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**Literacy and Sustainable National Development: A Tripod of Intervention**

Literacy has evolved as an essential means building people's knowledge, skills and competencies to cope with the evolving challenges and complexities of life, culture, economy and societal development. It is an indispensable foundation of learning opportunities in the rapidly changing world. Hence, it is a trite knowledge that globally, there is a growing importance in the recognition of the multiple dimensions and evolving nature of literacy, with new literacies and patterns of learning emerging, particularly using digital technologies. Succinctly, literacy is a national development instrument which no nation can ignore; thus the title of this inaugural lecture: **Literacy and Sustainable National Development: A Tripod of Intervention.**

The lecture assessed the global and national trends in literacy conceptualisation, development and initiatives; and this led to the exploration of the emergence of the three intervention tripods (commissions) in Nigeria; namely the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) and the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE). A critical assessment of the policies, programmes and methodological approaches adopted by these commissions for the promotion of literacy provisions in Nigeria were engaged. Besides, there was an insightful identification of challenges confronting the commissions, with a view to providing plausible solutions. The identified challenges were lack of appropriate collaboration and cooperation among the commissions, lack of funds, lop-sidedness in budgetary allocation, poor citizen engagement among many others. The contributions of the inaugural lecture to scholarship, literacy (and open distance learning) promotion as well as national development as an academia and principal actor in policy formulation and implementation were enunciated.

Though, literacy has been recognised as a tool for sustainable national development by successive government in Nigeria, there are evidences that most of the expectations from the promotion of literacy as enhancer of national development have not been met. This is therefore to say that regardless of the tripod (UBE, NMEC and NCNE) intervention, literacy as failed to play its part in meeting the developmental needs of Nigeria. This is evident in the increasing rate of children of nomads and migrant fisher folks (3 million), almajirai (9 million) and children (6 million) who are unable to transit from primary to secondary schools as well as adult illiterates (50 million) and out-of-school children (7.7

million). Based on disappointing contribution of literacy provision to the developmental needs of Nigeria, this lecture, therefore, proposed as follows:

- A Ministry of Basic Education, with the three commissions as special operational departments, be established without further delay,
- Each of the 2019 presidential candidates must make literacy for all a cardinal campaign programme,
- The year 2021 to 2025 be declared as campaign for “Free Nigerians from Illiteracy”
- A university from each of the six geo-political zones to be adopted as literacy research and documentation centre, to actualise the “Free Nigerians from Illiteracy” campaign, and
- While the CFR percentage to UBEC be increased to 5% and shared among the tripod proportionately given considerations for their different tasks.