



READING ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

(An Affiliate of the International Reading Association; Member, IDC-Africa)



10TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

**“LITERACY: HEADWATERS FOR EDUCATIONAL, PROFESSIONAL
AND ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENT”**

April 17-20, 2006

University of Port Harcourt & The Adolescent Project
Port Harcourt, Rivers State

END OF CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUÉ

The Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN), working to develop literacy in Nigeria (since 1983 as an affiliate of the International Reading Association), held its 10th Biennial Conference - with a Reading Tent/Pre-Conference Workshop for Teachers- from the 17th to the 20th of April, at the University of Port Harcourt and The Adolescent Project, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The theme of the conference was - **LITERACY: HEADWATERS FOR EDUCATIONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENT**. The following communiqué was released at the end of the conference, following intensive presentation of papers and exhaustive discussion of issues arising from the presentations.

1. Reading can never be overemphasized in schools as it is the centre of all learning and education achievement. Reading development is hindered in Nigerian schools by its absence on the curriculum as a separate teaching subject and by lack of flexibility in implementing the curriculum. Even when the modules and textbooks suggest activities, projects and other active learning, these are not followed through because of pressure to achieve the day's target content or lack of appropriate instructional skills. Educational authorities are therefore urged to provide for reading as a subject on the school time table and to encourage flexibility in instruction (Reading across the curriculum).
2. The reading components of the pre-service teacher training curricula in colleges of education, universities and National Teacher's Institute are grossly inadequate and out of touch with international practice. There is need to inject them with a rich repertoire of reading and literacy development strategies and lessons. Reading should be promoted out of the periphery to the centerpiece of curriculum development at the pre-service teacher training level, especially for basic education teachers (KG to JSS 3).
3. A mandatory schedule of in-service training in reading and literacy development skill for serving teachers should be commenced as a matter of urgency. Each teacher should be exposed to a minimum of two of such in-services in each academic year.
4. Lack of stimulating reading materials in adequate varieties and numbers constitutes a major impediment to reading and literacy development in primary schools, which

often lack libraries of any description. Public schools lack print-rich environment. Yet many of the few Nigerian children's books of high quality are no longer in print by publishers who show disproportionately far more interest in doing textbooks than leisure reading books. Government and school owners should be encouraged to invest more in making trade books and other leisure reading materials available to children in schools and communities. **Development of school and community libraries should be a priority.** RAN and ANA (Association of Nigerian Authors) should work with Government and publishers to have the extinct Nigerian classics back into print.

5. Digital literacy should be pursued with equal vigour to ensure that Nigerian children become functional constituents of the digital age. Government and the Nigerian Communications Commission should encourage digital communication companies to make the provision of services to rural and urban schools and communities part of their corporate social responsibilities.
6. The World Bank/UBE/ RAN PEP II project has produced a corps of highly trained literacy trainers and a versatile manual for in-service and pre-service training of teachers on literacy development. The manual's emphasis on critical literacy, multi-cultural literacy and literacy across the curriculum make it a cutting edge document for the renewal of literacy education in Nigerian schools at all levels. The Federal government is urged to extend these resources to teachers and communities all over the country. In particular, the 16 states with World Bank/UBE loans, as well as other states in the country, are strongly urged to buy into this reservoir of reading and literacy development know-how to achieve radical improvement in literacy instruction in their schools.
7. Every 8th of September is World Literacy Day. Governments at all levels should partner with Reading Association of Nigeria and other relevant NGOs to use that occasion to breathe fresh life into literacy development in the country, not only by massively creating awareness through the mass media, but also by direct intervention in reading and literacy activities in schools and in-services for teaches.
8. RAN deeply appreciates the support and collaboration of donor agencies and corporate organizations in Nigeria in the last six years. We want to put on record the substantial support of the **Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO**, the **Rivers State Government**, the **Nigerian Communications Commission**, the **British Council**, the **Education Tax Fund**, and **UNICEF**. We wish to seize this opportunity to appeal to these and other organizations and governments to raise the tempo of such collaboration and support with a view to taking literacy development in Nigeria's rural and urban areas to the next level.

Signed

Dr. Obiajulu Emejulu
President

Ijeoma Arguba
Secretary.