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Literacy education program for reformation and reintegration of inmates in Jalingo Correctional Centre, Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract

There are many illiterate inmates in the Jalingo Medium Correctional Centre, Taraba State. This study provided literacy education to 561 of them so that after reformation and reintegration on completion of jail term they can become functional and contribute positively to themselves and the society. The study was in collaboration with the Taraba State Ministry of Education and Mass Literacy Agency whose involvement determined progress of the training program. The program covered three areas: reading, writing and arithmetic. Three research questions guided the study. The design of the study was descriptive survey design. The instrument for data collection was the Literacy Education Achievement Test (LEAT). The instrument was validated by subject experts and tested for reliability using K-R 20 estimate which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.90. The instrument was administered to the inmates after the first six and nine weeks of teaching and learning. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data. Results indicated tremendous progress in reading, write and numeracy with mean achievement score above average. The study is of immense benefit to inmates, ministries, boards, parastatals, communities, social organizations and institutions. Literacy education for inmates is imperative for their rehabilitation, employability, and reintegration into society. Commitment and adequate private and government partnership funding and providing necessary materials for inmate literacy program in the country is essential.

Keywords: Literacy education; Reformation; Reintegration; Inmates; Correctional centre

1. Introduction

Education involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values for living properly in society. It can be acquired either formally or informally. Verma et al. (2023) defined education as process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits that enable an individual to develop and grow throughout their life, for themselves or for the betterment of society. Education is conceptualized as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and understanding through teaching, training, and research, which promotes personal growth, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities and functionality of an individual. Education is a lifelong process; it starts from the cradle to grave. By extension as long as the inmates are still alive, they can still be educated. Patra (2020) averred that the goal of education is to develop physical, mental, emotional, social, moral and spiritual aspects of life. It provides an individual the basic principles of life, socialization and work. Education is formal when it occurs within a structured institutional framework, such as public schools, following a curriculum. It is often seen as the transmission of knowledge, skills, and character traits, and it manifests in various forms, including formal, non-formal, and informal learning. The formal type of education is one that provides the individual the ability to read and write and to do other things. Lettered education and using numbers lead to literacy.

Literacy is a process by which one expands one's knowledge of reading and writing in order to develop one's thinking and learning for the purpose of understanding oneself and the world. In the assertion of Alberta Education (2015),

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literacy is the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living. Literacy is a continuum of learning and proficiency in reading, writing and using numbers throughout life and is part of a larger set of skills, which include digital skills, media literacy, education for sustainable development and global citizenship as well as job-specific skills.

2. Literacy education is very paramount in the life of every individual either free or incarcerated.

Park and Kyei in Syabariananda (2020) noted that the importance of literacy in our lives, be it the ability to read or adequately interpret and comprehend the meaning of various levels of text for the purpose of being able to successfully participate in and navigate modern society is made ever more apparent through its demonstrated correlation with educational attainment. It is the basis for proper co-habitation among people in the world today. Without literacy, one is capable of committing an offence inadvertently.

In Nigeria, the National Adult Basic and Post Literacy Curriculum, developed by the Federal Ministry of Education, aims to empower adults with essential literacy skills, including reading, writing, and numeracy, to improve their lives and contribute to national development (2021). The curriculum aims to eradicate illiteracy, promote lifelong learning, and contribute to national development by creating a literate and empowered citizenry. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words.

Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing). These literacy skills include all the skills needed for reading and writing. For example, through literacy, individuals will learn such things as awareness of the sounds of language through phonics, an awareness of printed letters and words, and understand the relationship between letters and sounds. On top of this, other literacy skills include vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension (UNESCO Digital Library, 2025). Literacy education for inmate is paramount in reforming and reinsertion into society.

Inmates are individuals who, for one reason or the other have been incarcerated for criminal acts which have been established to have been committed by the individuals or are awaiting trial. It also refers to any individual involuntarily confined or detained in a penal institution. The term inmates according to the National Library of Medicine, (2025), is intended to encompass individuals sentenced to an institution under a criminal or civil statute, individuals detained in other facilities by virtue of statutes or commitment procedures which provide alternatives to criminal prosecution or incarceration in a penal institution, and individuals detained pending arraignment, trial, or sentencing.

Every individual sent to prison has defined number of years or months to spend there. Some inmates are literate, while others are not. It is possible that some inmates committed the offences for which they are in prison for lack of education and ability to read and write. Since a correctional centre is meant to reform such individuals for reintegration after serving prison term, it is pertinent for the prisoner to learn pertinent values and useful trade he did not possess before he was sent to prison so that when he goes out, his reintegration will not amount to much problem. Literacy education for inmates will help to empower and liberate people. Reformation of inmates is a core function of prison systems, aims to rehabilitate and re-integrate offenders into society by providing education, vocational training, and other programs to promote positive change and reduce recidivism. Reformation and Rehabilitation involves correcting, educating, re-orienting, and rehabilitating inmates to equip them with skills and positive behaviors that will enable them to become productive members of society (UNESCO, 2025).

Beyond its importance as part of the right to education, literacy improves lives by expanding capabilities which in turn reduces poverty, increases participation in the labour market and has positive effects on health and sustainable development. Inmates empowered by literacy have a positive ripple effect on all aspects of development. They have greater life choices for themselves and an immediate impact on the health and education of their families (UNESCO, 2025). It is often heard that a prisoner released today, is back to crime the next day. This is because, such individual, while serving his jail term, was not given the opportunity to understand himself and the world around him.

A literacy curriculum for adults should focus on building foundational skills like reading, writing, listening, and speaking, while also incorporating digital literacy and practical applications relevant to daily life and career goals. (Twinkl.com.ng, 2025). Twinkl further states that key elements of basic literacy should include reading (focus on comprehension, vocabulary building, and fluency include reading different types of text e.g. news articles instructions, and books). It should also include writing in order to develop clear and effective writing skills for various purposes. Listening and speaking which includes enhanced communication skills through active listening, clear articulation and engaging in

conversations. Also to be included is to integrate literacy skills into real-life situations, such as reading instructions, understanding forms, or completing tasks at work.

Every human being requires education in any form (formal, non-formal or informal) to be able to exist effectively in the society to which he belongs. Education is the bedrock for effective citizenship. Education is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experiences for proper functioning in any given circumstance. Education is an essential process in human development. It is different from schooling. Schooling is just one of the ways in which education is provided, whereas education deals with the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties are trained and different skills are developed. Education is also defined as the act or process of educating or applying discipline on the mind or a process of character training. It is a dynamic instrument of change. Education is expected to affect or condition the social behaviour of the person being educated. According to Bamisaiye (1989), education is "a cumulative process of development of intellectual abilities, skills and attitudes, all of which form our various outlooks and dispositions to action in life generally". According to Plato in Quora.com (2025) education is the process of turning the soul around, so that it can see the truth." Plato emphasized the importance of education in achieving knowledge and understanding of the ideal forms, particularly the form of the Good. He emphasized the good of education as it tends to change the individual towards behaving well. All forms of education provided to free or incarcerated individuals have the same purpose: to create positive behaviour and thinking. Formal education seeks to provide literacy in individuals.

Literacy is the ability to read and write in any given language. It is the letter or number (alphabet or numeric) type of education. According to UNESCO (2004; 2017) literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.

Literacy is a relatively recent human invention, and goals of universal literacy within societies are even more recent. Furthermore, although a goal of universal literacy is in place in modern nation-states, it is far from universal, when one considers the vast number of languages for which writing has either not. Illiterate inmates require literacy education so that upon their release from prison, they would have learnt some virtues of living appropriate lives.

Reading encompasses new developments in the field that emphasize (or more accurately, reemphasize) the important roles of texts and contexts in the construction of meaning (Pearson & Cervetti, 2015). Reflective of renewed foci on texts and contexts, the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) defined reading as "the process of extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. They proposed that reading comprehension occurs through interactions among the reader, the text, the activity, and the larger socio-cultural context. The essential differences between this and the 1985 definitions are: (a) a greater emphasis on the text and the activity, in addition to the reader and (b) more attention to the broader socio-cultural contexts in and through which reading occurs. More recently, Purcell-Gates, Duke, and Stouffer (2016) argued that definitions of reading must go further by attending to the process as it occurs in the context of "socio-culturally constructed literacy practices including the values, beliefs, and power relations that characterize those practices, such as those related to language, gender, ethnicity, religion, economics, and geopolitics. Literacy as the process of using reading, writing, and oral language to extract, construct, integrate, and critique meaning through interaction and involvement with multimodal texts in the context of socially situated practices. This definition emphasizes four key shifts in understandings of reading/literacy that have increased in salience over the past 30 years. First, literacy involves productive (e.g., writing, speaking) as well as receptive (e.g., reading, listening) processes that are more alike than different, especially in their inherently constructive, or transitive, character (Pearson & Tierney, 1984; Rosenblatt, 1978; Smagorinsky, 2001).

Second, reading happens in the context of social practices that involve writing, speaking, and listening, in addition to reading (Gee, 1999; Street, 2005), and activities that are socially, culturally, and historically rooted (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Our focus is on how individuals make meaning through interactions with texts. However, the reciprocal relationships among reading, writing, speaking, and listening, combined with expanded notions about what constitutes a "text" (Smagorinsky, 2001), make it virtually impossible to write about reading without accounting for these other components of literacy. We also emphasize the need to consider the contexts in and through which individuals make meaning of their worlds, including the texts that provide representations of, and mediate interactions in, those worlds. In the face of these various definitions, some clarity is achieved by noting that the common meaning based definition is outcome based, whereas the narrower decoding-based definition is system and process-based. Thus to say that reading is the conversion of written forms into language forms, is to appeal to the relationship between writing systems and language systems and to the process of decoding elements of one system into elements of the other. By contrast, the pedagogical definition is focused on the outcome of comprehension, without regard to the system relationships or the process. The extended literacy definition is neither outcome nor system based, but rather is a culturally embedded

definition that can complement either the system based or the outcome-based definition. In considering the most universal aspects of early reading instruction, it is useful to adopt both the pedagogical definition and the systems definition. The pedagogical definition is useful because it emphasizes a consensus on the major goal of reading, including children's reading. The systems definition is useful because it reflects accurately both the systemic foundation of reading and the related decoding ability that must be acquired by children to learn to read.

The illiterate inmates require basic literacy education so they can read. Ability to read will assist the inmates eschew vices. It is the desire of this study that after an inmate passes through this program, he should be able to do away with all crimes coming as a result of the inability to read articles, pictures and so on. Numeracy is also an aspect of literacy. Inmates who are illiterate are not aware of figures. This is a great challenge for their survivals as citizens. The need for numeracy literacy is very vital to inmates

Numeracy deals with numbers or figures. In our daily lives as individuals, we use numbers either at homes, in offices or in markets. Rothman et al. (2008) defined numeracy as the ability to understand and use numbers in daily life. It is about understanding how numbers work and being able to use them effectively in various contexts. Some authors view numeracy as the numerical counterpart of literacy, emphasizing the ability to comprehend and apply mathematical knowledge. Cockcroft Report (1982 in Google.com 2025 described being numerate as having "at-homeness with numbers and an ability to use mathematical skills to cope confidently with the practical demands of everyday life. It is very crucial for inmates to acquire numeric skills of adding, subtracting, dividing, multiplying among other mathematical functions for effective functioning.

Writing is the process of putting thoughts, feelings, and ideas into written form while paying close attention to using the language in the most appropriate way possible. The purpose of writing is to express one self, to provide information to persuade, and to create a literary work. Furthermore, according to Suparno and Yunus (2008:1), writing is delivering messages (communication) using written language as media or tool.

2.1. Statement of the Problem

In civilized and largely literate communities, citizens go about doing their legitimate duties, concentrating on activities that will benefit their lives legitimately. In the same vein, an individual who is literate; barring all factors takes cognizance of things or activities that will bring shame or disgrace to them thereby eschewing illegality or crime. However, this is not the case with most illiterate individuals. Illiterate individuals are more affected by social inclusion, leading to social isolation and a sense of hopelessness, which can contribute to criminal behavior. They often times struggle to access better-paying jobs, leading to poverty and increasing the likelihood of engaging in crime as a means of survival. They may not fully understand the law, regulations and social norms, making them vulnerable to unintentional law breaking. They are also vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by others, potentially leading to involvement in organized crime and other illicit activities that are against the law.

For lack of ability to read and write and to properly understand the workings of society, some individuals may commit crimes which can lead them to incarceration in correctional centres. Today, there are many illiterate persons in correctional centres who are there largely because of the lack of knowledge of the workings of society. Also, they might be there because an educated person had lured them into crime. If such persons were literate, they would have rejected such deceptions.

Inmates, in most cases are in correctional centres for a given period of time. Once they complete their jail terms, they are released back to the society. In the absence of education or orientation to avert crime after leaving correctional centre, they tend to go back to crime. Before long, they are back to incarceration. This situation is worrisome. Addressing illiteracy through education and literacy programs can help reduce crime rates and promote social inclusion. Provision of literacy education to inmates on a continuous basis will assist their reintegration into society properly. It is on this backdrop, this study seeks to provide literacy education to inmates to ameliorate problems associated with inmates' return to prison after release.

Objectives of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to provide literacy education and digital education to inmates in Jalingo Correctional Center, Taraba State for reformation and reintegration. Specifically, the study:

- Provided literacy education in reading to inmates in Jalingo Medium correction centre
- provided literacy education in writing to inmates in Jalingo Medium correction centre
- Provided literacy education in numeracy to inmates in Jalingo Medium correction centre

2.2. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What is the achievement made in the literacy education in reading provided to inmates in Jalingo Medium correction centre?
- What is the achievement made in the literacy education in writing provided to inmates in

Jalingo Medium correction centre?

What is the achievement made in the literacy education in numeracy provided to inmates in Jalingo Medium correction centre?

3. Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 561 male and female inmates in the Jalingo Medium Correctional Centre in Taraba State. Data collection instrument was the Literacy Education Achievement Test. The instrument was in three clusters, measuring reading, writing and numeracy. The instrument was validated by three subject experts and tested for reliability using K-R 20 estimate which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.90. The instrument was administered to the inmates after the first six and nine weeks of teaching. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data.

The study recommends that:

- Inmates should take advantage of literacy education in reading, writing and numeracy as it is indispensable for them, serving as a catalyst for personal transformation, rehabilitation, and successful reentry into society.
- Investing in literacy education for inmates is not merely an educational imperative. There should be strong commitment through private and government partnership to provide quality and functional education for inmates in the country.

4. Results

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the Achievement made in the Literacy Education in Reading Provided to Inmates in Jalingo Medium Correction Centre

| Variable | N | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|----------|---------|----------------|
| Reading Pretest | 561 | 32191.00 | 57.3815 | 12.24689 |
| Reading Posttest | 561 | 38233.00 | 68.1515 | 13.39124 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 561 | | | |

Table 1 shows that the inmates' mean achievement score for reading in pretest is 57.38. This indicates that the inmates made meaningful achievement in reading. The mean achievement score for reading in posttest is 68.39, indicating that the inmates made steady progress in the training program. Their effort to learn how to read is above average, this displays enthusiastic in reading.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of the Achievement made in the Literacy Education in Writing Provided to Inmates in Jalingo Medium Correction Centre

| Variable | N | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|----------|---------|----------------|
| Writing Pretest | 561 | 32337.00 | 57.6417 | 11.11892 |
| Writing Posttest | 561 | 37505.00 | 66.8538 | 13.38122 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 561 | | | |

Table 2 reveals that the inmates' mean achievement score for writing in pretest is 57.64 and posttest is 66.85 indicating that the inmates made steady progress in the training program. Their effort to learn how to write is above average, this displays enthusiastic in learning to write.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of the Achievement made in the Literacy Education in Reading Provided to Inmates in Jalingo Medium Correction Centre

| Variable | N | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|----------|---------|----------------|
| Numeracy Pretest | 561 | 29774.00 | 53.0731 | 10.65598 |
| Numeracy Posttest | 561 | 37004.00 | 65.9608 | 12.70357 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 561 | | | |

Table 3 reveals that the inmates' mean achievement score for numeracy in pretest is 53.07. This indicates that their effort to learn to numeracy is above average. The mean achievement score for numeracy in posttest is 65.96 indicating that the inmates made tremendous progress in the training program.

5. Discussion

Data analyzed indicated that the inmates made meaningful achievement in reading. They made steady progress in the training program and their effort to learn how to read was above average which can be translated to mean they displayed enthusiasm in reading during the program. This further suggests that the inmates understand the efficacy of reading. Reading literacy is a foundational skill that empowers individuals to access information, participate in society, and pursue personal and professional growth. Literacy education aligns with broader goals of social justice and equity. The findings provides evident that democratizing reading literacy in prison settings addresses educational disparities and promotes inclusive participation in civic life. The findings is in line with Nita et al. (2020), who advocate for widening access to "powerful knowledge" in specialized fields. Furthermore, for incarcerated individuals, the consequences of limited literacy are profound, affecting rehabilitation, employability, and reintegration into society. For inmates, many of whom have experienced educational marginalization, reading literacy can break cycles of exclusion and empower them to engage with educational, vocational, and rehabilitative programs within correctional settings. The acquisition of reading literacy is closely linked to successful rehabilitation and reintegration. The findings aligns with Albarillo et al. (2018) that literacy programs foster increased productivity, innovation, and self-confidence, all of which are crucial for inmates preparing to re-enter society.

Findings indicated that inmates' mean achievement score for writing was tremendous. This may suggest that the inmates demonstrated value for writing which is one of the foundational competency that extends beyond the classroom and permeates various aspects of personal and societal development. For inmates, literacy education in writing is especially transformative, offering pathways for personal growth, improved communication, and reintegration into society. Writing literacy serves as more than a technical skill; it is a medium for self-expression, empowerment, and cognitive development. Inmates who develop writing competencies are better positioned to engage with technology, access information, and participate in lifelong learning. The findings aligns with Kennedy & Gupta (2025) that writing is particularly relevant as society increasingly values flexible, adaptable skills that transcend specific disciplinary boundaries. Writing literacy is a cornerstone for broader participation in modern life. Structured, inclusive literacy programs particularly writing in correctional settings are therefore essential for addressing educational inequities and supporting rehabilitation.

Findings revealed that the inmates' mean achievement score for numeracy was above average. This indicates that the inmates made tremendous progress in the training program as evidenced in their achievement score in numeracy. The findings suggest that the inmates attached value to learning numeracy. For inmates, many of whom may come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, numeracy education can bridge systemic gaps, fostering critical cognitive and material skills. The finding in this regard aligns with Odden et al. (2019) who found that Numeracy literacy is a vital ability for navigating modern society. Numeracy literacy is imperative to inmates as it enables them to apply mathematical reasoning to real-world challenges, a competency highly relevant for incarcerated individuals preparing for life after release. Numeracy literacy empowers inmates to succeed both during and after incarceration. Integrating numeracy into correctional education will not only enhance personal agency and rehabilitation outcomes but also aligns with broader social goals of reducing recidivism and promoting equity in access to powerful knowledge and employment opportunities.

6. Conclusion

Literacy education in reading, writing and numeracy is indispensable for inmates, serving as a catalyst for personal transformation, rehabilitation, and successful reentry into society. The progress made by the inmates in reading, writing and numeracy was tremendous as demonstrated in their mean achievement scores. By equipping incarcerated individuals with essential literacy skills, correctional institutions can support individual growth, reduce recidivism, and contribute to safer, more equitable communities. Investing in literacy education for inmates is not merely an educational imperative but a societal one, with far-reaching implications for justice and human development.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

- Inmates should take advantage of literacy education in reading, writing and numeracy as it is indispensable for them, serving as a catalyst for personal transformation, rehabilitation, and successful reentry into society.
- Investing in literacy education for inmates is not merely an educational imperative. There should be strong commitment through private and government partnership to provide quality and functional education for inmates in the country.

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