**Report of the Children’s Centre Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka on School/ Prison Library Activities for the Year 2017**

**By**

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This year, the Children’s Centre Library organized several activities with the **“Most Vulnerable”**- the prison inmates and the physically challenged.

**Rationale for organizing a programme “Most Vulnerable”**

Access to information and educational activities is fundamental human rights of all people, including “Most Vulnerable”-the prison inmates and the physically challenged. Individual citizens need to build up varieties of skills—including reading, writing and creative skills in order to realize the advantages of lifelong learning. These skills therefore need to foster in both prison inmates and physically challenged so as to enable them to effectively participate in the society.

***The Prison inmates***

For the inmates, training ushers in a reformation as well as rehabilitation to them; encouraging them during their jail terms to prepare for a time when they will be free. The significance of training is to encourage them to develop and become self-confident, become socially stable and reasonable individuals and build their skills of entrepreneurship.

When individuals are adequately knowledgeable and equipped for task ahead of them with the apt readiness required of them, they develop as autonomous agents capable of fully contributing in the society. The aim of establishing the prison institution in any part of the world is basically to provide an opportunity of rehabilitation for those who break the rules and regulations of their society.

Training of people behind the bar is not only a means of supporting offenders in their transition from prison to the outside world; it is a right for all and prisoners should not forfeit this right to access education while in prison more especially through the information repackages of the prison libraries. This informed the decision to organize a literacy programme in Nsukka and Awka reformatories respectively.

***Prison Library Workshops***

Week1: The programme kicked off on Wednesday, 22nd February with a view to develop literacy and creative writing skills of the inmates and was meant to last for about 3--4 months. Mr. Joseph, the prison library officer was readily available to organize inmates for the programme. Inmates were selected purposively based on interest.

* The programme started with 15 prison inmates who were introduced to the aim of the programme and the need for them to get involved in the programme.
* The next was making of pocket book and creation of biography. Participants were paired to interview each other and write the other person’s biography in a pocket book. For pocket books procedure, inmates were given a plain sheet of paper, a pencil, a cleaner and a sharpener each and paired after which they were asked to interview each other on their life history—name, age, place of birth, address, phone number, academic qualifications, sex, goals and ambitions, hobbies, religion, position in the family, family background.
* After the interview, participants were taught how to fold the paper to make eight pages to make a pocket book and write a biography of the person they interviewed. This produced positive results as they began to acquire skills for interview, social, communication skills.

Observation however showed that many of them were literate enough hence the need for the programme. Participants were assigned one comic book to read and make a summary of it, and then present for in the next meeting for discussion.

Week 2 : The following week was for discussion of the stories read and the difficulties encountered. The next was introduction to comic book writing. Individuals were grouped to read comic books, notice the story, characters, use of dialogue, drawing style, panels and then present back to the general group. The next was drawing of lines and shapes; turning these into faces, houses, and different other items, and creation of word balloons: making dialog and fixing it in word balloons and creation of comic panels; discussion of comic stories—beginning, middle, end. Participants were asked to make a comic of the story discussed in class to submit the coming week

Week 3: Discussion of the comics created and sharing of ideas

Inmates are allowed to discuss and creating stories of superheroes: individuals who bring about changes in the society; not necessarily imaginary characters. They were allowed, after drilling, to take the assignment to their cell

Week 4: Creating stories of outer world—folktales, Bible stories, news events, life after prison

Inmates were assigned to develop an outline or preliminary sketch of selected comic book story

Participants were guided to develop their own story and present into comics.

Week 5: Creating stories about the neighborhood and trending events: societal issues, news stories, personal experience—family, education, work, prison experience, or experience heard or learnt. The stories created are discussed and

Week 6: assignment of the final comics

***Train-the-Trainer Workshop (on Comic Writing for literacy Development)***

This was a 3-day intensive literacy and creative writing workshop aimed at developing prisoners’ basic literacy skills through the core activity of creating comic books. Facilitated by Prof. V.W. Dike, the programme lasted from September 26 to 27, 2017. Ngozi Osadebe, Gace Onyebuchi and Anthony Izuchukwu were the resource persons.

This programme was envisaged as a train-the-trainers workshop targeting the welfare officers in charge of prison libraries and educational programmes, together with locally-based librarians. When equipped with these skills, participants would be able to conduct similar workshops on a continuing basis with inmates in the various prisons of Anambra State.

The aim of the comic books writing was for individuals to exercise their creativity and self-development, becoming independent learners as well as gain the entrepreneurial skills required for successful living in today’s world.

**Participants**

Those who participated were

1. Welfare officers in charge of prison libraries (to be selected by NPS, Anambra State)

2. Librarians from institutions located near the prisons (to be selected by organizers)

**Day 1 – Mon., Oct. 16**

Introduction of programme: Introductions; What is literacy and creative writing?

Pocket book and biography creation – Participants will be paired to interview each other and write the other person’s biography in a pocket book. As much as possible a prison officer and librarian from the same location will be paired to help them get acquainted for future workshops.

Snacks

Introduction to comic books – Group activity reading comic books, noticing the story, characters, use of dialogue, drawing style, panels. Each group will present for a mark.

Drawing of lines and shapes; turning these into faces, houses, etc.

Lunch

Creation of word balloons: making dialog and fixing it in word balloons

Assignment: Participants to think of an idea for a comic book they’ll write, sketching out the story and characters. Could be something from their lives, a story from real life, a fantasy, etc. Ideas to be presented Tues.

**Day 2 - Tues., Oct. 17**

Making bookmarks, using anything of interest to them

Assigning roles in comic books; character making

Creation of comic panels; discussion of comic stories—beginning, middle, end

Snack

Discuss Mon’s assignment on story ideas

Creating stories of superheroes

Lunch

Creating stories of outer world—folktales, Bible stories, news events, life after prison

Assignment: Develop an outline or preliminary sketch of selected comic book story

**Day 3 - Wed., Oct. 18**

Creating stories about the neighborhood and trending events: societal issues, news stories, personal experience—family, education, work, prison experience, etc.

Discussion of stories and beginning final draft

Final write-up

Presentation of final productions and Certificates

This result of this programme generally was enthusiasm brought about by their involvement in the learning pocket books, book marks, art, and comic writing. The participants were also introduced to drawing and painting as well as story making, with which they were able to transform the knowledge and experience into making of comics. They benefited in the world book day also since March 1 was the right time to take literacy to the most vulnerable ones like them.

***The Physically Challenged and the World Book Day***

The physically challenged also needed to get involved in the world book day. Makerspace was created in their school to realize this. The result was also more of enthusiasm brought about by their involvement in the learning art, sporting activities, games, crafts, knitting, sewing, drumming, weaving, carpentry, shoe making and puzzle building. With this, children were happy to participate in the world book day.