zone (comprising Enugu North, Enugu East and Isi Uzo local government areas). A sample size of 325 adult learners, which comprised 175 males and 150 female adult learners from 50 literacy centres in the three (3) education zones in Enugu State selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used in the study. The proportionate stratified random sampling technique as attested by Nworgu (2015) involves a technique in which elements are randomly drawn from each stratum in such a way that the relative proportions of the strata in the resultant sample are the same as the parent population. Here, the population was first stratified in terms of one or more variables of interest to the researcher. This technique however, ensures greater representativeness of the sample relative to the population and guarantees that minority constituents of the population are represented in the sample. This made the sampling technique suitable for the present study.

A 10-item questionnaire developed by the researchers for the adult learners and titled “Curriculum Reform a Way of Improving Adult Learners Participation in Literacy Programmes Questionnaire (CRWIALPLPQ) served as instrument for data collection. Items on the research instrument was measured on a 4-point scale and rated as: (a) Very High Extent (VHT) – 4

points, High Extent (HE) – 3 points, Low Extent (LE) – 2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE) – 1 point, as response items for all the statements in the research instrument concerning the Curriculum Reform a Way of Improving Adult Learners Participation in Literacy Programmes in Enugu State. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, one expert from Department of Science Education and two experts from Adult Education, all from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the instrument were distributed to members of adult learners in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State based on similarity in historical and socio-cultural backgrounds. Cronbach alpha technique was used to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items and the reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained. Finally, out of the 325 copies of the questionnaire administered on the registered adult literacy centres through the help of 3 research assistants, only 294 copies were duly filled and returned. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for answering the two research questions while the hypotheses will be analysis using variance. Analysis of variance of the responses of respondents indicated no significant difference at $P > 0.05$.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extents has curriculum reforms in adult education increased learners participations in literacy programmers?

Table 1: Mean responses of the respondents on the extent to which curriculum reforms in adult education has increased learners' participation to literacy programme

S/N	Items:	X	Std	Decision
1	Increasing ability of problem solving.	2.94	0.95	Accepted
2	Achieving difficult tasks.	2.77	0.76	Accepted
3	Increasing accessibility of learning.	2.56	0.65	Accepted
4	Creating excitement among learners	2.94	0.73	Accepted
5	Exposing learners to new learning outcomes.	3.14	0.89	Accepted

Note: \bar{X} = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, N = Number of Respondents = 605

Result in Table one shows that items 1-5 had mean scores above 2.50. This indicate that curriculum reforms in adult education increased learners participations in literacy programmers by increasing ability of problem solving, achieving difficult task, increasing accessibility of learning, creating excitement among learners and exposing learners to new outcome.

Table 2: t-test analysis of the responses of the respondents on the extent to which curriculum reforms in adult education has increased learners participation to literacy programme

Adult Learners	N	X	SS	Df	MS	Fcal.	Fcrit.	Decision
Adult learners(Male)	175	2.82	0.47	2	0.24	0.37	1.96	Not Rejected
Female	150	2.79	388.26	325	0.34			
Total	325							

F-crit. = F- critical, F-cal. = F-calculated, X = Mean, SD = Standard deviation, N = Sample, SS=Sum of Squares, MS= Mean Squares.

The results of the analysis of variance in Table 2 indicated that male adult learners had higher mean response (2.82) relative to the mean response of female adult learners (2.79). The differences in the mean response was not significant at 0.05 level of significance calculated F-value (0.37) < table F-value (1.96). This shows that there were no significant differences in the mean response of the groups. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Research Question 2: To what extents has curriculum reforms in adult education motivated learners participate in literacy programmes?

Table 3: Mean responses of the respondents on the extent to which curriculum reforms in adult education has motivated learners participations to literacy programmes

S/N	Items:	\bar{X}	std	Decision
1	Reforming learning content	2.96	0.93	Accepted
2	Integrating digital technologies.	2.67	0.89	Accepted
3	Reforming teaching methodologies.	3.11	0.83	Accepted
4	Adopting conscientization strategy.	2.50	0.91	Accepted
5	Providing good infrastructures	2.76	0.89	Accepted

Note: \bar{X} = Mean, std=Standard Deviation, N = Number of Respondents=348

From Table 3, it can be seen that all items had mean scores above 2.50 indicating that respondents accepted that curriculum reforms motivates learners participations in literacy programmes.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the responses of the respondents on the extent to which curriculum reforms in adult education has motivated learners participation to literacy programmes

Adult Learners	N	X	SS	Df	MS	Fcal.	Fcrit.	Decision
Adult learners (male)								Not Rejected
Female	175	2.89	1.14	2	0.54	0.55	1.96	
Total	150	2.82	623.18	604	1.03			
	325			325				

F-crit. = F- critical, F-cal. = F-calculated, X = Mean, SD = Standard deviation, N = Sample, SS=Sum of Squares, MS= Mean Squares.

The results of the analysis of variance in Table 4 indicated that male adult learners had higher mean response (2.89) relative to the mean response of female adult learners (2.82). The differences in the mean response was not significant at 0.05 level of significance calculated F-value (0.55) < table F-value (1.96). This shows that there were no significant differences in the mean response of the groups. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Discussion of the Findings

The Findings of this study revealed that extent to which curriculum reforms in adult education has increased learners participations to literacy programmes are increasing ability of problem solving, achieving difficult tasks, increasing accessibility of learning, creating excitement among learners and Exposing learners to new learning outcomes. On increasing ability of problem solving, this is in line with Onyejemezi (2006) who states that inclusion of ICT tools in curriculum of adult education can help adult learners in literacy programmes not only to achieve or learn difficult tasks, but also master advance concept, It helps adult learners to develop the ability of problem solving. On increasing accessibility of learning, this is also in line with Albirini, (2006) who states that while, the aim of ICT integration is to improve and increase the quality, accessibility and cost-efficiency of the delivery of instruction to learners, it also refers to benefits from networking the learning communities to face the challenges of current globalization.

In relation to motivation, the findings of this study revealed that extent to which curriculum reforms in adult education has motivated learners participations to literacy programmes are reforming learning content, integrating digital technologies, reforming teaching methodologies, Adopting conscientization strategy and providing good infrastructures. On reforming curriculum content, this is line with Broek et.al (2008) who identified four areas of content reform in adult education that based on various reasons motivates adult learners participation in literacy programmes. Reform could be for adult learners who are engaged in adult literacy programmes in order to obtain skills and competences in areas of their own-interest; it could be learning to bring in innovation and competitiveness in a knowledge economy. On integrating digital technologies, This is in line with Ramdass and Masithulela (2016) in Adedokun (2018) who stated that the use of digital and web technologies now represent new way of learning to which reform must be made in adult methodology because traditional teaching and learning, thinking and doing are being challenged, through the face of disruptive and constructive forces.

Analysis of variance of the response of male and female adult learners on the way curriculum reforms in adult education has increased learners participations to literacy programmes indicated no significant difference at $P > 0.05$, as calculated F-value (0.37) was below table F-value (1.96). Thus hypothesis one was not rejected. Similarly, responses of male and female adult learners on the way curriculum reforms in adult education has motivated learners to participate in literacy programmes also indicated no significant difference at $P > 0.05$, as calculated F-values (0.55) was below the table F-value of 1.96. Hence, a hypothesis two was retained.

Conclusion

Adult learners, whether male or female are one of the important human resources whom high considerations should be given and adequate attention paid to in the literacy centres. When adequate attention is given towards the curriculum reform of adult education, it will therefore, improve adult learners participation in the literacy programmes, they will be motivated to make significant contributions towards their learning which is requisite for the

achievement of instructional objectives, educational goals and boosting national development in the country. However, this study concludes and equally submits that the inclusion of information and communication technology, managerial tools, reforms in content of learning and method of teaching in curriculum of adult education increases and motivates adult learner's participation in literacy programmes in Enugu State. However, recommendations has been proffered below.

Recommendations

1. Enugu State government should provide sufficient funds and financial budgetary allocations to support adult learning so as to improve on the curriculum reform of adult education and appropriately put the physical learning environment in place which will promote adult learners' participation in the literacy programmes.
2. Enugu State Agency for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education should constantly organize orientation and enlightenment programmes in order to enable adult learners handle and tackle social issues that could hinder or mar their active participation in literacy programmes in Enugu State.
3. The adult education curriculum including teaching and learning activities in the literacy programmes should be reformed and enriched with income or economic-generating training programmes by all concerned (that is; the State government, policy makers, Agency for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education curriculum developers and other educational practitioners) to assist adult learners' engage into high income generating businesses so as to aid them in purchasing ICT tools that will improve their participation in literacy programme in Enugu state.

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