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Adult Literacies as Social Practice: Some Lessons for Nigeria from Scotland

Abstract

This is part of the report of an exploratory study designed to investigate the rationale, process and outcomes of Scotland’s national adult literacy numeracy policy. Funded by the British Academy under her Visiting Research Fellowship Award, the study sought to examine the policy and the practice of Scotland’s approach with a view to identifying its potential benefit to the improvement of adult literacy policy and practice in Nigeria. The study focused on the context, the policies and the practice of literacy as implemented in Scotland. The aim here is to explore how the social practices approach to literacy operates in Scotland and the lessons that could be learned to inform policy and practice of adult literacy in Nigeria. Specifically, the study focused on the following four research questions.

1. What is the rationale for Scotland’s social practices approach to literacy?
2. How does the approach operate in practice?
3. How are the learning achievements perceived in terms of addressing the concept of capability poverty as discussed, for example, by Sen (1999)?
4. What lessons can be learned from the Scotland approach to inform policy and practice in Nigeria?

The preliminary report of the study indicates that Scotland literacy practice is associated with learner freedom especially in the choice of learning content. This does not compare with Nigerian practice which still conceives literacy as a set of mechanical skills and which does not give the learner any measure of freedom on what to learn. Unlike Nigeria where the traditional primer based model of literacy training is still the dominant approach to literacy teaching, Scotland conception and practice of adult literacy falls within the social practice model with its emphasis on literacy learning which emerges from issues which learners on their own, have identified as important and key to their social living. Compared with Nigeria literacy model that tends to isolate the learner from the content and use of learning experience, the Scottish literacy model forges a potential link between literacy development and capability enhancement.

Implementation of social practice model of literacy in Nigeria is quite feasible and desirable but certain challenges especially in the area of low concept of the model among literacy practitioners and policy makers will have to be addressed.
Introduction

This paper draws on the report of a study designed to assess the value of the Scotland’s adult literacy and numeracy strategy to Nigeria. The study focused on the context, the policies and the practice of Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) as implemented in Scotland. The aim here is to explore how the social practices approach to ALN operates in Scotland and the lessons that could be learned to inform policy and practice of adult literacy in Nigeria.

Funded by the British Academy under its visiting scholars programme, the study was carried out as a Visiting Research Fellow during a four month residency at the Centre for Research and Development in Adult Literacy in Lifelong Learning (CRADALL), University of Glasgow, Scotland.

The study

The study adopts a qualitative design with focus on perceptions from the point of view of researchers, policy implementers, practitioners and learners themselves. Four research questions have been posed to guide the conduct of the study as follows:

1) What is the rationale for Scotland’s social practices approach to literacies?
2) How does the approach operate in practice?
3) How are the learning achievements perceived in terms of addressing the concept of capability poverty as discussed, for example, by Sen (1999)?
4) What lessons can be learned from the Scotland approach to inform policy and practice in Nigeria?

Sampling was purposeful and it reflected the context specific nature of the study. Methods consist of 12 structured interviews with individuals and four focus group meetings (of approximately seven people in each) with learning groups who are identified through the local authority ALN partnerships. Members of the focus groups were also invited to participate in individual interviews for further clarification of any issues raised during discussions. The study also involved face to face interviews with researchers, providers and learners in Nigeria and Scotland. Data were analysed inductively and coded with the aid of Nvivo software, clustered into themes to represent key insights and issues.

This paper is a brief comparison of the policy and practice of adult literacy in Scotland and Nigeria. The essence here is to identify the potential gains which Nigeria can derive from the implementation of a social practices model of adult literacy and the challenges that are likely to be encountered in the process.

ADULT LITERACY PRACTICES IN SCOTLAND

Devolution of government in the United Kingdom (which is now a four nation state comprising England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and the resultant creation of Scottish Government in 1999 came with its attendant divergence in social policy. This four-in-one arrangement now means each part (of the four) presenting its own approach, history and characteristics in education and other social services. One area where this divergence has been most pronounced is in the adult literacy and numeracy policy framework. For instance, while the English Model of Adult Literacy emphasises skills for life, Scotland adopts literacies as social practices. This invariably “results in goals that are strikingly different from the skills for life strategy in England” (Merrifield, 2005; 20).

Scotland’s poor performance in the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in twenty countries including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States is one of the major reasons which necessitated a refocus of the adult literacy policy and programmes in the country. The result of the survey for Scotland indicated that “23% of the adult population) are estimated to have low literacy and numeracy skills according to the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)” (Sliwka. and Tett 2008; p. 5).

The adoption of literacies as social practices by Scotland can, however not be considered in isolation of her long history of community education practices (Tett, 2010). Early in 1977, the Working Party on Professional Education and Training for Community Education has highlighted on the major elements of community education as follows:

We consider the concept of community education to be consistent with current international thinking about education as a whole, as represented for example by the phrases ‘education permanente’, ‘recurrent education’, and ‘continuing education’. It reflects a view of education as a process (a) which is lifelong; (b) in which the participants should be actively and influentially involved and the traditional stress on teaching outweighed by the emphasis put on learning and (c) in which the needs of the participants rather than the academic subject divisions or administrative and institutional arrangements should determine the nature and timing of provision. (HMSO, 1977: 6)

It is against the above background that literacy is conceived as a key dimension of community regeneration and a part of the wider lifelong learning agenda (Scottish Executive, 2005). The strong community education background of the Scottish nation has constituted the equally strong ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factor in her adoption of the social literacies approach. For instance, adult literacy and numeracy programme was initially located in the defunct Communities Scotland (a government agency that worked with other Scottish government agencies for the improvement of quality of people in the country) and not in the education department as expected while the implementation team of the policy still form part of the community engagement activities in the country.

Adult literacy Policy and Curriculum

The journey to new adult literacy model started in 2000 when the Scottish Executive commissioned the Literacies in Community Report. The report was quite significant in the development of adult literacy policy and practice in the...
whole of UK as emphasis was shifted “from seeing literacy as functional skills towards seeing it as a set of real-life practices” (Merrifield, 2005, 20).

A key report, ‘Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland’ (ALNIS) was published in 2001. It recognised that ‘Literacy and numeracy are skills whose sufficiency may only be judged within a specific social, cultural, economic or political context’ (Scottish Executive, 2001, p. 7). ALNIS further defined ALN as: "The ability to read, write and use numeracy, to handle information, to express ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners" (Scottish Executive, 2001; p. 7).

The curriculum is one area where Scotland adult literacy and numeracy strategy offers a best practice example of a practical approach to adult literacy project. There is an Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) framework which unequivocally states that:

- We are using a social practices account of adult literacy and numeracy. Rather than seeing literacy and numeracy as the decontextualized, mechanical, manipulation of letters, words and figures this view shows that literacy and numeracy are located within social, emotional and linguistic contexts (p. 3). Many literacy and numeracy events in life are regular, repeated activities, such as paying bills, sending greetings cards, reading bedtime stories and some events are linked into routine sequences that are part of the formal procedures and expectation of social institutions such as work-places, schools and welfare agencies (Scottish Executive, 2005; p. 3).

The ALN curriculum framework has been designed to achieve three main purposes as follow:

- promote the Scottish philosophy and approach to adult literacy and numeracy in whatever context they are delivered
- show how this can be done with the learner at the centre of the process
- improve the quality of Scottish adult literacy and numeracy provision (Scottish Executive, 2005; p. 7).

The Scottish philosophy and approach to ALN is an inclusive policy that is tailored towards meeting the learning needs of different categories of youths and adults including:

1. those with low literacy skills
2. jobless and unemployed including those facing redundancy
3. those with English as second language
4. people with disabilities and health conditions
5. those living in disadvantaged areas
6. those on low skilled jobs (Tett, Leavey, & Slivka, 2008).

In terms of feature, adult literacy and numeracy education in Scotland is associated with curricular diversity, voluntariness, and learner-based methodology. There is intense focus on the different uses to which adults make of literacy or the ways in which literacy is reflected in their lives as individuals and as “family members, workers citizens and lifelong learners” (Scottish Executive, 2001; p. 7). The learner’s right to choose and determine what and when to learn is fully recognised. The policy:

- rather than focusing on a minimum standard, is concerned more with establishing what the learner’s goals are ... The aims is to access learners’ ability to apply their learning to real contexts to measure and to measure the economic, personal and social gains that they make, including their willingness to learn in the future (p. 14).

The curriculum is thus about the learner with particular emphasis on the different social contexts in which s/he uses literacy and numeracy and the main focus being on equipping him/her with the particular skills and knowledge required for effective social and economic living.

Equally worthy of note is the fact that Scotland ALN policy was informed by research evidence. According to Leavey (2005) “The adult literacy and numeracy strategy in Scotland is built on what was learned from a number of different research projects as well as a number of UK and international adult literacy programmes” (p.22). In addition to IALS, other research projects were specifically commissioned to provide further evidence to inform the policy. These include; further analysis of the Scottish IALS (1996) data, the Workforce Survey - a household survey of the workforce, the Employers Survey – Scottish employers’ views of literacy and numeracy in the workplace (Scottish Executive, 2001; p. 8).

The implementation of the policy is built around 32 ALN Partnerships that form the nucleus of contact with adults who have literacy needs on the one hand and providers of ALN across all sectors including colleges on the other. The partnerships enjoy some measures of freedom in defining the content and context of ALN in their respective areas of authorities.

Since the implementation of the new ALN policy started in Scotland, appreciable progress has been recorded especially in the area of improved capacity of people to handle text and other literacy and numeracy tasks. As reflected in the report of the evaluation of the 2009 Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies (SSAL) “Literacies in Scotland are generally strong … [which] means that the majority of Scots have skills at the level considered appropriate for an advanced economy by the OECD” (St.Clair, Maclachlan and Tett, 2009). This can be a remarkable improvement over the country’s performance at IALS.

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Policy and Practices in Nigeria

Nigeria obtained her independence and republican status from Britain (the present UK comprising England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) in 1960 and 1963 respectively. This, by implication, makes Scotland a colonial master to Nigeria, a vast and ethnically diverse nation with more than 250 ethnic groups (Udebu, 2011) at least three of which are more than the size of the UK, the four-in-one country former colonial authority. Nigeria’s population is presently estimated at 162.5 million (World Bank, 2011). The 2010 National Literacy
Survey conducted Jointly by the National Mass Education Commission (NMEC) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) put the national literacy rate for the country at 56.9% (NMEC & NBS, 2010). The survey further revealed that Nigeria houses about 40 million people who are unable to read and write in any language out of which only 500,000 (0.13%) are currently enrolled in adult literacy classes. With such a huge population of illiterates, it is not surprising that Nigeria is a prominent member of the E9 countries (and the only one from Sub-Saharan Africa, SSA) meaning that she is among the nine countries with highest population of illiterates in the world along with Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and Pakistan. Nigerian is the present chair of the E9 group. Thus, adult literacy remains a big issue in the resource endowed Nigeria.

Nigeria has made considerable efforts to address the adult literacy issue. The efforts have been largely in the area of mass literacy campaigns and policy. In the 1977 National Policy on Education (NPE) which was subsequently reviewed in 1981, 1998 and 2004, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) declared that “an intensive nation-wide mass literacy will be launched as a matter of priority” (FGN, 2004, p. 35). Resultantly, the country conducted various mass literacy campaigns with all aiming at eradicating illiteracy in the country. Apart from the national campaigns, states also conduct campaigns to address areas of needs. Presently, Kano, one of the states in the North-West region recently (in May, 2012) launched its own mass literacy campaign tagged ‘Building a Learning Society initiative’. According to Mallam Rabiu Kwankwaso, the State Governor, the mass literacy campaign is “aimed at ensuring that every adult in the rural and urban areas of the state becomes literate by 2015” (Ehiabhi, 2012). In terms of campaign strategies, the each-one-teach-one or fund-the-teaching-of-one (EOTO or FOTO) has been widely used.

The Policy

There is also a strong policy structure to support adult literacy and numeracy provisions. Mass literacy, adult and non-formal education is contained in section 7 of the National Policy on Education, 2004. The policy defines Mass literacy, adult and non formal education as encompassing “all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education (FGN, 2004, p. 36). The objectives of adult and mass literacy as stated in the policy are as follow:

1. To provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the opportunity of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, the disable and other categories or groups. Especially the disadvantaged gender
2. To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education
3. To provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills
4. To provide in-service and on-the-job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills and
5. To give the adult citizens of the country aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment (FGN, 2004, p. 19).

There is a tripartite administrative framework in the implementation of the policy on adult literacy education in the country. At the head of the structure is the National Commission for Mass Education which is in charge of policy, monitoring and evaluation of literacy programmes, standard and quality control, development of curricular and didactic material, personnel training and collaboration with Non Governmental Organisations and International Development Agencies. Each state has a Mass Literacy Agency with responsibilities for policy implementation at state level, planning and research and coordination of state based NGOs as well as “provide support services for adult and non-formal education including curriculum development, mobile and rural libraries, television viewing and audio-listening centres, and studio –visual teaching and learning aids” (FGN 2004, 38). All the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) have adult education unit that sees to the day-to-day control and administration of local mass literacy and adult education programme. This tripartite arrangement reflects the three tier structure of governance in the country.

The seemingly extensive policy provision on mass literacy, adult and non formal education appears in tandem with the position of Faure et al (1972), when they declared that illiteracy is an aspect of underdevelopment and as such, literacy training should form an integral part of any development undertaking. Providers of adult literacy education include government, religious institutions, nongovernmental organisations, International Development Agencies, Trade Unions and Employers of Labour (Garuba, 2007).

Nigeria has had a long a long history of mass literacy campaigns starting from 1940s. The campaigns have been of long term duration. Prominent among these are the 1974-1982 and 1982-1992. Despite a developed adult education and successive but largely unsuccessful literacy campaign strategies the problem of illiteracy in Nigeria has been very intractable (Omolowa, 1988). In its bid to further address the adult literacy issue in the country, the government has started a programme of revitalisation of adult and youth literacy in collaboration with UNESCO. The project aims to “educate 4 to 5 million illiterate adults and 2 million out-of-school children over the next three years” (UNESCO, 2012; p. 2).

Generally, adult literacy programmes have always been primer based with strong emphasis on enrolment and participation of adults in literacy centres. It has always been the provider determining the nature and content of what is to be
learned by adult literacy learners. Even in the ongoing revitalisation of youth
and adult literacy programme, there is still emphasis on production of literacy
primers. As a matter of fact, part of the strategic framework for the programme
is to produce about 5million primers and textbook for use of instructors
(UNESCO, 2012). The problem with primer based literacy is that the learner is
virtually isolated from the learning content. The primer leaves too little role for
the learner in the teaching-learning instruction as the teacher assumes full
responsibility for the determination and interpretation of the learning content.

University Adult Education and Literacy Practice
Nigeria can be said to have a developed and vibrant adult education movement
with a long history of andragogy at higher education level especially when
considered against the limitations imposed by human and material resources.
University adult education actually started with the establishment of the then
Extra Mural Studies department (now the Department of Adult Education) at the
University of Ibadan in 1949. The department was saddled with the
responsibility of grappling with the problems of adult education throughout the
country … [and] to make a large section of the country as possible university –
conscious” (Anyanyi, 1987, p. 119). In addition to being the first Department of
Adult Education on the Continent, the department was the host of 1991
International Conference of the Committee for Study and Research in
Comparative Adult Education, (CSRCAE), the precursor of ISCAE and a winner
of the UNESCO International Reading Association Literacy Price in 1989.
Presently, not less than thirteen other universities in the country run programmes
ranging from certificate to doctoral degrees in adult and non formal education.
These universities and the scholars have contributed very immensely to
development and research in adult literacy education in the continent of Africa.

In addition to research, scholarship and personnel preparation, universities
have, through their extension services contributed greatly to the promotion of
ALN in Nigeria. A typical example is the University Village Association
(UNJAVA concept developed by the University of Ibadan.

Comparing Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in Nigeria and Scotland
From the brief adult literacy and numeracy profile of Nigeria and Scotland
presented earlier sections of the paper, it is clear that there are glaring
dissimilarities in the conception and practice of adult literacy. In Table 1 below
attempt is made to juxtapose literacy policy and practice in the two countries
with emphasis on the major points of departure between the two in key areas of
literacy.

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>SCOTLAND</th>
<th>NIGERIA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>A clear policy with a clear statement of objective and modalities for implementation</td>
<td>A general education policy with a section on mass literacy and adult education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Policy matched with implementation</td>
<td>Gulf between policy provision and implementation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A bottom up arrangement that promotes participation across all stakeholders</td>
<td>Usual top down approach with literacy conceived and delivered for ‘illiterates’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In addition to IALS four research projects commissioned to inform the new policy</td>
<td>Social policy rarely benefits from research as there is a wide gap between researching institutions and policy makers and implementers who continue to operate within the national bureaucratic structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conception of literacy</td>
<td>Social practice, embedded within other learning activities as well as other individual or community engagements</td>
<td>Traditional with emphasis on literacy and numeracy as skills. Emphasis on textual literacy and numeracy Primer based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners Participation</td>
<td>Programme designed with learners and essentially based on identified needs and circumstances of individuals</td>
<td>Designed for learners with instructor practicing within prescribed curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Full of diversity and provide options to meet learner needs and aspirations of learners</td>
<td>Traditional with focus on acquisition of basic skills of reading and writing, lack of curriculum content that speaks directly to the experiences of people Apparently for noninvolvement of the learner, the curriculum does not speak directly to the experience and unique needs of people without literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training and professional development for literacy tutors</td>
<td>Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnerships offer introductory training in adult literacies work in each local authority area. Training programmes lead to certificate in Tutoring Numeracy in Adult Literacies. There is also the Teaching Qualification: Adult Literacies (TQAL) Certificates recognised within national qualification framework</td>
<td>Training essentially on ad-hoc basis provided for the newly employed literacy instructor usually by organizers of the programme with a certificate of participation issued to participants at the end of training c. Certificate obtained at the re-skilling of existing basic education teachers to teach literacy on part-time basis d. Universities and some other tertiary institutions offer certificate, diploma, graduate and postgraduate programmes in adult education but such programmes are more academic than field-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Teaching</td>
<td>Involved of highly educated with majority being degree holders</td>
<td>Mainly secondary school leavers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and institutional arrangement</td>
<td>Adult literacies project located within Communities Scotland with Learning Connection as the anchor structure Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnerships form nucleus of organisation at the local level and this enable wider reach as literacies learners are accessed closed to (or even in)</td>
<td>Adult and non formal education sections of ministries of education at the Federal and State levels. There is a National Commission for Mass Literacy at the centre A Mass Literacy Agency in each of the 32 states and the FCT</td>
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</table>
Scotland conception and practice of adult literacy falls within the social practice model with its emphasis on literacy learning that emerge from issues which learners on their own, have identified as important and key to their social living. In contrast with Nigeria that still operates within primer based model of literacy education which tends to isolate the learner from the content and use of learning experience, the Scottish literacy model forges a potential link between literacy development and capability enhancement. The Scottish model provides flexible learning options that respond to diverse contexts, needs and aspirations of the adults and consequently make learning worthwhile.

Borrower-Lender Imbalance between Nigeria and Scotland

It may be pertinent to first address the issue of comparability of Scotland and Nigeria. A major basis for international comparison is borrowing. Borrowing is premised on the fact that “learning from international experiences abroad helps to adapt foreign experiences to one’s own practice, avoids repeating mistakes and “reinventing the wheel” (Reischmann, 2005, p. 137). However there is usually the problem of adaptability of foreign experience to local peculiarities which, at the end may see borrowing constituting a problem rather than solution to development policy. Thus caution has to be exercised when it comes to borrowing from experience especially when it is done on wholesale basis.

In the particular case of Nigeria and Scotland, it is not in doubt that the two belong to two different sides of global divide. While Scotland belongs in the category of countries of the North, Nigeria is in the South. There is the usual assumption that most countries of the North are economically superior to their counterparts in the South as being in the south is tantamount to being economically deficient and dependent - on the North - (Preece, 2009). Generally countries of the North are associated with better social policy infrastructure and strong commitment to policy implementation. This tends to present a kind of borrower-lender relationship between the two sides of global divides with the former being the lender and the latter as facts from the country situations presented earlier in this paper tend to reveal that the latter has much to offer and this is the stark reality we shall be facing as we highlight on the lessons Nigeria can learn from Scotland dynamic approach to adult literacy and numeracy learning.

Tab. 1: Comparison Key of Elements of Adult Literacy Programme Scotland and Nigeria

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Each of the 774 Local Government Areas has Adult Education and Community Development Unit</th>
<th>There is strong presence and participation of NGOs and IDAs, EEC, UNDP, UNESCO</th>
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<td>Borrower-Lender Imbalance between Nigeria and Scotland</td>
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For Nigeria and Scotland, this borrower-lender imbalance can be quite apparent given the fact that the former was a British colony and there is still a considerable measure of British influence around. As a matter of fact, English is not only the official language but remains the language of wider interaction. It is not unusual for scholars to allude to the problems of Nigerian education to its colonial past. Not even when the nation made a bold step of ‘changing’ from the British system to 6.3.3.4 education of American orientation. Nigeria still remains strongly tied to western influence as “Certain historical antecedents have impact on how educational policies are formulated and implemented in the country” (Fabunmi, 2005: 3). Though as earlier alluded, borrowing is not supposed to be a one-way traffic, Nigeria has continued to be a passive recipient of educational ideas and policies from Britain and other countries of the North. This is not surprising as “the West’s monopolistic control over the nature and the flows of knowledge remains in place, even decades after colonized territories achieved political independence and nationhood” (Takayamaa, and Apple, 2008; p. 290).

Be that as it may, one can still not gloss over the fact that a comparative analysis of adult literacy practices in Nigeria and Scotland will serve to enrich the latter as facts from the country situations presented earlier in this paper tend to reveal that the latter has much to offer and this is the stark reality we shall be facing as we highlight on the lessons Nigeria can learn from Scotland dynamic approach to adult literacy and numeracy learning.

**LESSONS FOR NIGERIA**

As rightly pointed by Merrifield (2005):

> a grand experiment is going on in Scotland, one of the most dynamic and exciting places in the world right now to be an adult literacy or numeracy practitioner. The rest of us can only watch (with envy perhaps) as the story unfolds. So far, there is much to encourage us that a social practices approach can be operationalised not just within the classroom but at a national policy level… We all have much to learn and Scotland is helping move the whole field forward (p. 22)

There is no doubting the fact that the literacy and numeracy model as currently designed and implemented in Scotland holds a lot of promises for Nigeria in her present efforts to universalise access to basic education and promote an inclusive society where individuals’ capacities and capabilities are brightened and broadened. However, wholesale or full scale adoption of the Scotland practice may be unrealistic as it may be grossly unfair and mistaken to use the lens of Scotland to gauge Nigeria literacy policy and practices. The point however, remains that Nigeria adult literacy policy and practice needs to be aligned with global reality, a reality which Scotland has not only aligned with (through the adoption and implementation of social literacies approach) but she is facing headlong. Scotland social literacies approach to adult literacy and numeracy thus offers a lot of lessons and promises to Nigeria. Some of these are highlighted below.
1. The first major lesson which Nigeria has to learn from Scotland approach to literacy that research is of great essence in design of social policy. As earlier stated, the Scottish model benefited extensively from research. This is unlike in Nigeria where there is a gulf between research and practice and between research institutions and policy makers. As posited by Adelakun (2012), “except a pragmatic approach is taken to promote the application of research findings to development, attainment of the goals of adult and non formal education will be a mirage” (p. 12).

2. The starting point for Nigeria in the implementation of social practices model of literacy and numeracy is to conduct a Learning Need Assessment (LNA) of adults (including the vulnerable or disadvantaged ones) with limited or no literacy and numeracy skill. Just as the IALS was the beginning for Scotland, LNA may be our own take off point as it will serve to provide detailed information and required data for planning and decision making on the appropriate step to take to address the literacy issue in the country. LNA is not about assessment of literacy level but about knowing what the adult needs to know as a basis for literacy and numeracy intervention. A well designed and executed LNA makes ALN to respond to perceived needs of participants.

3. There is the need for more learner involvement in choice of what, when and where to learn. The choice of what to learn should essentially be that of the learner. The teacher is only to guide the learner and facilitate learning though the instrumentality of a curriculum that speaks directly to the learner and his/her peculiar needs.

4. It is also high time Nigeria revisited her vocational and technical education programmes. With a strong traditional apprenticeship culture in most parts of the country, what is needed is a restructure of the National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) to allow for revaluation of qualifications and certificates obtained through apprenticeship to be contained within the national qualification framework. Here the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) can be especially relevant.

5. There is the need for an integrated programme of awareness and confidence building that will see to (1) identification of literacy issues in the community and (2) re orientation of adults with literacy and numeracy needs and other stakeholders in the Nigerian project on the essence of literacy. With this, stigma associated with illiteracy will be contained. To this end, the Big Plus strategy in Scotland offers another evidence of best practice and is hereby commended for adoption to Nigeria. As usual, necessary modification that will suit our local peculiarities will have to be carried out.

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**Conclusion and Recommendation**

This paper attempts a discussion of the transferability of Scotland Social Literacies approach to Nigeria. At the risk of getting drowned by challenges associated with wholesale importation of education idea and policies, the paper contends that in the context of Nigeria’s low rate of literacy achievement and the wider issues of poverty and social exclusion, a new approach that revisits the concepts of literacy and growth is desirable. Adult literacy has gone far beyond the old traditional way of explaining it as mechanical skill of reading and writing. The emphasis now is on the Social Uses of Literacy (SoUL).

There is the need for a closer link to be forged between policy makers and existing education research centres and institutes like the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council as a step towards a more research informed policies in the country. Establishment of a National Institute for Research in Adult and Lifelong Learning (NIRALL) to perform the role similar to that of the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) performs in UK. Among others, NRDC “aims to improve practice in adult literacy, language and numeracy teaching and learning by creating a strong research culture and by developing professional practice” (NRDC, 2012) through collaboration and partnership with universities, institutes and other organisations with stakes in adult literacy.

In the context of Nigeria’s low rate of literacy achievement and wider issues of poverty and social malaise, a new approach that revisits concepts of literacy and growth is desirable especially given the fact that in spite of huge government expenditure on adult literacy and numeracy, the literacy rate of the country is still only 56.9% and women form the majority of the illiterate population. As the country is currently revitalising its adult literacy provisions, it behoves the government to look beyond the existing traditional primer based model of literacy education which tends to isolate the learner from the content of learning. Perhaps a little glance at the Scottish way might make the difference.

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**The Validation and Recognition of Prior Learning (VRPL) in France, Spain and Italy**

**Introduction**

The objective of this paper is to analyze similarities and diverging and converging trends in validation policies, practices and methodologies. This is why this reflection aims at characterizing European validation of non-formal and informal learning, to evaluate differences and commonalities between countries, precisely France, Spain and Italy to consider the potential for building a European approach. We present a cross-country analysis whose aim is to look at validation not only from a national perspective but also from an organizational and individual perspective. Key issues such as the number of people who have benefited from validation and / or the number of qualifications awarded for example are also covered. The domination of formal education is challenged when VRPL provides new possibilities for valuing learning and knowledge from informal and non-formal learning contexts. In some countries there may be structural barriers when a project needs to be expanded to a national level or be embedded in the apparatus of the educational system.

Mainly based on the information provided in the 2010 country updates, it is possible to group the countries according to their level of development or the approach they have taken to the development or implementation of a validation system – either centrally designed and managed validation initiatives or those which fundamentally rely on local project based initiatives. If all descriptive and analytical elements on categorisations however have clear limitations and do not take account of the often complex and multi-faceted situations at national level, however the VRPL can be regarded as a vector making it possible to build bridges between various forms of cultures - of an educational, economic or social nature - resulting from behaviors and representations of the historically rooted actors, finally like the source of convergences or divergences.

**European context of the Validation of Recognition of Prior Learning**

The process of Recognition of Prior Learning is recognised as an important tool in the pursuit of economic and social goals at European level. Moreover, the long-term commitment to validation has been recently reinforced by the revised Strategic Framework for Cooperation in Education and Training until 2020 (adopted in 2009) identified ‘making lifelong learning a reality’ as one of its four