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Essays in honour of

Professor Raufu Adebiyi Adebisi

Edited by
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CHAPTER 59

AN ASSESSMENT OF FUNCTIONAL LITERACY NEEDS OF ADOLESCENT INMATES IN THE BORSTAL HOME IN ILORIN, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study assessed the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates in the Ilorin Borstal Home. The descriptive study of the cross-sectional survey type was employed in the study. The target population consisted of all the adolescent inmates, as at the time this research was carried out, in the Borstal Home in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. All the 141 sampled adolescent inmates were purposively selected. The researcher-designed questionnaire was analysed using the percentage, mean, the t-test and the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 alpha level. A reliability coefficient of r = 0.81 was obtained. The outcome revealed that the cultural and economic literacy functions were ranked as the most essential by the adolescent inmates. Besides, religion and ethnic background were not significant factors in determining the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin. Conversely, inmates' parental level of education was a factor which significantly influenced the adolescent inmates' perceived literacy needs. It was, therefore, recommended for Borstal Home students, their parents and the warders that cultural literacy

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functions such as moving closer to one's Creator and learning good habits from fellow students were among the most crucial functions for which literacy could be employed.

Keywords: Generic literacy; functional literacy; adolescence; adolescent inmates; Borstal Home; correctional facilities.

Introduction

The word "literacy" is a term that has failed to yield to a single definition as it means different things to different scholars. According to Lawal (2014), literacy, like literature, is derived from the Latin "litera", meaning a letter of the alphabet. He added that this explains why, traditionally, literacy has been closely associated with the alphabet and its role in written communication, while at the same time being contrasted with oral communication. Olajide (2002) defined literacy as the ability to read, write, and calculate figures well enough to carry out activities that many people consider necessary to function in society – such activities include reading newspapers or training manuals in the workplace or in school, understanding a highway map, and balancing a chequebook. Therefore, literacy is not a mere school or work affair (Lawal, 2014).

Like all purposeful activities of humankind, education is a 'means-end' system (Lawal, 2004). Literacy, which is a crucial part of formal education, must therefore be purposeful. According to Greenberg, Dunleavy and Kutner (2007:2), literacy is 'using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.' For adolescent inmates in Borstal homes to meaningfully develop their knowledge and potentials, their literacy needs must first be identified and thereafter enhanced in order to consolidate the desired future state of literacy the inmates feel they have to possess before leaving the facilities. Their inability to do so is called illiteracy or analphabetism (UNESCO, 2012).

Literacy is an entrenchment of our daily practices as it can hardly be considered as an activity separate from any of them (Ballard, 2013). These daily practices revolve around what Lawal (2014) considered as the four (4) P's of **People** (values/culture), **Policy** (social development), **Prosperity** (economic development), and **Planet** (ecological balance and sustainability). This is a confirmation that literacy must be embedded within public debates about schooling, employment and public values just as it mediates interdisciplinary discourse across different disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology, political science, linguistics, education, literature, among others (Ballard, 2013). Literacy seems to assume different guises and connotations based on how it has been operationalised.

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Literacy, in the opinion of Norris and Phillips (2003), is an important tool that shows the way one learns about the world and how one can participate in society. It is a necessary requirement for any meaningful interaction in the modern global society. The lack of literacy skills provides an explanation for inequities in the distribution of social goods and social power (Ballard, 2013). He argued further that illiteracy accounts for high unemployment or underemployment and by implication for crime, poverty, substance abuse and other social ills. This assertion is in line with what Salinger (2010) reported that when inmates with low literacy level are freed from correctional facilities, social and economic difficulties, including future unemployment and welfare dependence are some of the host of challenges they are confronted with. After all, if a person does not possess the expertise demanded by employers of today, why should s/he expect to be hired for a good job?

Adolescent literacy is keyed into the four (4) P's of **People** (values/culture), **Policy** (social development), **Prosperity** (economic development), and **Planet** (ecological balance and sustainability) (Lawal, 2014), given the factors exerting contrary pulls in the world today in the quest for balanced and sustainable development (Dzulkifli, 2014 in Lawal, 2014). Correctional facilities are to be cognisant of the corollary functions of producing an emancipated citizenry who can efficiently discharge their cultural, social, economic and civic responsibilities in the service of balanced and positive social transformation as enunciated in Lawal, 2014).

(Lawal, 2014) A Taxonomy of Literacy Functions

The four functions adopted in this taxonomy cannot be mutually exclusive as they derive from one and the same generic source. This is not unconnected with the fact that taxonomies are products of concept-mapping, a process of constructing or mapping logical relationships among concepts in a hierarchical order such that the most general concepts are at the top of the map while the most specific are at the bottom of the hierarchy (Lawal, 2014). The generic literacy function is the production of a balanced person with a liberated body, mind and soul via concern for consideration for total development involving **People** (values/culture), **Policy** (social development), **Prosperity** (economic development), and **Planet** (ecological balance and sustainability).

Correctional facilities are expected to be treatment-oriented since those who are delinquents are essentially hitherto deprived of having proper schooling and nurturance in a well-organised family, and can be re-socialised to become normal again (Sa'ad, 2006). He maintained that there are four types of juvenile institutions in Nigeria, namely the Juvenile Courts, Approved Schools, Remand Homes and Borstal Centres.

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Borstal Centre derives its name from the village called Borstal, just outside Rochester where it was first set up in Britain (Sa'ad 2006). When introduced in Nigeria, it retained its name. Borstals are fewer than both Approved Schools and Remand Homes in Nigeria. Borstal institutions are meant for only the young persons. According to Sa'ad (2006), there are two functions of Borstal institutions in Nigeria. First function is the encouragement of a personal relationship between the Borstal Staff and inmates through which the inmates will be given progressive trust demanding personal decision, responsibility and self-control; secondly, the placement of emphasis on regular educational and vocational training regimented with demanding physical training content. Juvenile delinquents can be committed to this school for a period as long as two years or more and two years follow-up after release programme.

As far as this study is concerned, the juvenile homes under investigation are the Borstal Institutions. The reason for choosing the Borstal Centres are as follows: first, the study is all about young persons between the age range of fourteen and nineteen years and not about children below the age of fourteen years; second, unlike the Approved Schools and the Remand Homes, Borstal Institutions have uniformity of control, administration, curriculum and policy; third, the Nigerian Prisons are in control and not some social workers or religious institutions or affiliations; lastly, it is only the Borstal Centres that place emphasis on regular educational and vocational training regimented with demanding physical training content. All these justify the selection of the Borstal Homes for the study.

Statement of the Problem

The February 26, 2003 edition of the New Zealand business weekly newspaper, *The Independent*, had its lead article carrying the headline, "Government's schools fail industry: Forget the knowledge wave, half of our factory workers can't even read or write" (Chapman & Tunmer, 2011:3). The Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA) of New Zealand attributed this problem to inadequate literacy instruction in schools. They observed that the literacy problem is rooted in the school system which undercooked students that passed through without attaining the proper literacy skills that will make them capable of functioning in the manufacturing sector, efficiently. Although this allegation was directed at mainstream students, disadvantaged students such as the adolescent inmates in Borstal Institutions are not an exemption. The EMA affirmed that the use of modern technology, combined with legal compliance regarding health and safety, required competence in literacy. Therefore, identifying adolescent inmates' literacy needs that could forestall an inadvertent relapse into a higher illiteracy syndrome (Lawal, 2000) before or after having left the facility is of paramount importance. This was why Greenberg et al.

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(2007) averred that the important tools for navigating everyday life are the skills and credentials that are acquired through formal education.

Some other studies in the direction of this study are those of Alemika and Chukwuma (2001), Danner (2011), Elijah (2011), Greenberg et al. (2007), Langer (2002), Learning and Skills Improvement Service (2013), Martin (2003), Meltzer (2001), Meltzer and Hamann (2005), Olajide (2002), Sa'ad (2006), Satherley and Lawes (2008), Scarcella (2002), UNICEF (2011), among others. All of these studies were either surveys of Adult literacy skills or juvenile justice administration. Similarly, the findings of these studies have been mixed. Although much work has been done to date, more studies need to be conducted especially to fill part of the gap in ascertaining the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of Borstal Institutions in Nigeria, most especially the Borstal Home in Ilorin. This would be a further step in seeking ways of ameliorating the conditions of these juvenile inmates and rehabilitate as well as re-integrate them into the mainstream.

Research Questions

a) What are the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin?
b) Is there any difference in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on religion?
c) Is there any difference in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on ethnicity?
d) Is there any difference in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on parents' educational level?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the course of this study:

HO_1: There is no significant difference in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on religion.

HO_2: There is no significant difference in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on ethnicity.

HO_3: No significant difference exists in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on parents' educational level.

Methodology

This study was a descriptive study of the cross-sectional survey type. The demographics entailed religion, ethnicity and parental level of education. All the current adolescent inmates, as at the time this research was carried out, in the Borstal Home in Ilorin constituted the population of the study. The target population still comprised all the current adolescent inmates in the Borstal

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Home in Ilorin. The sample consisted of all the available one hundred and forty-one (141) adolescent inmates as at the time of the study. The purposive sampling technique was thus used for the selection of the sample needed for the study.

The data collected through a researcher-designed questionnaire were analysed using the percentage for the demographics, mean scores in drawing inferences on the first research question, the t-test for hypothesis one and the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical method for hypotheses two and three, all at p-value less than 0.05 alpha using IBM-SPSS version 20.0 for windows. To validate the instrument, it was submitted to three experts in the Arts Education Department of the University of Ilorin to check and approve the structure and content of the instrument. The reliability index was determined through the use of the Cronbach's α (alpha) coefficient. A reliability coefficient of r = 0.808 was obtained. This indicated that the internal consistency was good.

Results

TABLE 1: Demographic Data of Respondents (N=141)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Religion		
Christian	55	39.0
Muslim	86	61.0
Ethnicity		
Hausa	13	9.2
Igbo	25	17.7
Yoruba	103	73.0
Parental Education		
No Schooling	7	5.0
Primary School	12	8.5
Secondary School	46	32.6
Post-secondary	76	53.9

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of inmates in the Ilorin Borstal Institution. Out of the 141 respondents that participated in the study, 86 (61%) were Muslims, 103 (73%) were of the Yoruba ethnic group, and majority of their parents 76 (53.9%) had acquired education above the secondary school level.

Research Question 1: What are the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin?
In drawing inference from the means on this research question, the following critical ranges of scores on a scale of 0 to 3 were used:

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TABLE 2: Table of Inference

Critical ranges	Inferences
0 – 1.99	Not essential/Not Crucial
2 – 2.49	Essential/ Crucial
2.5 – 3	Very essential/Very Crucial

TABLE 3: The Literacy Needs of the Adolescent Inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin (N=141)

S/N	Items	Mean	Sd	Rank	Inference
	Cultural Functions/Skills				
1	Learn good study habits from my fellow students	2.71	0.51	2nd	VC
2	Become a professional (e.g. teacher, medical doctor, accountant)	2.65	0.60	5th	VC
3	Pursue a postgraduate degree (PGDE, Masters, Ph.D.)	2.62	0.55	7th	VC
4	Move closer to my God	2.78	0.54	1st	VC
5	Light up my soul	2.62	0.58	7th	VC
6	Proclaim God's favour in my life.	2.68	0.60	3rd	VC
	TOTAL MEAN	**2.68**			**1st**
	Social Functions/Skills				
7	relate well with family (both nuclear and extended) and friends	2.45	0.66	14th	C
8	Relate with neighbours	2.24	0.61	19th	C
9	cooperate with community members	2.26	0.62	17th	C
10	Keep fit and look healthy	2.58	0.65	11th	VC
11	Know how to dissipate excess energy	2.30	0.63	16th	C
12	Promote respect for other sportspersons	2.55	0.64	12th	VC
	TOTAL MEAN	**2.40**			**4th**
	Economic Functions/Skills				
13	Keep proper records of my work	2.68	0.60	3rd	VC
14	Earn a decent living	2.50	0.64	13th	VC
15	Improve the quality of my work	2.62	0.60	7th	VC
	TOTAL MEAN	**2.60**			**2nd**
	Civic Functions/Skills				
16	Protect my rights	2.65	0.60	5th	VC
17	Discharge my civic responsibilities by voting	2.26	0.74	17th	C
18	Discharge my civic responsibilities by seeking votes from others	2.22	0.75	20th	C

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19	Protect the environment by cleaning it from time to time	2.45	0.63	14th	C
20	Promote the environment by educating others on the importance of good governance	2.60	0.64	10th	VC
	TOTAL MEAN	**2.44**			**3rd**
	GRAND MEAN	**2.53**			

Table 3 reveals that out of the twenty (20) items that addressed the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin, items 4 and 1 ranked 1st and 2nd, respectively. These two items were under the cultural literacy functions. From the table, it is evident that all the six items on cultural functions of literacy, all the three items on economic functions, two out of the five items on civic functions and two out of the six items on social functions were considered by the respondents to be very crucial and of high essence to them during their stay in the Institution. This would seem to suggest that the respondents valued literacy more for satisfying cultural and economic needs than for purely civic and social ones.

The result on Table 3 further presents the prioritised literacy functions as perceived by the respondents. The cultural literacy functions were ranked as the most essential literacy skill by the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Homes in Ilorin with a total mean score of 2.68. This was followed by the economic functions which ranked second with a total mean score of 2.60. Nevertheless, civic functions and social functions ranked third and fourth with a total mean scores of 2.44 and 2.40, respectively.

Hypotheses Testing

HO_1: There is no significant difference in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on religion.

TABLE 4: The difference in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on religion (N=141)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)	Decision
Christian	55	50.29	4.93	139	-.209	0.835	HO Accepted
Muslim	86	50.49	6.21				

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 4 shows t (139) = -.209, $p > 0.05$. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha value, the hypothesis was thus accepted. It can be deduced that there was no significant difference between the literacy needs of Christian and Muslim adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin. The implication of this is that Christian adolescent inmates do not view the literacy needs differently from their Muslim counterparts.

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HO_2: There is no significant difference in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on ethnicity.

TABLE 5: The differences among the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on ethnicity (N=141)

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Decision
Between Groups	36.22	2	18.11	.549	.579	HO Accepted
Within Groups	4555.92	138	33.01			
Total	4592.14	140				

*Significance @ 0.05

From Table 5, the result F (2, 138) = .549, p > 0.05 shows that there was no significant difference in the perceived literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin among the three ethnic groups. The null hypothesis was thus accepted. The result tends to indicate that inmates' ethnic background did not significantly influence their perception on their literacy needs.

HO_3: No significant difference exists in the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on parents' educational level.

TABLE 6: The differences among the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on parents' educational level (N=141)

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Decision
Between Groups	899.861	3	299.954	11.130	.000	HO Rejected
Within Groups	3692.281	137	26.951			
Total	4592.142	140				

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 6 reveals that F (3, 137) = 11.130, p > 0.05. Since the p-value is less than the alpha value, the hypothesis was thus rejected. In other words, it can be deduced that inmates' parental level of education significantly influenced the adolescent inmates' perceived literacy needs. Scheffe's Post-Hoc analysis was therefore carried out to locate the direction of the differences.

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TABLE 7: Scheffe's Post-Hoc analysis of significant difference in the perceived literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on parents' educational level (N=141)

Parents' educational level		Means Difference	Std. Error	Sig
No Schooling at all	Primary Sch. Edu.	-2.07	2.47	.872
	Sec Education	-6.33*	2.11	.032
	Postsecondary Edu.	-8.79*	2.05	.001
Primary Sch. Edu.	No Schooling at all	2.07	2.47	.872
	Sec Education	-4.26	1.68	.098
	Postsecondary Edu.	-6.72*	1.61	.001
Sec Education	No Schooling at all	6.33*	2.11	.032
	Primary Sch. Edu.	4.26	1.68	.098
	Postsecondary Edu.	-2.46	0.97	.097
Postsecondary Edu.	No Schooling at all	8.79*	2.05	.001
	Primary Sch. Edu.	6.72*	1.61	.001
	Sec Education	2.46	0.97	.097

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 7 reveals the Scheffe's post-hoc analysis on the difference among the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on parental educational level. It can be deduced that that the mean difference between the perception of inmates whose parents had no formal schooling at all and those whose parents highest educational background is the secondary school education was statistically significant at 0.05 alpha level. It can also be deduced that there was a significant difference in the perception of inmates whose parents had postsecondary education and those whose parents had no schooling at all. Further still, a significant difference was noticed in the perception of inmates whose parents had postsecondary education and those whose parents' highest educational background is the primary school education.

Discussions and Implications of the Findings

The finding of the study indicated that the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin perceived the cultural literacy functions such as moving closer to their Creator, learning good habits from their fellow students, proclaiming God's favour in their lives, becoming professionals (e.g. teacher, medical doctor, accountant), among others as the most essential literacy skills that could help them reach beyond ordinary success to achieve extraordinary effectiveness, spectacular results, and positively deviant performance – performance that dramatically exceeds the norm and reaches extraordinary levels of excellence in a positive direction. The inmates also considered the economic literacy functions such as the ability to keep proper records of their work and the ability to improve the quality of their work as next in rank to

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cultural functions. Conversely, the inmates ranked the civic and social literacy functions as third and fourth with a total mean scores of 2.44 and 2.40, respectively. This would seem to suggest that the respondents valued literacy more for satisfying cultural and economic needs than for purely civic and social ones.

The outcome of this study seem to support the assertion of Ballard (2013) who maintained that literacy is an entrenchment of our daily practices as it can hardly be considered as an activity separate from any of them. These daily practices revolve around what Lawal (2014c) considered as the four (4) P's of people (values/culture), policy (social development), prosperity (economic development), and planet (ecological balance and sustainability). However, the finding of this study is not in perfect tandem with the hierarchical arrangement of Lawal's (2014) 4P's of people (cultural literacy functions with a total mean score of 2.68), policy (social literacy functions, 2.40), prosperity (economic literacy functions, 2.60), and planet (civic literacy functions, 2.44). In other words, the respondents perceived both the cultural literacy functions and the economic literacy functions to be very crucial to their overcoming future unemployment and welfare dependence as well as a host of other challenges which inmates with low literacy level may be confronted with when freed from correctional facilities. After all, if a person does not possess the expertise demanded by employers of today, why should s/he expect to be hired for a good job?

The result of the finding in Table 4 indicates that there was no significant difference between the literacy needs of Christian and Muslim adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin. The implication of this is that Christian adolescent inmates do not view the (cultural, economic, civic and social) literacy needs differently from their Muslim counterparts. This indicated that both the Christian and Muslim inmates acclaimed that moving closer to their Creator is the most crucial in being able to re-socialise to become normal again. They perceived further that learning good study habits from their fellow students, proclaiming God's favour in their lives, keeping proper records of their work, becoming professionals (such as teachers, medical doctors, accountants), having their rights unviolated, pursing postgraduate degrees (such as PGDE, Masters, PhD), among numerous others are also very crucial not only to their wellbeing but also to national development. In this regard, Sa'ad (2006) asserted that correctional facilities are expected to be treatment-oriented since those who are delinquents are essentially hitherto deprived of having proper schooling and nurturance in a well-organised family.

Table 5 shows that there was no significant difference in the perceived literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin among the three

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ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba). The result tends to indicate that inmates' ethnic background did not significantly influence their perception on their literacy needs. This outcome seem to be in agreement with Lawal's (2000) finding that ethnic background is not a significant factor on respondents' preferences for general (news) materials.

The result of the finding in Table 6 reveals that inmates' parental level of education significantly influenced the adolescent inmates' perceived literacy needs. Table 7 locates the direction of the differences among the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin based on parental educational level. It can be deduced that that the mean difference between the perception of inmates whose parents had no formal schooling at all and those whose parents' highest educational background is the secondary school education was statistically significant at 0.05 alpha level with regard to cultural literacy functions. It can also be deduced that there was a significant difference in the perception of inmates whose parents had postsecondary education and those whose parents had no schooling at all with regard to cultural, social and civic functions. Further still, a significant difference was noticed in the perception of inmates whose parents had postsecondary education and those whose parents' highest educational background is the primary school education with regard to civic literacy functions only.

Limitations

Despite this study being the first to assess the literacy needs of the Borstal Home adolescent inmates in Ilorin as regards their religious, ethnic and parental backgrounds, it does have some limitations among which include: being an indirect measure of the literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin as it relied on self-reports and some other subjective evaluations; and the non-randomization of study sample selected. This, it is believed, should influence subsequent research on the topic.

Conclusion

It could be concluded that the respondents valued literacy more for satisfying cultural and economic needs than for purely civic and social ones. Religion and ethnic background were not significant factors in determining the functional literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of the Borstal Home in Ilorin. Conversely, inmates' parental level of education was a factor which significantly influenced the adolescent inmates' perceived functional literacy needs.

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Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Borstal Home students as well as mainstream students should be made to realise that cultural literacy functions such as moving closer to one's Creator, learning good habits from fellow students, proclaiming God's favour in one's lives, becoming professionals (e.g. teacher, medical doctor, accountant) as well as the economic literacy functions such as the ability to keep proper records of one's work and the ability to improve the quality of one's work are among the most crucial literacy skills that could help them reach beyond ordinary success to achieve extraordinary effectiveness and spectacular results which would help them overcome future unemployment and welfare dependence as well as a host of other challenges which inmates with low literacy level may be confronted with when freed from correctional facilities.
2. Parents/guardians are encouraged to always find time to discuss God with their children/ward. Doing this is very crucial as most inmates acclaimed that moving closer to their Creator is the most crucial to them in being able to re-socialise to become normal again.
3. Warders (academic and non-academic) and teachers in mainstream schools should be sensitised that teaching English language is different from teaching literacy as every discipline is built upon its own literacy. Literacy standards are for everyone, not just for the language arts teacher alone. All the teachers in the facility must emphasise to the inmates that learning good study habits from fellow students, proclaiming God's favour in one's life, keeping proper records of one's work, becoming a professional (such as a teacher, a medical doctor, an accountant), having one's rights unviolated, pursing postgraduate degrees (such as PGDE, Masters, PhD), among numerous others are very crucial not only to their wellbeing but also to national development. When this is taken into consideration, students would have been assisted into reaching their fullest potentials.
4. Policy makers within the Ministry of Education should ensure that they formulate policies that would assist incarcerated adolescent inmates who return to mainstream school graduate from there based on the adequacy of literacy instruction he must have undergone during his stay in the correctional facility.

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