

Application of the Integrated Teaching Strategy (ITS) for Children with Learning Difficulties in Bayelsa State

Tony E. Ganagana

Department of Educational Foundations, Niger Delta University,
NIGERIA.

drtganagana2006@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The paper examined the Integrated Teaching Strategy (ITS) and to what extent it could ameliorate learning difficulties among children. The paper further assessed the effectiveness of the strategy in tackling illiteracy among children. A workshop organised by the Association of Productive Empirical Psychologists of Nigeria (APEPN) in Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa state of Nigeria, resulted in the direct application of the teaching strategy on children identified with the problem of literacy in the elementary schools. The workshop concluded with the findings that the Integrated Teaching Strategy (ITS) is an effective approach for the remedy of learning difficulties especially illiteracy. It was therefore strongly recommended for teachers to apply it from time to time when handling learning problems.

Keywords: Teaching, difficulties, integrated, constructivism

INTRODUCTION

Learning difficulties are common among little children. This is natural because they are growing persons. Usually, time is required of them to master their developmental and learning tasks. What is unnatural is that a child did not learn or master learning tasks specific to his age. In schools, children are given experiences that would help them to overcome learning difficulties. Often times, most children are able to do so, straightaway, given that opportunity, but a handful of them may require additional attention if they must brace up like others. This is where learning difficulties are observed. In Bayelsa State, as in other states of the federation, the experience is always similar. An accumulation of learning difficulties results to illiteracy. This paper examines illiteracy among children as a special form of learning difficulty and how it can be tackled by the integrated teaching strategy (ITS). The Integrated Teaching Strategy (ITS) is a combination of strategies, the main of which are the use of projectors, feeding subsidies and peer teaching. ITS is therefore designed to solve learning problems in the classroom including illiteracy.

The level of illiteracy in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria is astronomically high. This has become a serious set-back to the development of the Niger Delta people. The Niger Delta area is made of only six states of the thirty-six states in Nigeria. These are the states that spread along the Nigeria's coastal area of the Atlantic Ocean. Exploitative oil activities cause serious disservice and prevent many from active schooling and purposeful training for maximal self-development. Most educational problems are often left to increase in their trends in this area, among them is illiteracy. As a learning difficulty, illiteracy is a concept that portrays the inability to read, spell, and write as well as to comprehend and carry out allied skills, effectively. It has been identified that the children are more highly affected in this regard.

The fact that many young people enjoy enviable financial benefits, without necessarily, possessing equivalent training or educational background gives room for less attitudinal orientation towards school learning, and this seems to have had a ripple effect on the educational ambition and participation of children in this area. More so, governments in this area exhibit some lackadaisical attitude towards education which culminates into neglect and the rendering of elementary schools into mere traditional classrooms, with no modern facilities. This actually makes it difficult for most learning problems of children to be effectively handled. Hence, the illiteracy level in this area is estimated at 40%, which does not fall in tandem with the global declaration of education for all. Besides, the teachers in this area are grossly less motivated in their profession because of lack of government attention and delays in salary payment (Okokoro, 2012). They appear quite amenable to their professional responsibilities if given the enabling environment. Thus, there are concerted efforts made by the teachers, themselves, and other stakeholders, aimed at improving teaching-learning in the schools in this area amidst daunting challenges.

One of such efforts is the improvement of reading and writing skills among children, and the reduction of the illiteracy level in this area. Thus, as an antidote the use of the Integrated Teaching Strategy (ITS) by the teachers in classroom instructions is recommended.

THE INTEGRATED TEACHING STRATEGY (ITS)

The Integrated teaching strategy (ITS) is the introduction of modern technology and socio-scientific approach to the traditional method of teaching. It is therefore a comprehensive method of teaching in the classroom. This involves the combined use of modern electronic gadgets, such as the computers, audio-visuals, radios, micro-phones, film strips, cartoons, galvanized teaching aids and other instructional materials as well as psychological approach and socio-interactive effectiveness in the classroom. It was hoped that utilizing the media (projectors, radio, computers, tv sets etc.) and socio-dynamic indices in teaching-learning would be plausible in ameliorating learning difficulties, and particularly, illiteracy.

The introduction of modern scientific discoveries into the realm of traditional teaching is commonly referred to as integrating technology in teaching, which is part of the Integrated Teaching Strategy. According to Armstrong (2012), integrating technology is a response to the “21st century learning challenges”. It is described as a vision of using technology for empowered, self-directed learning. Furthermore, Armstrong stated that the use of integrating technology will not only improve learning but also curriculum development. This is because integrating technology will lead to technology pedagogical content knowledge or TRACK framework (Armstrong, 2012). The Integrated Teaching Strategy (ITS), as more comprehensive, enhances constructivism in learning. Constructivism is the process whereby the students construct their own knowledge through collaboration and inquiry-based learning.

Integrated Teaching Strategy (ITS) is believed to be a teaching method that would enhance student’s retention and deeper self-reflection of learned materials. This is so because students now can compulsorily play an active role in their own learning and produce meaningful works in order to develop a clear understanding of learning materials (Piaget, 1964).

RELATED LITERATURE

The use of the media (projectors, radio, computer and Tv sets) had been adjudged in literature to be effective means of learning especially among children (Asita, 2011). According to Brown (1973), the creative use of variety of media increases the probability that the student would learn more, retain better and improve on their performance on the skills that they are

expected to develop. Bariya(2000) observed that the lack of use of computer in government schools has brought decline in pupils' performance.

Feeding subsidies, in schools have always been observed to result to improved academic performance. Iddrisu (2005), Boateng (2009) and Gunde (2010) noted that school feeding in Ugandan secondary schools had proved to be highly effective in raising the students' performance recorded in that country. Etsey (2008) also observed that free feeding in schools has helped to strengthen students' performance and enthusiasm of primary school pupils in the sub-metro of Sharma Ahanta East Metropolitan area of Ghana. In the same vein, Nimrod (2009), Drake (2008), Kakanawa (2010) and Nnamdi (2010), all observed that there was an improved academic performance of the school pupils when free feeding was introduced in Kenya, Zambia, Uganda and Nigeria respectively. Earlier, Weitzman (1986) had reported that the introduction of U.S. school breakfast programme dramatically shot up pupils' test scores and therefore, recommended that developing countries should apply same strategy for better learning results. Besides, McGregor (2000) suggested that where majority of the pupils are from extremely poor backgrounds, school feeding programme will greatly improve learning and academic performance of pupils.

Besides, peer group factor presents variety of influences on both the attitude and academic performance of pupils in teaching-learning process. Harris (2009) noted that peer group support programmes are extremely beneficial. They assist children to learn better. In their study, Mashburn, Justice, Drowner and Pianta (2009) observed active peer influence in pre-kindergarten children's language achievement. Similarly, Tanta, Deitz, White and Bilinsley (1997) found in their study that there was an improvement in the social response patterns of pre-school children with peer interaction.

All of these were thus explored in this paper so as to examine their combined effects on the children's literacy development. Peer tutoring or teaching was specifically introduced because it was believed that this would naturally capture the interests of the affected pupils and motivate them for better learning.

LEARNING PROBLEMS IN NIGER DELTA

As earlier noted, learning problems, generally, are prevalent in the Niger Delta in which illiteracy assumes a higher dimension. Bayelsa State is a core state in the Niger Delta area. Although, the level of literacy in Nigeria is comparatively low, yet, that of the Niger Delta is the worst hit and most appalling. Ada-George (1994) earlier estimated it to be as low as 40%. The situation is even fast degenerating with the militancy era in the Niger Delta. According to Dubabo (2009), the literacy level of the Niger Delta States can be compared to the situation in the most under-developed states in the colonial era. It is a truism to state here that there are a lot of factors which must be tackled when making attempts to handle the problem of illiteracy in an area (Ada-George, 1994). These range from poor infrastructural facilities to lack of funds to execute various projects as well as embarking on capacity building for effective literacy.

Internally, it has been identified that of the six states (Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-Rivers, Delta, Edo and Rivers) that made up the Niger Delta area, only Akwa-Ibom and Edo States are known to be "Educationally advantaged", the rest are considered as educationally disadvantaged". More glaring is the fact that Bayelsa State is the least in literacy level. As an illustration, table 1 indicated the levels of literacy in each of the states in the Niger Delta area.

Table 1. Literacy level in the six states of the Niger Delta

S.No.	States	Population	Level of literacy (%)
1.	Akwa-ibom	3,902,051	24.80
2.	Bayelsa	1,704,515	9.69
3.	Cross-river	2,892,988	10.33
4.	Delta	4,112,445	13.53
5.	Edo	3,233,366	30.12
6.	Rivers	5,198,716	11.53

Source: Academic Planning Consultants (2005), Nigerian National Population Commission (2006)

Table 1 showed a clear picture of the literacy levels in each of the states with Bayelsa State most affected. Cross-River and Rivers States also presented a curious situation of low level of literacy in the area even though not to the degree of the former.

LOCALE OF STUDY

The focus of study in this paper is Bayelsa State. Bayelsa State is one of the major oil producing states in the Niger Delta area of Southern Nigeria. It is comparatively a new state which was created in 1996. It is located at latitude 04° 15 North, 05° 23 South and longitude 05° 22 West, 06° 45 East of the Equator. It has eight local Government Areas among which are Brass, Ekeremor, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Nembe, Ogbia, Sagbama, Southern-Ijaw and Yenagoa Local Government Areas.

Bayelsa State is constituted of a riverine and estuarine setting. Thus, the state has a peculiar terrain in that majority of the communities that made up the state are almost (and in some cases) completely surrounded by water. This makes accessibility very difficult.

THE CASE OF BAYELSA STATE

Bayelsa State, according to Abowei (2000), is the least developed of all the states in Nigeria, lacking in any form of developmental amenities and infrastructures. Though, oil producing, yet the impact of modernization and the source of oil wealth for the nation has not been felt in the state.

This gloomy, dismal picture of the state in terms of development is prevalent in every sector of the economy. Thus, the same trend can be recorded of educational development in the state. Oduma (2004) described the state of education in Bayelsa state as deplorable. The general observation is that most primary and secondary schools lack facilities. Apart from lack of infrastructural facilities, there is dearth of teachers. Under such circumstances, the few available teaching staff should be re-trained to meet up with modern challenges. Thus, teachers in the state should be re-directed and re-equipped to be more effective in their responsibilities in these schools.

Associational Activities in The State

In the light of the above, concerted efforts are recently being made by stakeholders and groups to tackle educational problems, particularly illiteracy, in the State. One of such activities was the recent move in the State by the Association of Productive Empirical Psychologists of Nigeria (APEPN). The body carried out a programme known as the Stimulating Literacy Project (SLP).

The Stimulating Literacy Project (SLP) was initiated by the Association of Productive Empirical Psychologists of Nigeria (APEPN), aimed at tackling children's literacy problems in reading and writing based on private partnership initiative. It was borne out of the feeling that government alone cannot adequately tackle illiteracy in the area. The state government that is saddled with the responsibility of providing education to the teeming youths has indeed been making definite efforts to solve the problem of illiteracy in the State, but these efforts have not met benchmarks. The degree of illiteracy remains high which compelled the actions of the Association. Thus, the project was organised and sponsored by the Association.

The Literacy project adopted by the Association was a psycho-cross cultural measure of literacy development. It specifically identified and used the most serious cases of children experiencing reading and spelling difficulties. The aim is not only to solve their problems but to inculcate advanced literacy skills in these children. Its major strategy was the use of projectors, feeding subsidies and peer teaching of pupils. This was organised in a workshop which lasted for nine months with the selected pupils in Yenagoa Metropolis in Bayelsa State of Nigeria. Although, the area of focus in the experiment was basically reading and spelling. The key elements involved in the study were pre-conceived to be potent factors of literacy and sometimes, learning generally.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The study adopted a survey design. It was intended to examine the basis and effect of the Stimulating Literacy Project, a workshop which was organised by the Association of Productive Empirical Psychologists of Nigeria (APEPN) from 1st August to 8th October, 2011 in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State of Nigeria. It was a nine-week workshop. The project made use of 44 elementary school pupils. They were of age ranging from 6- to 9- years old. Out of this number, 38 of them were pupils that had been diagnosed with reading and spelling difficulties in their respective schools, while the remaining six pupils served as peer tutors. The peer teachers/tutors were selected from among elementary (primary) school children from the schools in the Yenagoa Metropolis who were adjudged to be bright pupils and can read and write effectively. By their reading skills, they served as the pupils' leaders and facilitators, and ultimately were made to serve as peer tutors (teachers) to the deficient pupils. It is a psychological strategy to energize the pupils to emulate their colleagues to actively engage in reading and spelling, and to improve on their general literacy levels.

Prior to this period of the workshop, the Association had gone to the various schools in the Yenagoa Metropolis of Bayelsa State of Nigeria to identify these reading-deficient children. This was made possible through their internal examinations' reports and from biographic records.

Consequently, these pupils who were in their worst state in writing and spelling ability were chosen. Thus, the 38 pupils were selected for the project to serve as experimental group as it were, while the peer tutors were also selected through the same means. The population of the schools from which these pupils were selected were a total of 20 schools. The sample

constituted of a total of 15 female and 23 male pupils. The sample distribution is as shown in table 2 below:

Table 2. Distribution of pupils per selected school

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Class 1</i>	<i>Class 2</i>	<i>Class 3</i>
1.	State School Swali, Yenagoa	2	1	-
2.	Community Primary School, Ovom	-	-	2
3.	Community Primary School, Onopa	1	1	1
4.	St Mathias Primary School, Amarata	2	1	1
5.	State School, Ekeki	-	1	-
6.	Bayelsa State College of Education Primary School, Ekeki	1	-	-
7.	Community Primary School, Okaka	-	1	-
8.	Community Primary School, Kpansia	-	2	-
9.	Community Primary School, Yenezwe-Gene	1	-	2
10.	State School, Biogbolo	-	-	1
11.	State School, Opolo	2	-	1
12.	Community Primary School, Okutukutu	1	1	1
13.	State School, Etegwé	2	1	-
14.	Community Primary School, Ede-epie	1	1	0
15.	State School, Akenpai	-	1	1
16.	State School, Agudama	-	-	1
17.	St Luke Primary School, Agudama	-	-	-
18.	State School, Kpansia	1	-	-
19.	Community Primary School, Yenegwe-Epie	1	-	-
20.	State School, Igbogene	-	-	1

They were all drawn from public elementary schools in the area. The venue of the workshop was Community Primary School, Kpansia, Yenagoa. All the pupils were coming from their homes within Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State Capital.

Personnel and materials involved in the project were as follows.

1. Co-ordinators/moderators who were expert members of the sponsoring body and who supervised and directed all aspects of the programme.
2. Peer (pupil) tutors/teachers
3. Food items to feed the pupils while in school
4. Projectors/projectiles
5. Textbooks and notebooks for use in the workshop
6. Computers and television sets
7. Power generating sets
8. Vehicles to convey officials and materials

The thirty-eight pupils were drawn from different respective classes (classes 1, 2 & 3) and were given relevant textbooks and a set of notebooks for writing. They were to come to school by 8a.m and close by 11a.m. Each time they came to school they were taught by their peer teachers that is, leader pupils that were of the same age bracket and class with them. They were made leaders among the pupils because they could read and write effectively. These leader pupils were six in number from different class levels – 2 leader pupils from class 1; 2 from class 2 & 2 from class 3 respectively.

A time table was drawn for the programme with each day of the week usually beginning with peer teaching/tutoring who was immediately followed by the pupils’ exercises and practice of what had been learned in the tutoring session and to be moderated by the co-ordinators. Next is the TV session where the pupils learned to read and spell words from a television teacher- a sort of programmed lessons series that was specifically arranged for the workshop. At the end of the session, the pupils would have their breakfast at about 10 am and immediately after convened for exercises and practice and then close at 11 a.m. This is done daily with a few modifications on the time schedules and the activities. Table 3 clearly presents the programme of activities and time schedule as a working document for the workshop.

Table 3. Literacy Project Programme Time-Table

<i>Days</i>	<i>8.30-9.00 AM</i>	<i>9.00-9.30</i>	<i>9.30-10.00</i>	<i>10.00-10.30</i>	<i>10.30-11.00</i>
1.	Peer teaching moderated by the co-ordinators	Exercises & practices	Tv session	Breakfast	Exercises & Practices
2.	“	Break	“	“	“
3.	“	Exercises & Practices	“	“	“
4.	“	Break	“	“	“
5.	“	Tv session	Break	“	Exercises & practices / General reading

At regular days and times, the television session would be shown to the pupils, where the children viewed their mates reading, spelling and writing correctly on the screen. At this session, the co-ordinators/moderators would direct the pupils to watch carefully and write down what the television teacher was writing or read what the ‘television tutor’ was reading. The television session made use of programmed lessons to be played to the pupils of the experimental group. The television session always came after the peer teaching and would

repeat the same lessons. Thus what the pupils learned earlier would be reinforced by the television lessons.

As a rule, the pupils were fed once in the school hour. They were given food preparations of rice, beans, yams, plantains and creams- menu common to the Niger Delta people of Nigeria. The free feeding was to boost their interest and to motivate them for active school works.

At the beginning of the workshop, the 38 pupils for the experimental group were tested in reading and spelling from their respective class textbooks as well as workshop materials prepared by the moderators with relative level of ease. Pupils' performance for this initial test were recorded and noted by a team of judges and assessors present in the workshop. The workshop materials were prepared by educational experts similar to what was in their class textbooks and moderated to that effect.

After the initial test, the second test came by the end of the workshop on the ninth week of the project. They were still tested with materials from their class textbooks and workshop materials, and finally general reading exercises on the last day. The pupils' performances in the second test were also recorded as well as the general reading exercises which were used to evaluate them. Engaging the pupils on general reading exercises was to examine how proficient and interested they are after the workshop training in reading materials outside the training. Pupils' participation, attendance and commitment to workshop activities were also keenly observed. Table 4 showed the pupils' response pattern.

Table 4. Cases of late-coming among pupils

<i>Class</i>	<i>Wk1</i>	<i>Wk2</i>	<i>Wk3</i>	<i>Wk4</i>	<i>Wk5</i>	<i>Wk6</i>	<i>Wk7</i>	<i>Wk8</i>	<i>Wk9</i>	<i>Total</i>
1.	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
2.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3

Table 4 showed the number of cases of late-coming to the workshop among the participants. Only two cases were recorded in the 1st and 2nd weeks respectively among class 1 pupils, none in class 2 and only 1 case in the 1st week among class 3 pupils was observed.

Table 5. Cases of absenteeism among pupils

<i>Class</i>	<i>Wk1</i>	<i>Wk2</i>	<i>Wk3</i>	<i>Wk4</i>	<i>Wk5</i>	<i>Wk6</i>	<i>Wk7</i>	<i>Wk8</i>	<i>Wk9</i>	<i>Total</i>
1.	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
2.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

Table 5 showed the number of cases of absenteeism among the participants. Only one case was recorded in week 2 among class 1 pupils.

RESULT

At the end of the workshop, the following observations were made.

Table 6. Pre-test performance of pupils in class text and workshop materials

<i>Reading Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Class Text</i>	<i>Workshop Materials</i>
Class 1	16	285(7.50%)	251(6.61%)
Class 2	12	719(18.92%)	767(20.18%)
Class 3	10	666(17.53%)	816(21.31%)
Total	38	1670(43.95%)	1964 (48.81%)
<i>Spelling Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Class Text</i>	<i>Workshop Materials</i>
Class 1	16	382(10.05%)	244(6.42%)
Class 2	12	795(20.92%)	754(19.84%)
Class 3	10	503(13.24%)	460(12.11%)
Total	38	1680(44.21%)	1458(38.37%)

Table 6 showed pupil’s performance scores in pre-test across the groups in the workshop using the norm-referenced method. It generally indicated that performance is lower in percentages in the workshop materials than in the class text except in Spelling where classes 2 &3 were higher in performance in class text materials than in the workshop materials. Total performances of the pupils were below average.

Table 7. Pupils’ performances in class test

<i>Reading Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Post-test</i>
Class 1	16	285(7.50%)	489(12.87%)
Class 2	12	719(18.92%)	1068(28.11%)
Class 3	10	666(17.53%)	1226(32.26%)
Total	38	1670(43.95%)	2783(73.24%)
<i>Spelling Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Class Text</i>	<i>Workshop Materials</i>
Class 1	16	382(10.05%)	474(12.47%)
Class 2	12	795(20.92%)	857(22.55%)
Class 3	10	503(13.24%)	1397(34.43%)
Total	38	1680(44.21%)	2639(69.55%)

Table 7 showed pupils' performance scores in pre-test and post-test across the three groups from both class text and workshop materials in reading and spelling. With the norm-referenced method performance in post-test was significantly higher than that of the pre-test. Thus, while pre-test was below average ($X=43.95\%$; 44.28%), post-test was far above average ($X=73.24\%$; 69.53%) indicating the magnitude of the projects' effect on the pupils' performance.

Table 8. Pupils' performance in workshop materials

<i>Reading Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Post-test</i>
Class 1	16	251(6.61%)	499(13.13%)
Class 2	12	767(20.18%)	1158(30.47%)
Class 3	10	816(21.31%)	1196(31.47%)
Total	38	1964(48.81%)	2853(75.06%)

<i>Spelling Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Class Text</i>	<i>Workshop Materials</i>
Class 1	16	244(6.42%)	495(13.03%)
Class 2	12	754(19.84%)	1219(32.08%)
Class 3	10	460(12.11%)	1190(31.32%)
Total	38	1458(38.37%)	2904(76.42%)

Table 8 showed pupils' performance scores in pre-test and post-test across the three classes from workshop materials in reading and spelling. With the norm-referenced method performance in post-test was higher than that of the pre-test. Thus, while pre-test was below average ($X=48.81\%$; 38.37% respectively), post-test was above average ($p=75.06\%$; 76.42% respectively). The post test result portrayed the effect of the workshop on the pupils.

DISCUSSION

Findings from the results clearly revealed that the Stimulating Literacy Project (SLP) was highly successful in addressing the literacy problems of the categories of pupils selected to benefit from the programme. Assessment of the programme therefore showed that the purpose for which the workshop was initiated was achieved.

A careful examination of the Project gave results that indicated that there was a tremendous improvement of the children in reading and spelling ability. At the end of the workshop, the performance level of these pupils rose from 7.50%, 18.92% and 17.53% to 12.87%, 28.11% and 32.26% respectively in reading with class textbooks, while it was 10.05%, 20.92% and 13.24% to 12.47%, 22.55% and 34.43% respectively in spelling using the class textbook materials. The same was observed in workshop materials as performance of pupils rose from 6.16%, 20.18% and 21.31% to 13.13%, 30.47% and 31.47% respectively in reading exercises and from 6.42%, 19.84% and 12.11% to 13.03%, 32.08% and 31.32% respectively. Thus, group performance in reading and spelling improved by an average of 26.27% and 38.05% with exercises in workshop materials. After treatment, class textbook exercises also recorded

about the same range of performance improvement. This findings is supported by the studies of Iddrisu (2009), Boateng (2009), Gunde (2010), Etsey (2008), Weitzmann (1986), Harris (2009) and Brown (1973), who suggested that the free school/feeding, use of projectors/projectiles in learning and peer group lead to improved pupil's performance in school. After the workshop treatment, the selected pupils also showed greater interests in reading and spelling as well as in writing.

Then again, it was evident that the project did not only lead to the improvement of pupils' performance in literacy but also positive attitude and commitment to school work. It was observed that there were a few cases of late-coming and only one case of absenteeism among pupils throughout the nine-week period (See table 4). This suggests that the model if properly utilized can also control pupils' behavioural problems in school.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the efficacy of the Stimulating Literacy Project (SLP) organised by the Association of Educationists in the Niger Delta (AEND) on children's literacy in the area. It was a nine-week programme where participants were exposed to projectors/computer programmed teaching, free school-feeding and peer tutoring in developing literacy skills among young children of ages ranging from 6 to 9 years old. The workshop materials which were developed by the organisers and the author from the pupils' class text materials dwelt basically on reading and spelling.

At the end of the project, it was discovered that the 38 pupils who were experiencing the worst levels of reading and spelling difficulties in class in their respective schools exhibited a tremendous improvement in reading and spelling. Besides, improved performance in these areas, pupils' level of commitment to school and school activities also increased significantly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers in the elementary (primary) schools in the Niger Delta area of Bayelsa State should endeavour to adopt innovative teaching strategies such as the one under review to develop literacy abilities among young children.
2. Where the literacy level is very low among pupils due to lack of commitment to school and school activities. Teachers can apply this model particularly to reverse the trend.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abowei, S. E. (2000). *Bayelsa State: its creation and development*. Lagos: Lighthouse.
- [2] Academic Planning Consultants. (2006). *Literacy in Nigeria: which way forward* Retrieved November 15, 2011, from <http://www.ucac.edu/03/stl/423561.html>
- [3] Ada-George, R. (1994). Addressing the literacy problem of the Niger Delta: Government intervention strategies. *The Rivers*, 33, 141 – 149.
- [4] Asita, H. (2011). *Effect of internet utilization on learning and cognitive development of children in Rivers State*. An unpublished Ph.D thesis of the University of Calabar, Calabar.
- [5] Armstrong, J. S. (2012). *Natural learning in Higher Education*. Encyclopedia of the Science of learning. Heidelberg: Springer.
- [6] Bayirga, H. (2009). *Declining BECE performance in Ghana*. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://www.abt/nc~ac./2613160.html>
- [7] Boateng, C. (2010). *Free breakfast for better performance. Free feedingprogramme in Manila*. Retrieved on November 30, 2010 from <http://www.mb.com.ph/.../free-breakfast-better-school-performance-213456789.html>
- [8] Broom, L. (1973). *Sociology: A text with adopted reading*. New York: Harper and Row.
- [9] Drake, L. (2009). *Simple school health and nutrition intervention in action*. New York: Clever pills.
- [10] Dubabo, E. (2009). *A history of Niger Delta development*. Port Harcourt: Pecan.
- [11] Etsey, K. (2008). *Causes of low academic performance of primary school pupils in the Sharma sub-metro of Sharma Ahanta East Metropolitan Assembly*. Retrieved November 10, 2010, from www.saga.cornell.edu/saga/edu.conf/etsey.pdf
- [12] Gunde, R. (2010). *School children in the developing world: health, nutrition and school performance*. Retrieved November 15, 2010, from www.international.ucla.edu/asp=89436
- [13] Harris, L. (2009). *Peer support peer-led programmes in school*. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from www.arif-shara.ac.uk/p/peer-support-Peer-led-children-school-shtml
- [14] Idrissu, M. (2003). *Free feeding and school performance among Ugandan Children*. Retrieved November 15, 2010, from www.allafrica.com/stories/2009/2020451.html
- [15] Kakanawa, C. (2010). *Pupils in Iganga district want schools to adopt new Feeding strategies*. Retrieved November 15, 2010 from www.Nothingham.ac.ulc/peslthemes/peer-teaching/effect022
- [16] Mashburn, A. J., Justice, L. M., Downer, J. T., and Pianta, R. C. (2009). Peer Effects on Children's Language Achievement During Pre-Kindergarten. *Child Development*, 80(3), 686-702.
- [17] National Population Commission. (2009). *Nigerian population state by state Analysis*. Retrieved November 20, 2011, from www.nationalpopulation.commissioncensus/census/2006/htm

- [18] Nimrod, B. (2009). *School feeding and its impact on school performance. The Case of Makueni District*. Retrieved November 15, 2010, from www.edu.slick/schoolfeeding/204567.html
- [19] Nnamdi, A. (2011). *The Universal Basic Education scheme in Rivers State. Implementation and effectiveness*. An unpublished Ph.D thesis of the University of Calabar, Calabar Nigeria.
- [20] Okokoro, D. D. (2012). *A comparative study of job satisfaction of public and private secondary school teachers in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State*. Unpublished B.ED. project of the Niger Delta University, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.
- [21] Piaget, J. (1964). *Development and learning*. New York: Connel University.
- [22] Tanta, K. J., Deitz, J. C., White, O., & Bilingsley, M. (1997). The Effects of Peer-Play Level on Initiations and Responses of Preschool Children with Delayed Play Skills. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 59(4), 437-445.
- [23] Weitzman, M. (1986). *U.S. school breakfast programme lifts test scores*. Retrieved November 15, 2010, from www.nytimes.com/988/06/22/US/education-us-schools