

INNOVATIONS IN LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH FOR SECURITY AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Current security/health challenges is an indicator that Nigeria is passing through the darkest moments of history. In spite of measures being taken by the Federal Government and the colossal sum of money spent daily to curb the menace, the situation is rather deteriorating. This ugly trend has affected the economic development of the nation particularly in the North and impeded national integration and development. The gamut of this paper is that no nation divided against itself can ever stand and achieve meaningful and sustainable development. Development is enhanced only in an atmosphere of decorum. This paper unravels the place of literature in enhancing security, national integration and sustainable development. It further asserts that Literature in English has the potency to entertain, educate, celebrate the cultural values of a people and propagate government policies. The paper examines the development of literary creativity in English, particularly in the North, and laments its declining trend. The contention of this paper is that innovations in literature in English will enhance creative impulse of the people. It concludes by examining the causes of decline and recommend ways for curbing this abysmal menace.

Keywords: Literature-in-English, Innovations, Security, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

The impact of literature in enhancing national security integration and sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. Hence for literature to achieve its objective as "mirror" to the society, the need for creating conducive working environment for innovation to emerge and thrive in this field is desirable. As earlier stated, literature mirrors the society and as such, creative writers have often used their creative works to comment on certain burning issues in the society and advocate for unity and mutual coexistence for meaningful and sustainable development.

As a matter of fact, if there is anytime in the history of this country that literary creativity in English should be encouraged, it is now. The social insecurity, economic malaise, epidemic outbreak (Ebola), corruption and political turmoil in the nation today, particularly in the North, need urgent attention and the creative writers have a role to play to unite the nation and enhance development. It is in the light of this that this paper discusses

the security challenges in Nigeria, the functions of literature, the declining trend of literary creativity in Nigeria and postulates the way forward.

Conceptual Consideration

The key terms shall be accorded some consideration in order to lend interpretation within the contextual parameter of this discourse.

Security Challenge in Nigeria

Nigeria is currently bedeviled with serious security challenges as manifested in the increasing rates of kidnapping, armed robbery, pipe line vandalization, crude oil theft and principal among which is the suicide bombings and wanton killings by the Islamic sect, Boko Haram. The insecurity in Nigeria today is taking a very dangerous dimension because even religious institutions are not spared. If this ugly trend is not immediately checked it could impinge on the survival and corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation. No meaningful development can ever take place in an atmosphere of chaos and rancour. The responsibility of any government should be the protection of the nation from attack or subversion. The preparedness for military action, diligence in the matters of intelligence gathering and secrecy, the protection of rights, lives, properties and resources are also very critical to the functioning of a nation. It is indeed the security and stability of a nation that necessitated national integration, sustainable development, increased productivity, initiates growth and attract foreign investment. Unfortunately, Nigeria, particularly the North, is witnessing deteriorating security challenges in recent times. – Chibok girls.

National Integration

Integration in society entails the incorporation of disparate ethnic or religious elements of the population into a unified society and providing equal opportunity for all members of that society. In such a society, an individual's attainment of an education, access to any public or private facility, opportunity for employment, and ownership of property are neither denied nor limited by reason of ethnic, religion, or state of origin.

Sustainable Development

Previously, the attention was basically on the concept of "Development". However, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development tagged 'the Bruntland commission of 1987' shifted the attention by reshaping and modifying the concept to "Sustainable Development".

The most interesting aspect of sustainable development is the fact that it puts into consideration the present conditions of people as well as not compromising those that come later. Therefore, the concept of Sustainable National Development remains the modern parameter of measuring development.

Sustainable Development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. In another definition by Munasinghe (2004), sustainable national development is a process of improving the ranging of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities

to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems.

Age (2005) identified some objectives which sustainable national development is expected to realize: increase capital income and employment, promoting human welfare satisfying basic needs; protecting the environment. It is in the light of these definitions above that this paper examines the role of literature in English in enhancing security and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Transforming Education through Innovations

Education has been conceptualized in various ways by scholars. Education is seen as the light that drives away the darkness of ignorance and enables mankind to find its ways through tortures and labyrinth of development and civilization Ikechukwu, O.G. (2006).

From the forgoing, therefore, it can be perceived that education is an instrument or tool for achieving national development. The development and transformation of education has been a great challenge in this millennium. National policy on Education has adopted education as an instrument for effecting national development (Federal Republic). There is no doubt that education is central to the development of individuals and the society in general. There is a tremendous development in technology, which has necessitated constant technological change and innovation. Transforming education in the face of new technological change and innovation is imperative. The challenge for education in this millennium is the need for innovation in creating adaptable approach, which enhances young people's lives within the school and their future employment.

Innovation is defined as incremental, radical, and revolutionary changes in thinking, products, processes, or organization (*Wikipedia*). Innovations in term of teaching and learning, open distance learning, blended learning, collaboration learning and student centre learning. Computer aided learning not only used as an instructional material but also as a tool and learning facilitator. Technologies are keys to transforming learning environment.

Educators are faced with the task of creating an environment that can harness and create the wisdom and intellect of their teachers and staff. The key is to create schools that are built in collaboration, which can be assembled to harness their combined talents into innovations.

The Roles of Literature in English in a Society

Literature plays a leading role in any given society, whether as oral or in its written forms in setting cultural norms and refining existing culture. The cultural values of a people are encoded in their creative works. For example Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* gives us the details of the cultural values of the traditional Igbo people. As it were, the reader may admire and even adopt some of these values. He can also gain a deeper knowledge of the Igbo people and perhaps develop more respect and sympathy for them. Apart from the fact that national integration is enhanced, foreigners who may never meet a Nigeria in their entire lives have become acquainted with the Nigerian culture through creative works by Nigerians. They are made to appreciate the Nigerian culture and understand the Nigeria cosmology better. Solzhenitsyn in his Nobel Prize for Literature Speech in 1976 describes literature as embodying the soul of the particular nation where it is produced. Literatures

tends to convey the culture of a people or nation to another because of its ability to present to readers from other nations the concrete experiences of the nation concerned.

According to Bamikunle (1999), literature makes it possible for us to present ourselves in the way that we want to be understood and at the same time has the potential for satisfying at least potentially, the desire of others to understand us by looking at the way we live. This understanding can enable readers to appreciate the religious beliefs, culture and lifestyle of others better. This will enhance tolerance and reduce conflict in the society. Creative writing therefore, helps in integrating people and in producing group solidarity for collective thinking and action. Where people are so united it will be very difficult to take up arms against one another at the slightest provocation.

Literature also serves as an instrument of government propaganda. Many national governments often resort to using literature and creative works as propaganda machine to popularize their ideas and programmes. Every writer writes in order to influence his readers and since every writer has his own ideological belief which may be political or religious, it is logical to assume that all creative works of art are informed consciously and unconsciously by the ideological inclinations of their writers. Thus all works of literature are propagandist in some ways. In Russia and China literature has played a very predominant role in bringing revolution. Ngugi Wa Thiong' O 'S *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* have been consciously motivated by the need to propagate certain moral and political ideas in East Africa. When people are well informed and conscientized about government policies, they are motivated to support and cooperate with government in its developmental drives.

Lu Xun (1980) agrees that everything is bound to be influenced by its surroundings, and this applies to literature as well. However, he cautions that though devotees of art like to claim that literature can sway the course of world affairs, the truth is that politics comes first, and art changes accordingly. Xun further posits that it is wrong to see all literature as propaganda.

Creative works provide entertainment. In life we are faced with so many challenges. Sometimes it may be the death of a loved one. At other times we are distressed by the lack of progress in our endeavours, or upset by a friend or lover. Even when life is not complicated by any of these difficulties, it is sufficiently tough to make us seek some means of escape and relief. Literature provides the escape we seek by taking us away from the reality of our existence and mentally transporting us to another form of reality. We are absorbed completely in the imagined reality of the fictional worlds. Some forms of literature, such as romance, actually transport us to an imaginary world that is rosier than our own, a world where perfect love is attainable. The jilted lover escapes from the pains of his disappointment, a bereaved person is consoled. Creative works also entertain by indulging our sense of humour. We all love to laugh. We also enjoy jokes, caricatures, satires and ironies. Sometimes because the imaginary worlds presented in creative works are so unusual and funny, we find ourselves having a good laugh as we read or watch. A healthy and relaxed mind thinks and integrates well with others and can contribute meaningfully to the development of society. It tolerates and exercises restraint. It is a security bridge builder.

Literary works in English also aim at achieving therapeutic functions. Literature while providing for the reader a psychological route of escape from the hardships of daily

existence, writers, on the other hand, write in order to exorcise (get rid of) certain unpleasant experiences that had exerted undue influence over their lives. Having made such an experience the subject of literary composition, a writer usually feels thoroughly purged. He feels renewed and ready to start life afresh after flushing out of his system the psychological clogs created by unpleasant experiences in the past. A renewed mind can contribute positively towards enhancing security, integration and sustainable development. Literature over the years in Africa has been a revolutionary anchor geared toward checkmating the ills in the society and install an egalitarian society.

In Femi Osofisan's play titled *The Chattering* and the song, there is revolt against oppressive and tyrannical leadership of Alafin Abiodun.

Latoye:...

But in your reign Abiodun

The elephant eats and nothing remains for the antelope!

The buffalo drinks, and thee is drought in the land! soldiers,
seize him! He is ripe or eating!

Consequently, the people seize the Alafin and his wives, and begin to spin them round the growing frenzy chanting as a sacrificial ritual.

Wole Soyinka (2001) latest play entitled "KING BAABU", which draws inspiration from Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* explores the endless, yet devastating bestialities of African leadership. The playwright focuses on Africa's often sit-tight dictators, echoing the gradual destruction of civil society as obtained in Rwanda and Congo, the Central Africa Republic as well as Liberia and Sierra Leone, and by extension, in Nigeria under General Sani Abacha.

Although the Nobel Laureate could not admit that "KING BAABU" is a satire against the despotic rule of late General Sani Abacha, Soyinka hinted that the play had come under various titles one of which is "Sauna Bash" rumoured to have been coined from the names of the late General Sani Abacha.

Another committed radical writer of repute is Sembene Ousmane, a Senegalese who wrote *God's Bits of Wood* which can be regarded as an account of the Senegalese workers' struggle in 1948. The emphasis is on collective heroism - for Bakayoko, the urgent mission is the economic liberation and restoration of the dignity of the working class. According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'O (1981) in his famous book, *Writers in politics*,

Sembene analyses and then synthesizes; how he is involved in the particular without losing time, you feel that he is with the people, that is their fate and their eventual triumph in which he is interested.

Ngugi Wa Thiong' O (1981) further posits thus:

Unless we as African writers embrace such a vision - a vision anchored in the struggles of the people - we shall succumb to self - despair, cynicism, and individualism, or else we become mesmerized by superficial bourgeois progress which in the words of Karl Marx has never been possible without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation.

Frantz Fanon's *The wretched of the Earth* (1968) is revolutionary to the core, hence it is very likely that it was instrumental in winning independence for Algeria. The back page comment attests to this:

... a leading spokesman of revolution which won independence for Algeria.

... it is a brilliant examination of the role of violence in effecting historical change which has served leaders of emerging nations as a veritable handbook of revolutionary practice and social re-organization.

Chinweizu's book, *The West And The Rest of Us* (1975), achieved success tremendously in sensitizing the Third world nations. In his back page comment to the book, Noam Chomsky, concludes that the book 'combines learning, insight and passion to provide a remarkably enlightening and often deeply moving account of the European assault on Africa ...

In the book, Chinweizu (1975) is not afraid both to analyse and to chastise those in his native country, Nigeria who have emerged as partners of the imperialists. In the forward to the book, former President of the Republic of Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko decries the dehumanization of the third world nations by the Americans and their cohorts:

America's pets - cats and dogs - now consume \$2 billion worth of resources annually, and eat much better than most of humanity, dining elegantly on shrimp cocktails and liver pate at such places as the Animal Gourmet restaurants in New York City. Thus, in its most dramatic and obscene forum, the question is whether the labour and resources of the third world Nations should continue to contribute more to the opulence of America's dogs and cats than to the elementary good health of Third World humans.

Hubert Ogunde's (1962: p.272) staged play *Yoruba Ronu*, that caused him to be banned from the Western Region is radical in performance. In the play, he tells the Yorubas that the loss of prestige they have suffered was the result of quarrelling among their leaders:

*Yorubas undo themselves because of money
Yorubas conspire against each other because of jobs.
They turn the guilty to the innocent
And the innocent to the guilty.
They call the thief to break the house
And they call the owner of the house to catch him.
Once wisdom carried them to a high place of honour
Now they lie flat on the ground.
Those who were once their master,
Are now people to be pushed around
Yo! Yo! Yo!*

The satirical political play angered Chief Akintola the then 'Premier' of the 'Western' Region. Chief Akintola who was physically present at the venue of the performance 'staged a walk out'. The irony of it all is that the play was sponsored by Chief Akintola who did not watch the rehearsal before the actual performance. The play was a violent attack on Akintola who at the time had a strained relationship with the late Sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, his political God father.

Although Imamu Amiri Baraka, the black American revolutionary dramatist, poet, and Marxist ideologue writes from the shores of America, the most powerful Nation in the world, he finds himself caught up in the dilemma of creating art that is aesthetically powerful and also politically effective. Taking his artistic credo from Mao Tse - Tung's book, *Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature*, Baraka (2002) aims at a radical aesthetics:

The Declining Trend of Literary Creativity in English in Nigeria

In spite of the fact that literary creativity in English has many important functions that can lead to security, national integration and sustainable development, it is witnessing a declining trend especially in the Northern Nigeria.

The situation is quite disheartening considering the fact the Nigeria has produced renowned literary scholars who had really demonstrated creative zeal and ingenuity. Writers like Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, John Pepper Clark – Bekederemo, Festus Iyayi, Chinua Achebe, Sam Ukala, and in the Northern Nigeria we have writers like Zaynab Alkali, Abubakar Gimba, Helon Habila, Audee Tanimu Giwa, Adamu Kyuka, Aliyu Kamal, Mamman Vatsa, Danjuma Kasagi, Ibrahim Tahir, Muazu Maiwada, Samaila Bala and so on.

This geometrical decline in literary creativity inflicted a terrible blow to the Northern Nigeria. Akuso (2012) buttresses this declining trend by making reference to the 2012 IJMB examination. There was a sharp decline in the students' enrollment for literature in English particularly in the North. A quick glance at some of the tertiary institutions in the North and the number of candidates that enrolled for literature in English reveals thus: Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic, Katsina (0), Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma (1), Adamawa State Polytechnic, Yola (4), Kaduna State College of Education, Kafanchan (14), Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin (3), Sokoto State Polytechnic, (0), CPAS, Y/Yauri (0), and so on. This is a tragedy. Also many secondary schools in the North do not have literature in English in their course contents. Where they do, there are no competent teachers to teach the subject. If this ugly trend is not immediately checked, the future of literary creativity in English is at stake.

Reason's For The Declining Trend In Literary Creativity In English In Nigeria

One of the reasons why literary creativity in the country has not reached its desired level is the way the programmes in the Departments of English of our schools are structured. There is no conscious effort to encourage creativity in the course content. Many tertiary institutions do not have Creative Writing courses in the school *syllabi*. Even where such exist, there are no qualified and competent teachers to handle such courses. Therefore Universities and other higher institutions of learning turn out young graduates of English year in and year out who cannot express themselves in writing and whose talents and creative potentials have not yet been fully developed.

The market forces have also contributed in no small measure to the decline of the aesthetic and creative drive in this country. Young talented writers find it very difficult to publish their works because of high cost of publication. Publication outfits, apart from focusing their attention mostly on established writers, charge exorbitant publication fees. This has stifled the creative zeal of young writers. Only recently some renowned Publishing houses such as Longman and Heinemann in Nigeria are being sold out. This will further complicate issues.

The reading culture in the country is generally declining. Students spend most of their times on the campuses socializing and catching fond instead of reading. Where students do not read, they cannot appreciate the aesthetics of art and be motivated to write. The internet is also not helping matters. Students rely so much on the internet at the expense of reading their books. Bamikunle (1999) laments the devastating effect of the internet

which has intervened on the literary practices and further removed control of the text from the writer. The Internet has given the critics and the readers the possibility to enforce themselves as co-creators with the author on anything published in the internet. Every reader on the internet can "create" what is called "reader driven sequence" to a book. A reader may not accept the ending of a book for example, and take the liberty to "rewrite" his/her conclusion to the story. In this way the author can no longer claim full control of his book. The book remains perpetually open to new additions by other writers and critics. The internet therefore has affected not only the readers but also the writers.

The Way Forward

From the above discussions it is evident that literary creativity in English has the potentials of fostering national integration and development. It also educates, entertains, conscientizes and propagates our culture to readers outside our own social milieu. However, many reasons have accounted for the abysmal state of literary creativity in English in the Nigeria. In order to improve on the current situation, the following steps may be necessary.

1. There is need for a complete overhaul of the Departments of English in our Universities other tertiary institutions. Courses mounted on the English and Literature programmes should be specifically designed to enhance the development of the writing skills and creative talents of the students. School managements should be ready to open their doors and recruit qualified and competent lecturers and teachers from all over the world who can teach Creative Writing. Creative Writers' workshops, seminars and conferences should be organized at least once every session and seasoned writers be invited to give talks and share their experiences and the prospects of taking a career in writing. Also literary festivals should be encouraged. Through these efforts many will be motivated to develop their creative abilities and maximize their potentials in writing.

2. Literary Essay Competitions

Annual Essay Competitions should be organized by the school authorities for both students and staff and attractive prizes are awarded to the best entries. This will motivate them to write thus developing their creative ingenuity. This should also be used to hunt for talents who could be awarded scholarship to go for further studies in institutions where they could better realize their creative ambitions.

3. Call For Literary Works Sponsorship

Since literature plays a predominant role in propagating the governmental policies for socio-economic development and preserving our cultural values, it is just expedient that state governments and wealthy individuals in the country will be willing to encourage creative writers in English by offering them some grants to publish their works and even to study abroad. Also in view of the current security challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the North, writers could use their creative talents and ingenuity to preach peace and mutual coexistence. There will be no meaningful development where there is no peace. The writer is a reliable tool the government could use. He has a lot to offer.

Some Benefits of Teaching / Learning Literature

- Literature reserves a fundamental educative function as it strives to improve the lot of humanity through exposure to knowledge in every facet of life.
- Literature makes constructive commentaries and criticism of society/life thereby informing society of its drift towards development or destruction with a view to balancing society's focus.
- Literature is celebrated for its entertainment potential; it enhances leisure and relaxation.
- Literature is a formidable tool for the propagation of history, politics and culture.
- Literature provides a diagnostic, analytic, preventive and prescriptive commentaries on/to life.
- Literature facilitates language acquisition and language learning.
- Literature broadens one's mental horizon.
- Literature is didactic in orientation.
- Literature is a tool for the preservation of culture.

Conclusion

The appalling fact of the catastrophic extent to which, particularly, humanity has contributed to environmental devastation/degradation necessitates/demands urgent decisive commitment to environmental education. This paper has propositioned the utilization of the latent potentials of Literature in this unavoidable task.

The place of Literature in English in enhancing national security, integration and sustainable development is not to be doubted. Literature has played great roles in uniting people and mobilizing them for collective action. Where the creative spirit of a society is weak, development cannot be easily enhanced and where there is no development there is bound to be youth restiveness and insecurity. This paper is particularly concerned about the declining trend of literary creativity in English in Nigeria especially in the North in spite of its great potentials to enhance national security, integration and sustainable development.

Recommendation

1. Literature should be accorded a core/compulsory status as English and Mathematics at primary and secondary school levels.
2. Literature should be incorporated, as a course in the General Studies Department of all tertiary institutions of learning.
3. Literature should be accorded a Double Major course status in tertiary level of education.
4. Literature/Literary facilitation bodies should be established to enable the teachers to attend and contribute to workshops, seminars and conferences.
5. There should be adequate motivation and material facilitation to the teaching/learning of literature.

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