

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

**SITUATIONAL CHALLENGES OF
ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN
NIGERIA: ADULT EDUCATION AS A
RESPONSE**

Valedictory Lecture

By

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Programme

- 1. GUESTS ARE SEATED**
- 2. INTRODUCTION**
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- 4. CITATION**
- 5. THE VALEDICTORY LECTURE**

The lecturer shall remain standing during the citation. He shall step on the rostrum, and deliver his Valedictory Lecture. After the lecture, he shall step towards the Vice-Chancellor, and deliver a copy of the Valedictory Lecture and return to his seat. The Vice-Chancellor shall present the document to the Registrar.

- 6. CLOSING REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR**
- 7. VOTE OF THANKS**
- 8. DEPARTURE**

DEDICATION

This valedictory lecture is dedicated to all my former students, at various levels, in the Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education, as well as those from other units in the Faculty of Education where I had equally hatched my academic eggs during the nearly four decades of my career at the University of Port Harcourt.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With reminiscences of my past ever before my mind's eye, my first acknowledgement rightly goes to the Almighty, All-knowing and Ever-present God who made it possible for me to successfully navigate through various surfs and tempests of life and academics to come up to the event of this day.

I must next express my sincere gratitude to my wife, Dr. Mrs. Caroline Eheazu, the young matriarch of the Ben Eheazu dynasty, for all the pains and risks she willingly and cheerfully endured, and for providing a shoulder for me to lean on at unimaginably critical points of my odyssey.

To my first son, Nnanna (circumstantially galvanized quite early in life as my worthy deputy) and his siblings, I owe so much for their prayers and collective assistance and love which made a lot of difference in my life and career.

My colleagues in the Faculty of Education and the Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education also deserve my acknowledgement for the immense co-operation and goodwill they accorded me throughout my years of service.

Finally, I must put on record my gratitude to my parents of blessed memory, Chief Joseph Eheazu Wogu and Lolo Anna Otolahu Eheazu, and to all others who made invaluable sacrifices to ensure my ascent on the education ladder.

PREFACE

In the twilight of a dedicated academic Professor's career, an inexplicable urge tends to intrinsically propel him or her to take a rear-view mirror look at his or her past trudgings along the distant and sometimes uneven road to scholarship, and to engage in a retrospection of the academic milestones he or she covered so as to leave some parting words to professional colleagues to ensure future progress of a shared discipline. The outcome of this process of reliving a passing era and of providing a leeway for professional continuity is usually encapsulated in what is known as a Professorial Valedictory Lecture. The beauty of such a lecture lies not just in the reminiscences it conjures up as it marks the end of a profoundly deep and mature tenure of a seasoned academic, but also in the opportunity it affords upcoming younger colleagues to visualize their professional future and that of their discipline, as well as the enormity of the diligence and hard work required to come of age academically.

On the subject of this lecture, environmental degradation has gradually become such a menace globally that in 1973, the United Nations set apart the 5th of June every year as World Environment Day. In 2015, the theme for marking the day was "*Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production*" (Radio Nigeria, 2015a). Nigeria is currently being weighed down by various forms of environmental degradation resulting from both natural and anthropogenic (human) causes. The country has adopted various strategies for tackling environmental degradation, including enactment of a National Environment Policy in 1989. Unfortunately, the progressive levels of deforestation, desertification, soil/gully erosion, land, water and air pollution, indiscriminate waste/refuse dumping, among other forms of environmental degradation, tend to point to a need for sustained relevant formal, non-formal and informal education programmes to promote sustainability of the environment, especially from the human angle. This valedictory lecture is based on what has for decades been the pre-occupation of the presenter; namely, how to

position adult education to effectively contribute towards the solution of man's environmental challenges much of which are invariably caused by the social and economic activities of adult members of society. Accordingly, the potentials of environmental adult education, along the said lines of concern, constitute the pivotal substance of the ensuing discourse in this lecture.

Professor B.A. Eheazu FNAE

SITUATIONAL CHALLENGES OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN NIGERIA: ADULT EDUCATION AS A RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

In my presentation of the 20th Professorial Inaugural Lecture of the University of Port Harcourt (Uniport) on September 24, 1998 (Eheazu, 1998), I dwelt at length on the various forms of Adult Education and their functions towards promotion of personal and societal welfare. In this valedictory lecture, I have rather chosen to focus specifically on the usefulness of Adult Education as a veritable tool for responding positively to the multifarious challenges posed by environmental degradation with particular reference to our country, Nigeria. The essence of the discourse is not necessarily to prove, in any way, that adult education is a panacea for addressing all environmental degradation challenges, but rather to, among other intentions, openly explain to my academic colleagues, students and other stakeholders my long standing commitment (through research and teaching) to elucidating the need for and importance of environmental adult education in contemporary global and situation-specific endeavours (as in the case of Nigeria) towards environmental sustainability. It is my hope that from this lecture the audience and subsequent readers of the presentation (some of whom might have had a wrong conception of environmental adult education) will find cause to support, and indeed be on the vanguard for the promotion of environmental adult education as a vital education programme for sustainable social and economic development.

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I feel compelled, at this point, to express my gratitude to the University and to my Creator for the opportunity to present this valedictory lecture which is the sixth in this University, the first in my Faculty, Education and also the first from my Department, Adult and Non-Formal Education. Before I go into the nitty-gritty of my presentation, I consider it useful to briefly trace

my career at Uniport, if only to clarify my *locus standi* for speaking on the functional capabilities of Adult Education.

A BRIEF ON MY CAREER AS ADULT EDUCATOR AT UNIPORT

I took up appointment as a Graduate Assistant at Uniport on 11th August, 1976, immediately after my National Youth Service. At that time, Uniport was a University College affiliated to the University of Lagos. By 1980, I had obtained my Master's and Ph.D. Degrees from the University of Wales, U.K. under the Uniport Staff Development Programme. The contents of my academic studies and training at my first *alma mater* (University of Nigeria Nsukka) and the second (University of Wales) prepared me for a career touching on the processes and implications of human and socio-economic development. In 1986, I championed the creation of the Division of Adult and Non-Formal Education in the Institute of Education of my Faculty for the award of Certificate in Adult and Non-Formal Education. I served as Head of the Division from when it was created in 1987 to 1990/91. In 1991, the Division was transformed into a Department for the award of Degrees in Adult and Non-Formal Education. Through the hardwork and collaboration of its academic members of staff, the Department got approvals from the University Senate in 2000 and 2004 to run M.Ed. and Ph.D. Degree programmes respectively, with specializations in Community Development, Environmental Adult Education (EAE), Distance Education and Literacy Education. Ever since, we have produced several Master's and Ph.D. Degree holders in Environmental Adult Education and the other approved programmes. Through various related research studies and publications, the EAE programmes have also been able to address a good number of fundamental issues in adult environmental education for sustainable occupational and general socio-economic development in Nigeria (cf, for example, Eheazu, 2007; Bisong, 2008; Eheazu, 2010; Eheazu, 2011; Ugwu, 2012; Madumere, 2012, and Godwin, 2014, to mention but a few). Recently too, an undergraduate programme in Environmental Education was approved for the Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education by the Senate of the University of Port Harcourt.

My modest contributions in spearheading the above and other academic developments in my Department (Adult and Non-Formal Education) obviously give me ample grounds to speak about the functionality of Adult Education in relation to the Nigerian Environment and, especially, its capacity to serve as a tool for positive response to environmental degradation challenges facing the country. However, to facilitate proper understanding of the nuances of this lecture, a brief exposé of the basic realities of man's environment and its degradation is considered necessary at this point.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF MAN

Man's environment is a complex of objects, circumstances and conditions which surround him, with an intricate system of physical, chemical, social, biotic and abiotic factors. These factors act upon man, as an individual, and even upon an ecological community, within an ecosystem, ultimately affecting life and living conditions. Eclectically speaking, the natural environment of man on planet earth is usually segmented into four spheres (each comprising important elements); namely, the atmosphere (made up of gaseous layers); the hydrosphere (water, including the oceans, seas and rivers); the lithosphere (soil of the earth's crust with underlying minerals), and the biosphere (containing living organisms like man, plants, wild life and birds). The environment of man is generally seen from two perspectives – the natural and man-made environments. Plates 1 and 2 below give true semblances of the two (Courtesy: UNDP.com).

Plate 1: A typical natural environment



Plate 2: A typical man-made environment



WHAT THEN IS ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION?

Environmental degradation may be simply defined as the deterioration or reduction in quality of the environment through any undesirable change, depletion or alteration of elements of the natural environment such as air, land, water, forest and wild life. Plate 3 below illustrates forest degradation through bush burning and tree felling.

Plate 3: Sample of Forest Degradation



The United Nation's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (2004) has characterized environmental degradation as a lessening of the capacity of an environment to meet social and ecological objectives and needs. In further portrayal of its global effect, environmental degradation has also been identified as the third in the hierarchy of ten threats to international peace and security

officially cautioned by the United Nation's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004). The other nine threats so cautioned are poverty, infectious disease, inter-state war, civil war, genocide, other atrocities like women and child trafficking or kidnapping for various criminal purposes, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and transnational organized crime, in that order. The phenomenal impacts of environmental degradation are, obviously, underscored by its said position in the hierarchy of threats to international peace and security. To boost comprehension of related issues subsequently addressed in this lecture, it would be pertinent at this point, to highlight, howbeit briefly, the impacts under the various causes/sources of environmental degradation.

CAUSES/SOURCES OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND RELATED IMPACTS

There are, basically, two major causes or sources of environmental degradation; namely, anthropogenic or human sources and natural sources. A brief articulation of these two major sources would be useful here for the reason already adduced.

I. ANTHROPOGENIC SOURCES

Human beings through their activities, constitute a major source of environmental degradation from many fronts, including:

a) Atmospheric transboundary air pollution through the injection or emission into the atmosphere of such harmful Green House Gases (GHGs), as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and carbon monoxides from industries, automobiles and other gadgets which use fossil fuels to operate. These gases together with others of their type like sulphuric gases (from coal industries), nitrous oxide (from fertilizers) and methane (from wastes) have variously been associated with acid rain that acidifies and pollutes lakes, streams and rivers, the depletion of ozone layer (insulator of excessive ultra violet rays from the sun) and consequently, the current wave of global warming and climate change with deleterious degradation effect on the environment. Plate 4 below shows a sample of

atmospheric degradation by CFCs from industrial furnaces and chimneys.

Plate 4: Atmospheric degradation by CFCs from industrial furnaces and chimneys



b) Pollution of water (rivers, lakes, streams, oceans and seas) through oil spillages from fossil fuel exploitation, use of chemicals for fishing, dumping of wastes (including toxic wastes) as well as discharge of industrial chemical effluents into nearby artisanal sources of water. Plates 5 and 6 below give examples of effects of water pollution (courtesy: Microsoft free download).

Plate 5: Effects of river pollution on aquatic life



Plate 6: River pollution due to dumping of wastes



c) Inadequate Management of wastes from domestic and industrial processes which gives rise to littering of various sites, blockage of

drainages and pollution from various illegitimate dump sites. (See plates 7 and 8).

Plate 7: Blockage of drainage with Wastes



Plate 8: A waste dump beside a food market



d) Deforestation (Felling of trees without their replenishment): This occurs in the quest for firewood and for land for agricultural and other developmental purposes in response to population increase (eg urbanization, estate development, road construction). Deforestation leads to disequilibrium of biodiversity through extinction of wild life and various flora and other living organisms. Based on empirical evidence of man's consumption of forest resources, the United Nations has predicted that if global forest resources consumption rate continued unabated, the *homo sapiens* would need three planets of the same size as the earth to meet their consumption demands by 2050 (Radio Nigeria, 5th June, 2015). Plate 9 below gives an example of the processes of deforestation.

Plate 9: Ecosystemic disequilibrium through deforestation



e) Adoption of farming practices (such as slash-and-burn and application of Sulphur and nitric oxide fertilizers). These promote destruction of natural habitats, soil deterioration, erosion and agricultural runoff that pollute streams and rivers. (See plates 10 and 11 below)

Plate 10: Destruction of natural habitats through slash-and-burn method of farming



Plate 11: Pollution of a Stream from agricultural runoff



Source: FAO.org

f) Desertification (the gradual transformation of habitable/arable land into a desert). This results from a number of anthropogenic causes, including over grazing by pastoralists, felling of the scantily available trees to provide fire wood, and global warming/climate change in arid and savannah zones of the world. More on this later, with reference to Nigeria.

II. NATURAL CAUSES

Nature, though in less ways than humans, also causes environmental degradation with or without the impact of human activities, in a number of ways, including:

a) Ecosystemic deterioration. Ecosystems may degrade over time on their own due to climate change or long-term biodiversity invasion by new species of flora and fauna which eventually alter the once familiar habitat. (See plates 12 and 13 below)

Plate 12: Alteration of the Arctic glacier environment due to climate change



Source: www.panda.org

Plate 13: A once productive orchard invaded by new species of flora due to long neglect (Saley, Hermed, Israel)



Source: Wikipedia (May, 2006)

b) Natural Disasters. Natural Disasters like landslides, volcanoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, tonadoes, floods and wild fires can and do decimate and incapacitate large expanses of local communities of flora and fauna. The original environment eventually yields to degradation at the point it cannot cope with new species introduced by the disaster (See plates 14a & b below for example).

Plates 14a & b: Environments degraded by landslide and volcano



a. (Landslide)



b. (Volcano)

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

Nigeria has enormous degradation challenges of both anthropogenic and natural origins. The challenges could be summarized under the following headings:

i) Deforestation

A lot of trees in Nigeria's forests are indiscriminately felled to meet demands for tropical wood by local and foreign markets, provide firewood for domestic cooking and heating, as well as to create farmlands and estates in response to the demands of an ever-growing population of Nigerians. This has led to the destabilization of ecosystems, and to erosion and a number of other deleterious effects on weather and climate. Besides, given the rate of demand for firewood as the main source of fuel for cooking by as many as 76% of Nigerian population (Halidu, 2015), it has been estimated that by 2030 a cumulative total of 7.5 hectares (807,320 sq.ft.) of fuelwood plantation (outside of the existing forests) would need to be established in order to meet the impending shortfall in fuelwood availability (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003). Plates 15 and 16 illustrate the seriousness of fuelwood use in Nigeria.

Plates 15: A village firewood market in Nigeria



Plate 16: Use of firewood in a village Garri Production Industry in Nigeria



ii) Land Degradation in Nigeria

This is a result of a number of circumstances; including:

- a) Bush burning caused by farmers who engage in slash-and-burn method of farmland preparation for cropping (as illustrated earlier in plate 10), and by hunters who set bush fires for game to run out from their hiding places. Bush fires are also caused by smokers who indiscriminately throw burning cigarette stumps into the bush.
- b) Massive and indiscriminate dumping of solid waste and discharge of sewage water and chemical wastes from homes, offices, markets and industries occasioned by lack of desirable knowledge, techniques and policy for appropriate waste management and disposal. It is common knowledge that much of the flooding that has plagued Nigeria from 2012, when 363 Nigerians died in floods and about 3 million were displaced (Radio Nigeria, 8am Radio Link Discussion, 21/8/2015) till date, is a result of indiscriminate discharge of solid waste in sewages and other water ways. (See plates 17a and b below for example)

Plates 17a & b: Flooding due to indiscriminate dumping on waterways and Sewage



(a) Waterways



(b) Sewage

- c) Desertification, as already defined here (and illustrated with plates 18a and b below), is another form of land degradation in Nigeria. Between 50% and 75% of 10 states of Northern

Nigeria, namely, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Kano, Gigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara and Yobe (which account for about 38% of the landmass of the country and have a population of about 20 million) are identified as being under threat of desertification as a result of overgrazing, over exploitation of the scantily available fuelwood and aggravated drought due to global warming and climate change (Halidu, 2015).

Plates 18a and b; showing two stages of desertification in Nigeria.



(a) Progressing desertification



(b) Advanced desertification

iii) Air Pollution/Degradation in Nigeria

The degradation of air is caused primarily by emission of Green House Gases (GHGs) from various sources; including, process industries, gas flaring, energy solvents and other products used, agriculture, land use change and wastes. The major GHGs include carbon dioxide (CO_2) carbon monoxide (Co), methane (CH_4) and nitrous oxides (N_2O). Pie charts 1–3 below show the sources of the major CHGs (CO_2 , N_2O and CH_4) in Nigeria and their percentage contributions to total global emissions from their respective sectors by 1994. Charts 4 & 5 on the other hand, show Nigeria's expected total contribution of these gases to global air degradation in 20 years and 100 years respectively from 1994 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003).

Chart 1: CO₂ emissions in Nigeria Chart 2: N₂O emissions in Nigeria

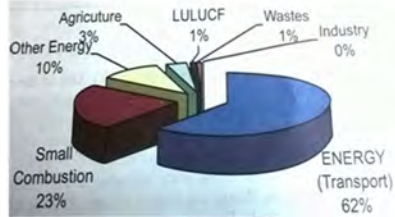
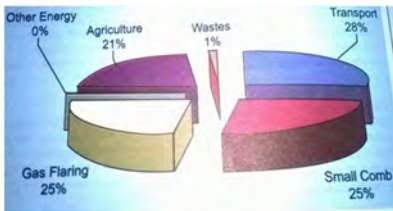


Chart 3: CH₄ emissions in Nigeria

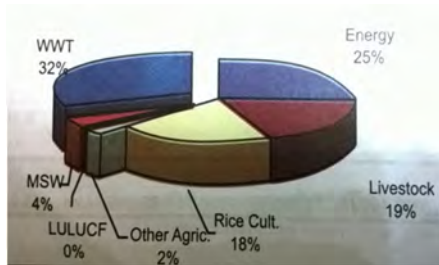


Chart 4: Nigeria's expected percentage contribution of major GHGs to global air degradation over 20 years based on 1994 emissions

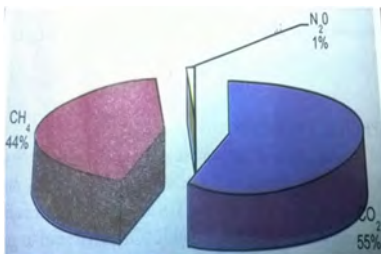
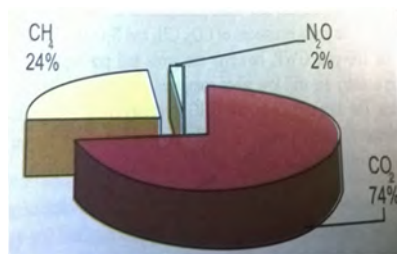


Chart 5: Nigeria's expected percentage contribution of major GHGs to global air degradation over 100 years based on 1994 emissions



iv) Water degradation in Nigeria

Water pollution (degradation) in Nigeria occurs through a number of sources, including, petroleum spillages from fossil fuel exploitation, agricultural runoff from farms (plate 11 above), industrial effluents directed to nearby rivers and streams (as in the case in plate 19 below showing pollution of artisanal water from a gold ore industry in Zamfara State which caused lead poisoning and death of several children that ingested the polluted water in 2010) and the use of chemicals for fishing. All these adversely affect the aqua-marine environment; aquatic life (plate 5 above) and eventually the lively hood assets of the fisher folk and even farmers within the zone(s) of pollutions. Plate 20 below shows a well-known case of water pollution through oil spillage in Ogoni, Nigeria.

Plate 19: Artisanal water degradation from local gold ore processing plant in Zamfara State, Nigeria, 2010



Plate 20: Water degradation (by oil pollution) in Ogoni, Rivers State



NATIONAL STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

Over the years, Nigeria has devised a number of strategies to address environmental degradation challenges facing the nation. In 1989, the country enacted a National Environmental Policy which stipulated the following among other objectives (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1989:3):

- to secure a quality of environment adequate for good health and well-being
- (and) restore, maintain and enhance the ecosystems and ecological processes

essential for the functioning of the biosphere to preserve biological diversity and the principle of optimum sustainable yield in the use of living natural resources and ecosystems ...

Following the provisions of the National Policy on Environment, a Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) was instituted by Decree 59 of 1992 to, among other responsibilities (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1992:8):

a) establish programmes for the prevention, reduction and elimination of pollution of the nation's air, land and inter-state waters, as well as the national programmes for restoration and enhancement of the nation's environment and natural resources;

b) encourage and promote the co-ordination of the conservation of natural resources and environmentally related activities at all levels.

Further to these mandates to FEPA, Nigeria again established a Federal Ministry of Environment in 1999 to achieve the following among other objectives (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999:7):

a) prescribe standards for and make regulations on water quality, effluent limitations, air quality, atmospheric protection, ozone protection, noise control as well as the removal and control of hazardous substances, and

b) monitor and enforce environmental protection measures

Overall, strategies adopted by the Federal Government to deal with environmental degradation challenges in Nigeria have been summarized under four main categories relevant to this lecture as follows (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003):

- i. Establishment of necessary legal and institutional frameworks, including the inauguration of the Federal Ministry of Environment (FMEnv);
- ii. Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening through a number of initiatives, including awareness creation and enhancement of the activities of NGOs;
- iii. Collaboration with International Organizations towards the development of mutually beneficial policies, legislation, action plan and programmes at regional and international levels;
- iv. Provision of necessary funding to back up the country's participation in various relevant organizations and conventions as well as creation of an Ecological Fund to address ecological disasters.

Plausible as these strategies may appear in prose, nonetheless, they leave much to be desired in practice, especially with regard to the mobilization of the generality of Nigeria's population of artisans, farmers, fisherfolk, industry workers and so on to adopt appropriate skills, lifestyles, consumption behaviours and basic knowledge that would predispose them to positively contribute towards the sustainability of their environment by eschewing their environmentally unfriendly actions/behaviours and thus reduce to a considerable extent the man-made causes of environmental degradation. Halidu (2015) has stressed the need for an appropriate education programme as a desirable strategy to achieve popular mobilization for environmental sustainability in Nigeria. As he rightly points out (Halidu 2015:9):

Many of the man-made threats on our environment are fueled by ignorance and

nonchalance of the populace. We have not educated our people enough to convince them to turn away from bad agronomic practices, illegal felling of trees, indiscriminate lighting of fire, poor refuse disposal habits etc. Environmental issues are part of daily living; therefore, knowledge of them must be reduced to messages and languages understood by all.

Halidu's view in this excerpt obviously supports environmental education for all sectors of the Nigerian populace - the literate and the illiterate, the young and the old, indeed every Nigerian who through "ignorance and nonchalance" manifests habits/behaviours that promote environmental degradation in Nigeria. This apparently further suggests linking environmental and social issues and locating environmental problems within the context of people's daily lives and actions whether as individuals, communities or organizations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ADULT POPULATION IN THE CONTEXT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

As I have indicated elsewhere (Eheazu, 2013), global environmental trends are in some way linked to demographic dynamics, including population size, population growth rates and population densities. Census classification of populations and their economic contributions by age groups (population structure) usually shows that adults (no matter the cultural or formal age-range criteria by which they are identified in time and in place) usually constitute the greatest percentage of economically productive and active members of society. For instance, in 2012, children aged 0-14years constituted 40.9% of the total world population. Young and old adults aged 15-64years (the economically productive and active group) constituted 55.9%, while older (retired and minimally productive) citizens made up 3.2% of global population (CIA World Fact Book, July, 2012). The same period, Japan's corresponding percentage population statistics for ages 0-14years, 15- 64years and 65 years and above were 13.1%, 64% and 22.9% respectively (CIA

World Fact Book, July, 2012). In Nigeria, the population structure by July 2010 has been calculated to be 42.8%, 53.8% and 3.4% for ages 0-14years, 15-64years and 65years and above respectively (Wikipedia, 2011). By July 2014, the population structure in Nigeria was documented as 43.2%, 53.8% and 3% for age ranges 0 - 14years, 15-64years and 65 years and above respectively, thus showing marginal difference with the 2010 structure (CIA World Fact Book, 2015). Table 1 below gives the said figures for easy reference.

Table 1: Sample of Global and National Population Structures, 2010, 2012, 2014

Global/ National	Population Structures and Years								
	Children (0-14years)			Active Adults (15-64years)			Retired Adults (65years above)		
	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014
Global		40.9%			55.9%			3.2%	
Japan		13.1%			64%			22.9%	
Nigeria	42.8%		43.2%	53.8%		53.8%	3.4%		3%

Population structures may not be ubiquitously uniform because of differences in longevity between developed and developing countries as well as global variations and cultural differences in age ranges for determining adulthood as distinct from childhood/adolescence and older citizens. Nonetheless, the preponderance of adult citizens as the economically productive and active group is not in doubt. By this fact, adults also are the largest groups of humans to impact on the environment through their socio-economic activities (such as farming, road construction, building of estates, use of fossil fuels for transportation and industrial activities) which could bring about the already highlighted largely anthropogenic environmental degradation phenomena like deforestation, disequilibrium of the ecosystem, land degradation, environmental pollution, global warming and so on. This demographic fact, obviously, underscores the need for special environmental education for the adult population to ensure an enduring and sustainable level of utilization of the earth's resources

(Parker and Towner, 1993). Besides, results of research studies indicate a globally high level of illiteracy among adult populations worldwide. For instance, by 2010, there were 793 million illiterate adults in our world. Two thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of these illiterate adults were found in 8 countries; namely, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan (Wikipedia, 2010). By September, 2015, the number of illiterate adults globally stood at 774 million, and Nigeria ranked 101st out of 180 most illiterate countries (Radio Nigeria, 2015b). In more specific terms, Nigeria's adult illiteracy rates (in English or any other language) were 26.4% and 50.5% for urban and rural areas respectively in 2010, while overall illiteracy rate by September, 2015 was 59.6% (National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education, Nigeria, 2010; 2015). This situation further highlights the need for a functional environmental literacy programme as part of the overall desirable environmental education for the teeming adult population in Nigeria and, of course, her other counterparts indicated above. It must be stated at this stage that Unesco at its 5th International Conference in Hamburg, Germany in 1975, adopted the nomenclature, *Environmental Adult Education* for the desired education programmes for adults (Unesco, 1997).

ENVIRONMENTAL ADULT EDUCATION AS AN IMPORTANT RESPONSE TO NIGERIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION CHALLENGES

Environmental Adult Education has, over the years, developed to become a distinct field of learning which combines the principles and theories of its precursor (Environmental Education) with those of adult education to provide practical educative experiences that inculcate in the adult learners positive attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to harmoniously interact with and sustainably employ the forces, elements and resources that form parts of their surroundings as they engage in their daily activities for survival and development. The distinctiveness of environmental adult education emerged due to the failure of environmental education as a purely scientific and technologically oriented discipline, to address environmental, cultural and social issues in a

holistic and practical manner within the context of individual and collective daily living and activities relating to livelihood assets. In the context of this lecture, it would be relevant to examine at this juncture some basic environmental adult education programmes that would respond effectively to the already highlighted environmental degradation challenges facing Nigeria.

FORMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ADULT EDUCATION FOR ADDRESSING NIGERIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION CHALLENGES

Earlier in this lecture, we noted that over time, the Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education, University of Port Harcourt through teaching, research studies and publications, has been able to address a good number of fundamental environmental issues on sustainable occupational and general socio-economic development at both the primordial and industrial levels. In general, environmental adult education programmes operate within the three basic forms of education; namely, formal, non-formal and informal. In his article on “the need for environmental education for adults”, Emmelin (1978:47) not only explained the need for an environmental education programme for adults, but also went on to stress the necessity of implementing the said three forms. Elucidation of these forms of environmental adult education is briefly provided immediately below, especially with regard to their relevance in addressing Nigeria's environmental degradation challenges.

i) Formal Environmental Adult-Education Programmes

Formal Environmental Adult Education is provided within an institutional setting to among other things,

- a) bring up experts/facilitators to effectively carry out non-formal and informal aspects of environmental adult education described below;
- b) orientate the skills, attitudes and behaviours of industry personnel towards promoting environmental protection and pollution control in their day to day activities;

- c) promote functional literacy among adult learners focusing essentially on the practical aspects of their livelihood assets.

The curriculum of the formal level of environmental adult education usually consists of theoretical and practical elements relating to development in participants of knowledge of the factors and forces affecting man's surroundings (the environment) and the outcomes of the interactive processes between man and his environment. In carrying out the above responsibilities among others, formal environmental adult education adopts a participatory approach which is learner centred and in which andragogy rather than pedagogy is the usual mode of knowledge facilitation.

Departments of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Universities are in the best position to actualize the said responsibilities of formal environmental adult education. This is so because at the primary and secondary school levels of formal education, beneficiaries of environmental education are usually children and adolescents respectively. Besides, the content of environmental education at these two levels is an infusion of a smattering of the subject into cognate disciplines. Even at the University level, environmental education usually occurs as a prefix to other disciplines (eg environmental engineering, environmental geography, environmental chemistry, environmental science and so on). It is not an independent discipline.

Besides, in providing environmental adult education as a discipline, departments of adult and non-formal education also have the additional responsibility to establish, as part of the practical aspect of the discipline, diverse ways whereby adults, in their different occupations, could mitigate as well as positively respond to both natural and anthropogenic environmental degradation challenges. The Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education, University of Port Harcourt is a trail blazer in this regard. A sample of the Department's research efforts and findings along this line was cited earlier in this lecture.

ii) **Non-Formal Environmental Adult Education Programmes for Responding to Environmental Degradation Challenges in Nigeria**

Non-formal environmental adult education connotes and indeed is an alternative to the school or institutionally based formal system. It is not systematized or hierarchically arranged like a school curriculum, but addresses communal, organizational, industrial and indeed societal needs for awareness of environmental issues and challenges and commitment to address and solve them. In its publication titled *Adult environmental education*, Unesco (1997:5) has identified three basic kinds of situations that create barriers to popular participatory action towards environmental improvement “in the context of people’s lives and activities” to include situations:

- a) where marginal communities face grave economic and social problems;
- b) where there is a lack of environmental awareness and of commitment to environmentally friendly policies among governments and the industry;
- c) where local initiatives do not achieve their aims because of lack of coordination with other initiatives.

These situational barriers require non-formal adult environmental approaches to address the various sectors of society involved – the marginalized community peoples, public institutions, industrial establishments, government, policy makers and so on. On their specific roles in fostering mitigation of and people’s coping with effects of environmental degradation challenges, the non-formal adult environmental education programmes would take the forms of awareness creation seminars, conferences, workshops, short training programmes for skills development to be championed by those who have gone through the formal environmental adult education programmes. Nigeria indeed needs this non-formal aspect to mobilize various categories of her population - market men and women, traders, industrial workers, environmental policy makers and implementers and so on. Much of the non-formal programmes would be implemented virtually in situ or centrally, as many of the people involved may not be able to leave their places of domicile or

employment. Town halls, village squares, cottages as well as modern industries, school halls, market squares, fishing ports and so on, would serve as veritable centres for non-formal environmental adult education. The content of such a programme would be situation-specific and may span discussions, training and skill development in such areas as conservation farming, sustainable fishing, appropriate methods of management and disposal of solid, liquid, gaseous as well as industrial toxic wastes, pollution control and environmental disaster management (eg. flooding and oil spillage). To reduce the quantum of deforestation occasioned by large dependence on wood as fire fuel for cooking and heating in Nigeria (as already highlighted in this lecture), the production and use of improved clay stoves, which require reduced quantities of wood as fuel, could be introduced in the villages through the non-formal environmental adult education programme. The use of the clay stove is already adopted in Uganda, Senegal and some other countries of Africa. Plates 21 and 22 below show pictures of a Ugandan lady and a Senegalese woman respectively using the clay stove.

Plate 21: A Ugandan lady using the improved clay stove



Plate 22: A Senegalese woman using improved clay stove



Apart from its advantage of reducing the amount of fire wood used in traditional cooking, the improved clay stove is also meant to reduce domestic air pollution which occurs through discharge of large volumes of smoke in the process of cooking on the age-old tripod stove with plenty of fire wood, as shown in plate 23 below.

Plate 23: Domestic air pollution in the use of a traditional tripod stove



Any other practical strategies to reduce deforestation and air pollution may also be infused into the non-formal environmental adult education programme. In all, the non-formal education programmes would focus on developing knowledge, skills and commitment in beneficiaries to enable them to effectively address situational challenges of environmental degradation in their various areas of domicile and employment.

iii) **Informal Environmental Adult-Education Programmes for Addressing Environmental Degradation Challenges in Nigeria**

In informal education, generally, learning comes spontaneously, unintentionally and accidentally. It is education that occurs outside an institutionalized or school setting and which is usually informative. It could take place anywhere and anytime. However, differences exist in delivery methods and materials between one mode of informal education and another, based on the objectives to be achieved and the nature of the target beneficiaries. In the context of this lecture, the informal environmental adult education being discussed is the type that would focus on the environmental degradation challenges facing Nigeria.

Knowles (1950) is of the view that adults should accept the fact of change and should think of themselves as always changing. They should acquire the habit of looking at every experience as an opportunity to learn and should have the capacity to learn from it.

Informal environmental adult education provides great opportunity for the adult population to learn about their environment and to develop commitment to participate in the solution of the challenges of environmental degradation through spontaneous learning. The radio, the television, town criers, bill boards and mobile megaphones are avenues to impact such learning. Accordingly, well-structured radio jingles and talks, television dramas, large and attractive posters on bill boards as well as information passed through mobile megaphones and loudspeakers could provide important education to adults at home or at work on the dangers of various human activities and natural incidents which promote environmental degradation (such as bush burning, indiscriminate dumping of refuse, flooding, domestic and industrial pollution, deforestation) as well as how to mitigate or possibly prevent the dangers through avoidance, adaptation or adoption of new techniques.

RECAPITULATION & CONCLUSION

Vice-Chancellor Sir, it is now time to recollect in brief the various focal points of this lecture. Environmental degradation, which this lecture has vividly described and illustrated, is a major global concern which occupies the third position in the hierarchy of ten threats to international peace and security. Nigeria's situational challenges of environmental degradation are in no way less threatening to the existential circumstances of her citizenry. The country has tried through a number of strategies to address the challenges, but the success rate is not yet very reassuring. More and effective approaches are therefore needed. The preponderance of the adult population who also constitute the greatest percentage of the economically productive and active citizenry of the nation, and are therefore an undisputable source of anthropogenic environmental degradation, creates the need for a special environmental education for this population segment to address the degradation challenges emanating from various levels of their existence and economic endeavours. This need is further accentuated by the fact that the adult population also has the highest percentage of illiterates globally. We have highlighted here the methodologies and processes

of operating the needed adult environmental education at the formal, non-formal and informal levels, using the experiences of the University of Port Harcourt Department of Adult & Non-Formal Education as an example of achievable milestones at the formal level. By way of conclusion, it is our conviction, given the detailed discourse on the subject of this lecture, that environmental adult education as a programme and as a distinct discipline in adult education, is an indispensable response to the challenges of environmental degradation in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the clarifications made in this lecture, a number of recommendations stand out in order to actualize the potentials of environmental adult education to impact on Nigeria's environmental degradation challenges. The recommendations include:

- i. Departments of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigerian Universities should, like their counterparts in the University of Port Harcourt, or any other University with a similar programme, endeavor to produce necessary manpower at the graduate and post graduate levels to, among other things:
 - a) plan adequate non-formal and informal environmental education programmes for adults of various levels and kinds of occupation/vocation.
 - b) assist in developing topics and learning units in environmental degradation for integration or infusion into the formal basic education programmes for adult learners offered in various Basic Literacy Centres in Nigeria.
 - c) organize workshops, seminars and conferences for personnel of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the National and State Environmental Protection Agencies to acquaint them with new techniques for carrying out their mandates regarding environmental degradation. In this regard, substantial attention should be focused on urban centres, industrial establishments as well as on prevention and

management of environmental disasters and emergency situations like flooding, desertification, climate change, landslides and so on.

- ii. Government should provide the necessary funding for the relevant University Departments to carry out the above functions. This will, among other things, help to fulfil President Buhari's recent promise at the November, 2015 United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) that Nigeria would reduce GHGs in her domain by 20% unconditionally and 40% conditionally post 2020.
- iii. The National Universities Commission should include Environmental Adult Education as a distinct discipline in its Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) approved for Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities. Currently, what the BMAS has is Environmental Education, and this may make some Universities reluctant to approve Environmental Adult Education as a programme for Adult & Non-Formal Education departments.

EPILOGUE

Vice-Chancellor Sir, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is my hope that I have done what I set out to do, *ab initio*, in this lecture; namely, to clarify the usefulness of adult education as a veritable tool to respond positively to the multifaceted challenges posed by environmental degradation in Nigeria. It is also my hope that achievement of this objective clearly explains my several years of dogged commitment (through research, teaching and mentoring) to promote popular appreciation of the need for and importance of environmental adult education in global and local endeavors to achieve environmental sustainability. Permit me then, my Vice-Chancellor, to freely bask in the belief that in the light of the facts adduced in this lecture, we all, by now, would have got strong reasons to support and indeed to join the crusade to promote adult environmental education as a vital programme for both minimization of environmental degradation and the achievement of

sustainable, social and economic development in our country. Obviously, the outcome of such support would be of immense benefit not only to our present generation, but also to generations of Nigerians coming after ours.

I THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.

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CITATION ON



PROFESSOR BENJAMIN AJUIWE EHEAZU
B.Sc. Ed/Geography (UNN); M.Ed., Ph.D. (WALES), FNAE

Birth and Parentage

Just as the world was emerging from the ashes of the Second World War in the first quarter of 1946, a bouncing baby boy was born to the family of late Chief Joseph Eheazu Wogu and Lolo Anna Otolahu Eheazu in Umuosakwu village, in the present Udo Mgboko Autonomous Community in the former Obioma-Ngwa (now Obingwa) Local government Area of Abia State, . As if to announce the predestined greatness of the boy, his birth was also heralded by the phenomenal arrival from space of the Great Comet which also, in the same year, coincided with the first eclipse of the sun observed in Nigeria.

Professor Benjamin Ajuiwe Eheazu was the baby boy being referred to. Today, he is the man we have gathered to listen to his valedictory lecture as he gracefully exits his career as an accomplished academic.

Education

Ben, as his close colleagues and associates call him, started his primary school education in 1953, at the age of seven. He was a

pupil of Holy Family Primary School Amiri in Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area. He completed his primary education at Seat of Wisdom Primary School, Avunariam, Obowo where his senior brother, a teacher, was posted, and passed the First School Leaving (Standard Six) Certificate examination in 1960 with DISTINCTION.

After a little delay to prepare for further studies, the young Ben Eheazu proceeded to the, Immaculate Conception Catholic Seminary (ICS) Ahia-Eke Ndume, Umuahia in 1962, where he was to be trained to become a priest of the Catholic Church. On completion of his Junior Seminary studies in 1966, he entered for the University of London General Certificate of Education (GCE) 'O' Level Examination in eight subjects (the maximum allowable) and was permitted to do so as a result of his proven brilliance, and his being quite comfortable with all the subjects in the School Curriculum.

Young Ben obtained the University of London GCE Certificate in all the 8 papers at a sitting (with 6 distinctions and two credits) and set a record, unbroken till date at the Seminary. For this intellectual feat, some fellow Seminarians called him Einstein in Science, Cicero in Latin, Herodotus in History, Churchill in English Literature and so on. For this excellent performance also, the then Catholic Bishop of Umuahia Diocese honoured him with an award. Ben was billed to travel to the Pontifical University in Rome in 1967 to pursue his priestly studies, but the arrangement was disrupted by the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil war.

The young Seminarian joined the Biafran Army and was trained as a medical officer as soon as the Army detected his enviable intellectual endowments. By the end of the civil war in 1970 the young soldier had lost interest in the priestly vocation and took up appointment as a TUTOR at Ibo National High School, Aba. Who knows what must have caused the change in vocation? The tutorship was a very brief undertaking, for in September 1971, Ben gained admission into the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to read

Education/Geography. When this young bundle of energy ex-soldier, ex-tutor and ex-seminarian went to UNN to be a “**LION**” to capture his golden fleece, he took his winning sails with him. In June 1975, he completed his undergraduate studies and came out with 2¹ (Second Class Upper Honours Degree, narrowly missing 1st Class with 0 .003). Those were the days when outstanding scholastic merit quickly attracted the attention of government. Ben was a Federal Government Scholar throughout his four- year undergraduate programme at the University of Nigeria.

On completion of his undergraduate studies in 1975, the answer to National Duty took Professor Ben Eheazu to KATSINA where he served in the NYSC as a Tutor at the Arabic Teachers’ College, Katsina.

At the end of his national service, our valedictory lecturer was offered appointment as Graduate Assistant by both Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria and the University of Port Harcourt (Uniport). He accepted Uniport’s offer in August 1976 and thus became one of the first four pioneer bona fide academic staff of the Faculty of Education. In September of the same year, under the then Uniport staff development programme, he proceeded to the United Kingdom for further studies at the University of Wales (University College Cardiff). In 1977, he obtained the Master of Education (M.Ed) Degree **WITH DISTINCTION**. He also bagged the Kathleen Naughton Memorial Honour and Prize Award as the Best M.Ed. student of the University of Wales, 1977.

With the same vigor and the conquering spirit for which intellectual giants are known, Ben immediately registered for the Ph.D. programme of the University of Wales. He completed the programme in record time in 1979; but was forced by the University of Wales to remain in the institution for extra six months to meet the residency requirement. Thus in 1980, Ben became **Dr. Ben Eheazu**. Yes, Professor Eheazu’s educational progress reads like an epic poem!!

Research and Publications

In the area of research and Publications, Professor Eheazu has authored, coauthored and edited an enviable list of books, journal articles and chapters in refereed books relating to the field of Education in general and Adult and Non-Formal Education in particular. These contributions to knowledge culminated in his promotion to the rank of Professor with effect from January, 1989 – a record time of only 9 years after his Ph.D. The learned Professor has also presented many commissioned papers, keynote addresses, and lead papers in National and International Conferences, Seminars and Workshops. His analysis of topical issues is usually very robust and masculine and his style of delivery very emphatic, convincing and authoritative.

Career Progression and Iconic Contributions at Uniport

Career wise, Professor Eheazu, like a meteorite, rose fast and far in his professional career. A career that started with Graduate Assistantship in 1976 fully matured to the professorial rank by 1989 after going through the ranks.

Professor Ben Eheazu is a model teacher and a frontliner in Adult and Non-Formal Education. His teaching models are cushioned in journals, books and numerous technical papers. His incisive articles, comments and lectures on Environmental Adult Education rightly support the title of his valedictory lecture: **“Situational challenges of environmental degradation in Nigeria: Adult Education as a response”** As expected of an academic giant of his pedigree, Professor Eheazu has supervised and examined several successful Master’s and Doctoral degree students in the University of Port Harcourt and in other universities. He is a much sought after research consultant and External Examiner within and beyond the shores of Nigeria.

On the institutional development axis, Professor Ben Eheazu has, over the years, made significant contributions to the development of Uniport in general, and the Faculty of Education, in particular the details of which allowed time and space do not permit to list here.

Worthy of mention, however, are his pioneering initiatives in the establishment and growth of the Institute of Education, the Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education and the Federal Nomadic Education Centre at Uniport.

His administrative experiences as an academic include:

- i) Director, Federal Nomadic Education Centre, University of Port Harcourt (1999-present);
- ii) Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt (1995 – 1999);
- iii) Chairman, Committee of Deans of Education in Nigerian Universities (1997-1999);
- iv) National President, Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE); (1997 – 2006);
- v) Executive Member, Nigerian Academy of Education, (2004 – 2006);
- vi) Permanent member of Senate, University of Port Harcourt;
- vii) Chairman of Board, College of Continuing Education UNIPORT (2005 – 2010);
- viii) Member, University of Port Harcourt Governing Council (2007 – 2009).

Membership of Professional Organizations

Professor Benjamin Eheazu has also been an active Member/Fellow of a number of National and International Organizations and Associations in his professional area, including:

- i) Member, International Council for Adult Education;
- ii) Member, African Association for Literacy and Adult Education;
- iii) Member and Former President, Nigerian National Council for Adult Education;
- iv) Fellow, Nigerian Academy of Education;
- v) Member, Adult Education and Peace Movement (Sweden);
- vi) Member Common Wealth Association for the Education and Training of Adults (CAETA), UK.

Honours and Awards

The many academic laurels Professor Eheazu has won include:

1. Distinction, First School Leaving Certificate; 1960
2. Bishop's special prize as best London GCE candidate in Immaculate Conception Seminary Umuahia, 1967;
3. Kathleen Naughton Memorial Honour and Prize Award as Best M.Ed. candidate in the University of Wales, 1977;
4. Literacy Certificate of Merit (1989) awarded by the Adult Education Department; Nigeria Baptist Convention "in Recognition of Outstanding Meritorious Services rendered in the Fight Against Illiteracy";
5. Chieftaincy title of OMEREOHA 1 by home Autonomous Community, December 31st, 1987;
6. Golden Jubilee "Award of Excellence as a Distinguished Alumnus" by his Alma Mater, Immaculate Conception Catholic Seminary Umuahia, 11th December, 2010;
7. Holder of the Medallion of the prestigious *Ahijoku* lecture series awarded him by the South Eastern States of Nigeria, November, 2011;
8. Ngwa Patriots Forum Award for commitment to the cause of Ngwa Ethnic Nationality, 2012;

Social Life

Many of Professor Eheazu's admirers, colleagues, students and friends believe that he was born to "shape lives". His dedication, touch and style towards promotion of human welfare are indeed unique. Creating a success path for others to follow is the CenterPoint of his social life

While extolling Professor Ben Eheazu as a worthy academic, one would not forget to mention that he is at home with Ngwa, nay Igbo Culture, idioms and wise sayings. He was installed as a Chief by his Community in December 31st, 1987 with the title "OMEREOHA I" (meaning one who does good to all without discrimination). This was in recognition of his outstanding contributions towards the growth of his ethnic nationality and general progress of humanity. Among other social responsibilities of his, Professor Eheazu has

also been President of his town's Development Union since 1984. Ben is always giving and yet ever so grateful for small favours. He is usually referred to as "A man of gentle disposition, a man of the people, friendly and sharp-witted". These generally perceived qualities endear him to people.

Family Life

Professor Ben Eheazu is very happily married to a beautiful, intelligent and vibrant young lady, Dr. (Mrs.) Caroline Eheazu, who has born him five children 3 boys and 2 girls.

Vice-Chancellor Sir, Distinguished Academics, Ladies and Gentlemen, I hereby present to you, this much sought after scholar and happy family man, Professor, Benjamin Ajuwe Eheazu, B.Sc. Ed/Geography (UNN), M.Ed., Ph.D. (Wales), Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Education, Former Dean of Education, Professor of Adult and Non-Formal Education, an apostle of democracy, a lover of his people, a perfect gentleman, a model teacher, an original and innovative thinker and researcher, an exemplary academic leader and Nehemiah, the Omereoha I of Ngwa Land and holder of the prestigious Ndigbo Ahiajoku Medallion, an accomplished academic, to give his valedictory lecture.

THANK YOU.

Orator