

ATTAINING THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR LITERATURE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The Annual Human Development Reports usually published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have always shown that there is a wide gap between the developed and underdeveloped countries of the world, especially, when indices such as the levels of literacy, poverty, child and maternal health care and life expectancy are considered. Efforts have always been put up by various international humanitarian bodies to bridge the development gap, especially in the African region. Such efforts include the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 after the failure of many countries, including Nigeria, to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) rolled out in the year 2000 by the United Nations (UN). Considering the 17 – point agenda put up by the UNDP, especially item 4, which is to, “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities” (UNDP, 2015), the place of education in the programme cannot be brushed aside. Education has always played a vital role in any nation’s development, of which Nigeria is not an exception. While this paper is of the opinion that in attaining this aspect of the development goal in educational sector, the roles of Literature in English, which is one of the subjects at the secondary school level in Nigeria, should be considered. Among the roles that literature can play in achieving the goals are: sensitization and awareness, entertainment, education and enlightenment, expression of cultural values, addressing social and material inequalities, propagation of efforts to end hunger, promotion of food security and sustainable agriculture. Literature can also assist in ensuring healthy life and promote wellbeing. The paper posits that the subject should be made compulsory for all students in schools while its teaching and learning should also be improved tremendously through the concerted efforts of both government and the Literature teachers.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Roles of Literature, Prospects of teaching literature, Challenges of Learning literature, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The development of any nation is anchored on programmes put up by its government to impact positively on the various sectors, such as, the politics, economy, education and socio-cultural activities, to mention a few. The usual beneficiaries of such programmes are the citizenry. However, it has been globally acknowledged that the major promoter of the programmes is education. Education has always been used by developed countries such as the USA, UK, France and others in fostering and improving their developmental programmes. Education is seen as a tool used by such countries in their scientific research innovations and major breakthroughs in the sciences and technologies. As educational programmes have, to a great extent, influenced the developed countries' global leadership positions, educational systems in Nigeria and in most cases African nations, have always been faced by challenges ranging from policy formulation to implementation.

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014 revised) emphasizes the role of education as a major and veritable instrument and tool for attaining the global sustainable development. The policy advocates the need for quality education, which can only be implemented by the government, as well as the quality of teachers produced by the system. Various subjects are taught in Nigerian schools as stipulated in the educational curriculum. The various subjects fall into sections such as Sciences, Humanities, Technical and Vocation; etc. Literature is one of the subjects and it falls into the Humanities division of the Nigerian educational system. At the secondary school level, it is known as Literature-in-English, encompassing all forms and varieties of Literature. Its three major genres or components are Poetry, Prose and Drama and its varieties include the Nigerian Literature, English Literature, American/Caribbean Literature, Pre and Post-Colonial Literatures, Children Literature, to mention some.

Literature-in-English used to be a core subject for all students in the school curriculum in the past. However, the Nigerian educational policy later changed this position. Thus, making the subject optional for students wishing to study science courses at the tertiary level and making it a compulsory subject for students who wish to study English Language and Literary studies in the University. It is not only made compulsory but must be passed at a credit grade in their secondary school certificate examinations. Such is presently the status of Literature-in-English in Nigeria.

It is pertinent, at this juncture, to discuss briefly the complementary role of Literature to English Language. English is Nigeria's official language used for economic, political, religious, cultural, social as well as educational purposes. Proficiency in Literature therefore, is widely believed to be an avenue for performing effectively in English. This point can further be buttressed when considering the aims and objectives of teaching Literature at the secondary level of education in Nigeria. The National Curriculum for Senior Secondary Schools sub-section of the National Policy on Education (NPE – NCSS, 1985 revised) produced by the Federal Ministry of Education under the auspices of the Nigerian Educational and Development Research Council (NERDC), in conjunction with the Comparative Educational Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC), states the aims and objectives of Literature teaching as to:

- (i) give students a rich and well rounded humanistic education through broadening the cultural horizon of students;*
- (ii) reinforce the English language skill already acquired by the students by exposing them to language in action in Literature texts and works;*
- (iii) expose students to the beauty and potentials of languages;*
- (iv) expose students to healthy human values and attributes;*
- (v) equip the students to develop the capacity for independent thought and judgment;*
- (vi) encourage attempts at creative writing.... specially for those who can benefit from it;*
- (vii) develop students' ability to respond appropriately and independently to literary works;*
- (viii) inculcate in the students the entertainment and instructive values of Literature as a follow-up to the literary skills learnt in the Junior Secondary School;*
- (ix) prepare the students to pass Literature in the Senior Secondary School Examinations and the Joint Matriculation Examination and also to prepare them for work; and*
- (x) utilize each literary activity as scaffolding for language growth.*

There is no doubt that the above aims and objectives of teaching Literature-in-English in the Nigerian secondary schools are lofty and will be in consonance with the aims and objectives of the global Sustainable Development Goals, if well implemented. This paper therefore limits itself to address the following issues of concern:

- i. Concept of Development
- ii. Concept of Sustainable Development
- iii. Nigeria and Sustainable Goals
- iv. Literature: (i) Concept and scope, (ii) aims and objectives of teaching each genre and Literary Appreciation
- v. The Role of Literature in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals
- vi. Challenges and Prospects for Literature Teaching and Learning in the Attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria
- vii. Recommendations and Conclusion

CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

In a broad sense, *development* is a product of planned activity aimed at bringing about a positive change which is meant to achieve a goal. It can be regarded as an action deliberately designed to bring about a positive change. The above stated view is corroborated by Adepoju and Aderinoye (2001), who are of the opinion that development is a process of change with two basic elements of planning and action. From their view, development involves planning a programme and ensuring that the plan is hatched and implemented to bring about the desired result, which is, a positive impact on people.

Todaro (2003) opines that development is a multi-faceted concept which implies the improvement in a qualitative manner in the living conditions of people on one hand and a process of economic and social transformation within countries, on the

other hand. This view is in consonance with Bamidele's (1999) assertion that, development is in connection with the individual, which subsequently determines the development of the nation involved. And, as opined by Abba and Anazodo (2006), development can be seen as a product of a sustained elevation of an entire society and its social system towards a more glorified and better life for its citizenry. In other words, development, as perceived by Paulley (2011), can mean a process which tends to alter an existing social structure, popular attitudes and national institutions with a view to accelerating economic growth, reduction of inequalities within societies as well as reduction of absolute poverty among the populace.

The sum-total of the above views, as well as others, brings us to the fact that 'development' is an encompassing phenomenon that involves the production and utilization of natural resources and human talent to improve the well-being of the people through the provision of reliable and affordable energy, decent housing, transportation and communication services, opportunities for employment and provision of basic amenities, a society devoid of poverty. It may therefore be very difficult for a country to claim that it has attained a developed status when it can not meet its citizenry's basic needs, such as: clothing, shelter, education, health care, social and infrastructural facilities, and all necessary things that will make life comfortable. No nation can also claim any development where there is a social polarization – a situation of the few well-to-do citizens oppressing the down-trodden, where corruption thrives in high places and injustice prevails, where there is no iota of transparency in government's business and where insecurity is the order of the day.

Concept of 'Sustainable Development'

According to Khale and Gurel-Atay (2014), '*sustainability*' is the process of living within the limits of available physical, natural and social resources in ways that allow the living systems in which humans are embedded, to thrive in perpetuity. Nnokam & Sule (2017) draw our attention to the concept of 'Sustainable Development' by saying that it was at the United Nations Conference on Human Development attended by various heads of government at Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972, a mention of it was made. The conference, among other things, discussed extensively the rights of families to have access to decent health and productive environment, democratic governance, uninterrupted energy supply and affordable education.

As cited by Aaron and Ibaba (2004) the term '*Sustainable Development*' is an idea conceived by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1983) to meet the development needs of the present generation without necessarily jeopardizing or compromising the needs of the future generations. Noting therefore that the needs of any generation are multi-dimensional, the United Nations (UN) believe that all countries should be able to provide these needs within the ambit of their economic resources. In line with the UN's position of meeting the needs of people, countries of the world, including Nigeria started to put up efforts to alleviate the sufferings of their citizenries. A major breakthrough towards this global effort is the UN's adoption of an 8 – point development agenda tagged "Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) in the year 2000, whose aims are:

(i) Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger

- (ii) Provision of Universal Basic Education*
- (iii) Promotion of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women*
- (iv) Reduction in Child Mortality*
- (v) Improvement in Maternal Health*
- (vi) Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other related diseases*
- (vii) Assurance of Environmental Sustainability*
- (viii) Development of a Global Partnership for Development*

As it was sure that many countries of the world, including Nigeria, could not meet up with the year 2015 deadline for achieving the goals, the United Nations Organization (UNO) had to meet in September 2015 to adopt the year 2030 Agenda known as “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs) either to replace the former MDGs or continue with the achievement of the goals. According to Osman, Ladhani, Findlater and McKay (2017), the SDGs are only meant to guide the world countries and to be used as parameter to measure the various countries’ achievement of the SDGs by the year 2030. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2015) in its booklet, (SDGs Booklet), states the 17 goals of the SDGs as below:

1. *End poverty in all its forms everywhere.*
2. *End hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture.*
3. *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being of all ages.*
4. *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning.*
5. *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.*
6. *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.*
7. *Ensure access, affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.*
8. *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.*
9. *Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.*
10. *Reduce inequality within and among countries.*
11. *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.*
12. *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.*
13. *Take urgent actions to combat climate change and its impact.*
14. *Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.*
15. *Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.*
16. *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*
17. *Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.*

Considering the fourth goal of the SDGs which states that countries should “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning” opportunities for all, it is no gainsaying that education is of great significance to a nation’s development. In an effort to achieve this fourth goal which pertains to education, it should be noted that “...quality education” is anchored on the quality of the teacher and the teaching strategies employed in the class by him. This, by extension, has a very vital impact on the learner, either positively or negatively. Both the teacher and the learner are major stakeholders in the education industry of any nation, including Nigeria. From the foregoing therefore, the Literature teacher or learner is one of the contributors to the developmental processes.

Nigeria and Sustainable Goals

After the UN’s adoption of the 8 – point Development Agenda tagged Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000, whose aims have already been stated in part of the preceding issues in this paper, successive governments in Nigeria have not been able to meet the goals as adequately as expected. Despite the promises of free education for all, free health care, free housing, subsidised oil products, good roads, un-interrupted power supply, eradication of poverty, the Nigerian citizenry are yet to enjoy these goodies fully since the year 2000. Rather, quality education, which can only be attained by the children of the well to-do citizens in private schools, is not at the reach of the children of the masses who can only be found in public schools. There has not been free health care, patients have to pay for drugs and even other health facilities at exorbitant costs. The housing estates built by governments are costly and cannot be afforded by average Nigerians. Roads are in bad state to the extent of becoming death traps for Nigerians. Power supply is in such a state of comatose to the extent that virtually every average Nigerian has a generator to supply his/her electrical needs. Graduate unemployment, despite the vacancies created by retirees, is increasing by day, as government is not ready to fill the existing vacancies. Therefore, non-implementation of goal number one of the MDGs, (i.e. eradication of extreme poverty and hunger) which, appears to be the pillar on which all other goals rest, is the major cause of the civil strife and threat to security in the country. A situation where majority of a country’s populace is in abject poverty and hunger will only militate against the development of such country!

After the flag-off of the MDGs in the year 2000, Nigeria proposed a Vision 2010 Agenda meant to implement the goals. By the year 2010 and after, it was obvious that successive governments were incapacitated. It is disheartening to note that several laudable policies that were formulated and programmes initiated and embarked upon, could not be implemented, due to nonchalant, greed, selfish interest, ethnocentrism and parochialism on the part of government and other stakeholders. The resultant effect of all these is that the country cannot grow economically as foreign business partners are hesitant to establish their businesses due to security threat that pervades the country and other reasons. The education sector is poorly funded with the poor state of infrastructural facilities in schools, dearth of teachers, delay in payment of teachers’ salaries, inability to fill existing vacancies, to mention only a few. As Nigeria and some world countries could not implement the millennium goals fully (UN’s Reports on MDGs 2015) the UN, as noted in a part of this paper, proposed the 17 – point agenda, tagged SDGs, which will last till 2030, in September, 2015 to replace the MDGs or continue with the implementation of the goals.

Concept of Literature/Literature-in-English and Objectives of teaching it

Literature as a concept, is diverse in nature and therefore, conceptualising it from different perspectives, will not only enable readers form an opinion of what Literature is or different from but will add value to its understanding and status. The word **Literature** is derived from the Latin word “*littera*”, which means “a letter of the alphabet”. In a wide sense, literature is taken to mean every expression in letters that is written down (Okolo, 2003). However, to scholars of Literature, the term does not apply to every form of written expression, it is limited to certain categories of written expressions which have artistic merit or aesthetic appeal. It can also further be explained that literature is a work of art created with words, either in oral or written form and whose value lies in its impressive nature and ability to arouse admiration. In describing the concept, Banu & Dogan (2013) state that it may be a misconception to define ‘literature’ in a way that may seem ambiguous to non-literary minds, rather, the term should be viewed from two perspectives, and so, the following could be a summation of the various definitions: Literature should include choosing any text worthy to be taught to students by teachers of Literature, when these texts are not being taught to students in other departments of a school or university; and that, Literature is a canon, which consists of those works in language by which a community defines itself through the course of its history. This includes works primarily artistic and those whose aesthetic qualities are only secondary.

Literary writers (Aristotle, 1956; Unoh, 1981; Collie & Slatter, 1987; Lazar, 1993; Ayo, 2003; Kure, 2011; Onuekwusi, 2013; Ogunnaike, 2016; and a host of others) have defined and discussed literature from different perspectives. These writers all agree that Literature is one of the subjects that has been contributing and will continue to contribute to the growth and development of any nation if given proper and adequate attention. It will, at this juncture be necessary to narrow down the definitions and scope of the term **Literature** to two broad senses. First, it can be used to refer to any written material on a subject; and second, as one of the school subjects studied by students in any school. It is this second sense that applies in this paper.

As a school subject, the National Curriculum for Senior Secondary Schools produced by the Federal Ministry of Education in 1985 (p. iii) unequivocally states the aims and objectives of teaching Literature-in-English, among others, as to:

... give students a rich and well-rounded humanistic education, which can be achieved by exposing them to works that are varied in perspective and universal in application; reinforce the English Language skill already acquired by exposing the students to Language in action in literary texts and works; encourage attempts at creative writing; and inculcate in the students the entertainment and instructive values of Literature.

The document further emphasizes the need to prepare students to pass Literature in the Senior Secondary School Examination (SSCE) and the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). For students who intend to pursue their course in English studies at the university, a credit grade in Literature-in-English is required at the SSCE, apart from also having a credit grade in English Language at that level of their education.

Literature-in-English as a subject in the secondary school has three components that constitute the subject. They are Prose, Drama, and Poetry. However, the National Curriculum also mandates the teaching of Literary Appreciation in addition to

teaching the three major generic divisions or components. The aims and objectives of teaching these components are spelt out in the document as follow:

Prose

Prose is a genre of Literature, usually written in narrative as a reflection of human experience. It can be an imaginative experience (fiction) or real experience (non-fiction) of the writer. The objectives of teaching Prose are to:

- (i) identify those elements in creative prose which will enhance a reader's response to specific texts, such as subject matter, characterisation, theme, setting, plot and language;
- (ii) recall incidents in fiction that are probable in life and whose interpretation can be of value since fiction is imaginative writing; and,
- (iii) be exposed to various ideas and values embodied in fictions.

Drama

Drama is life's experience usually enacted (i.e. acted on stage). It makes use of an art form known as 'impersonation' to depict personalities known as characters in the play. The objectives of teaching Drama in schools according to the Curriculum are to:

- (i) relate drama to life by demonstrating that the central action is from human experience;
- (ii) examine the inter-relationship and the difference between action in real life and action in drama; and,
- (iii) analyse action as a means of demonstrating and understanding elements of drama, such as dramatic techniques, structures, characterization, setting, etc.

Poetry

Poetry is an expression of experiences in a rhythmic form that is natural to human beings. The language is usually symbolic and aesthetic in nature. The objectives of teaching this component as stated in the curriculum are to:

- (i) expose different kinds of poems as a means of demonstrating the richness and variety of poetic expressions and ability;
- (ii) identify and evaluate the various linguistic and thematic components of poetry; and,
- (iii) encourage poetic creative expression through attempt at writing poems.

Literary Appreciation

As already stated, Literary Appreciation is not a component of Literature-in-English but the National Curriculum makes its teaching mandatory, as it spells out the following as objectives for teaching it. It should be taught in order to:

- (i) develop the students' critical sensitivity to Literature by introducing them to the techniques of decoding literary works;
- (ii) develop skills in Literature that will lead to independent assessment of Prose, Drama and Poetry.

The document encourages teachers to teach and allow students to discover the significance of literary texts and works, identify figures of speech and other literary devices and terms and their effectiveness in a text; and identify the effect of mood and tone of the writer.

Having highlighted the concept of Literature/Literature-in-English, its components and the aims and objectives of teaching it, it is pertinent at this juncture to discuss the challenges prospects of literature teaching in attaining the global sustaining development goals (SDGs) in education.

Prospects of Literature Teaching in the Attainment of the SDGs

Despite all the perceived challenges enumerated above, there also lie several prospects that Literature educators, teachers and students can leverage on in the march towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as stated below:

- **Incorporating Aspects of the SDGs into the Literature Curriculum**

English Language/Literature donor agencies and relevant government agencies should ensure incorporating aspects of the SDGs into the Literature curriculum so that by continuous teaching and learning of the respective SDGs in the classroom, more awareness and knowledge would be created and gained. As suggested by Owede and Duyilemi (2009), a very strong political will and commitment to education by government and international donor agencies is equally needed at this point to ensure that viable internal reforms to raise the efficiency of the education sector in terms of service delivery is urgently entrenched especially within the context of the drive towards achieving the SDGs.

- **Using Literature as a Sensitization and Awareness Programme of the SDGs**

One of the major roles of Literature is its ability to mirror the society. It is a subject used for correcting the ills of the society, educating the masses and entertaining the entire citizenry especially when the dramatic component of it is enacted. Therefore, Literature can play a vital role in this era where emphasis is placed on inclusiveness in the provision of education. This means that there is enormous responsibility lying on the shoulders of Literature educators and researchers to ensure that well-articulated awareness and sensitization programmes, targeting both the Nigerian government at all levels and the citizens are organized, where emphasis would be placed on the need to meet substantial number of the SDGs (if not all) within the time frame of 2030 and against the backdrop that Nigeria was unable to meet the previous 8 MDGs whose deadline expired in 2015.

- **Literature as a Problem-Solving Subject**

The point that has been made so far is that Literature as a subject has the potential to provide the much needed platform for the realization of the SDGs, given its unique nature of being a problem-solving field of teaching and learning process. It should be emphasized at this juncture that if Nigeria had failed to meet the previous 8 MDGs within a space of fifteen years on account of inappropriate implementation strategies, efforts should now be put in place to meet the target of the SDGs before 2030. One of such steps is to implement programmes in the education sector as adequately as required.

Literature as a subject should be made compulsory to all students both in the sciences and humanities, as it is a subject that deals directly with human growth and development, having it at the back of our minds that no nation can grow without proper education of its citizenry. As a problem-solving subject, Literature teachers should be encouraged to put in their best so that both the teaching and learning process will yield the desired result. The constant high rate of failure in Literature will reduce and by extension also reduce in English Language, which is a compulsory subject for all students to pass in order to forge ahead education-wise. This will go a long way in meeting the education sector's SDGs.

Other Roles of Literature-in-English towards Attaining Global Sustainable Development Goals

Among the other roles of Literature-in-English towards achieving the global sustainable development goals are: entertainment, teaching/education, societal reform, employment provision, propagation of history and culture, expansion of knowledge and mobilization towards eradication of poverty. The entertainment functions of literature is hidden in its ability to give pleasure, amusement and happiness through its various organs such as prose drama, theatre, stand-up comedy, poetry, etc. Many written plays, novels and poems have served as means of entertainment to their various readers and audience. For example, despite Amos Tutuola's *Palm wine Drunkard's* thematic and structural deficiencies, if one would not hide one's own feelings, its ability to create amusement cannot be hidden. The novelist's various metaphoric and hyperbolic use of language would not be forgotten easily.

More serious literary works written by well-educated Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ben Okri and other younger writers also entertain. Helon Habila's *Measuring Times* (2007) though a historical novel creates pleasures in a world dominated by men. In the text, Habila deals with deception, aftermaths of warfare, youthful exuberance, greed, love, hatred and insecurity. Though pleasurable, the text also teaches moral lesson about the need to be hopeful in all situations. For example Mamo and La-Mamo who are the twin brothers about whom the story is written were almost written off as failures in the society but at the end of the story, the duo assist to effect the desired change that led to the desired liberation of their people. This was achieved through determination and life of selflessness.

Another very important contribution that literature can make to achieve the goals is enlightenment and education on various human activities such as health care, family life, law, culture, politics, population, election, etc. For example, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) propagates culture education and traces the historical background of Colonialism and Christianity in Nigeria. The novel traces the pre-colonial and post-colonial experience of the Igbo people from 19th century. It is about the unpolluted and original Igbo society before the coming of the Europeans and the consequences of the British arrival. Most importantly, the novel centres on the life of Okonkwo, a famous Umuofia man who is everything to his people before the coming of the Europeans: a wrestling champion, a senior chief, a successful farmer, a respected husband of two wives and a defender of the ancestors and clan until things fall apart. Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) traces the problem of corruption in Nigeria to the origin of the country. In order to solve the problem as it affects Nigeria, we have to go to the background of the problems. The same corruption that brought the First Republic to its untimely end has given the nation sleepless nights even after fifty-eight years of its existence. Writers behave like prophets and their predictions often come true. The military coup that Achebe predicted that truncated the nation's first republic in *A man of the People* (1966)

takes place in Nigeria within the first six years of independence and has printed an indelible mark on the politics of the nation as we are all living witnesses today.

Through literature, the values inherent in the nation's culture can be expressed, eulogized or praised. An instance of this is in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966). The text teaches different traditional beliefs and cultures of the people. The novel has its setting in the village of Omokachi, a rural African community where modern ideas are absent. Beliefs in spiritual husband, betrothal and marriage are the focus of the text. In the text, Ekwueme marries Ahurole, his childhood friend through betrothal plans but later abandons her for Ihuoma through whom he meets his end.

Social and material inequalities that manifest in Nigerian societies can also be addressed through literature. It can also address the problems created by poverty in all its forms in the society. Festus Iyayi's *Violence* is a good example of this. The novel frowns at capitalism as an economic philosophy that is employed to promote unnecessary competition or rivalry in Nigeria. Another very important theme of the text is poverty versus virtue. A poor person cannot strongly protect his/her dignity and morality. In the novel, Adisa, though not loose in integrity, her desire for money to meet her needs makes her morally weak. This explains the state of many female members of the society who commit adultery in order to survive including catering for the well beings of their husband and children. Idemudia loves his wife but poverty is his major problem.

Literature can help to propagate the efforts of nations to end hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture. Apart from this it can help to promote the need to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managed forest, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation/biodiversity loss in different ways. In an attempt to achieve the above mentioned objectives, many poems in Niyi Osundare's anthology titled *Eye of the Earth* are relevant. In one of the poems, "Ours to Plough and not to Plunder" Niyi Osundare emphasizes the need to take care of the mother earth and not destroy it. In the poem, Osundare calls for orderliness, rectitude and restraint in the way human beings handle nature and its resources. In the first stanza of the poem, the poet projects the earth as the source for agricultural establishment in all its forms where man needs to plough and plant. He sees the "Hoe" as the "Barber" for the earth. In the second stanza, the poet emphasizes the need to fetch more farm implements such as Mattocks and Machetes. The need for calabashes, trays, and rocking baskets for harvesting is also emphasized. The third stanza talks about the need to explore earthly resources such as the "bread some hands of the Wheat field and legumes cloth" that is put on the "naked bosom of shivering moulds". The poem has a universal theme of the need to respect and preserve the earth. Also, the poem is a metaphor of the need for political leaders to guard and guide our national entity to prevent the resources from being vandalized so that it can be exploited for the good of all.

Apart from the above, literature can assist to ensure healthy life and promote the well being of all ages through giving values to things that are made in Nigeria such as music, musical instruments, arts, crafts, food items and locally manufactured products. For example, the beauty that is inherent in Nigerian traditional music, culture and power of music as a universal language is expressed in J P Clark's poem titled "Agbo-Dancer". The poem is symbolic and it speaks the language of all those who believe in Nigerian traditional solution to our national problems. A dance from Agbo, present day Delta State of Nigeria, expresses victory to the eloquent and trenchant voice of African music and the musical instruments which are African in origin. The first stanza of the poem presents the picture of a lady absolved and intoxicated with music which is

played with a stem completely made of animal skin. The music is not Western, but the one inherited from the musicians' fore-fathers and mothers. The second stanza of the poem invites the audience to come and participate in the labyrinth and bewilderment associated with the power of African Music. The poem ends with the guilt that the poet has in his heart for separating himself from his culture for some times. Despite this separation, the poet wants all modern African people to respect the culture of their people and request that people should prepare to "answer the communal call" at all times.

The need to ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote life-long learning could also be achieved through literary propagation. In Chukwu Emeka Ike's *Our Children are Coming* (1990) the need to give adequate attention to our children is emphasized. In the novel, Ike expresses his dissatisfaction with the injustices and inadequate attention meted to youths by the adults in the society. According to him, the inadequate attention has led to the generational gap between the old and the young. Ike complains about the gap that exists between parents and children, principal and students, university authority and their undergraduates, government officials and the youths generally. Ike sees failure to develop the youths as the portrait of crisis of youth's development.

Achievement in gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls is another role of Literature. This is captured in the agitation of our female writers who have become voices to reckon with through their various creative works in which they express their dissatisfaction with the dominance of male members on the female. They also seek a just, egalitarian and equal society where female members will be treated as equal rather than being subordinate to their male counterparts. Examples of these are demonstrated in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizens* (1974) and Earnest-Samuel, Gloria *Iheoma my Dear* (2016) among several others.

Challenges of teaching Literature and the effects on the Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals

- **Teachers' Awareness of SDGs**

Literature is the mirror of life and this is why it is important that Literature teachers should not only be diligent in the discharge of their duties, but ensure a proper implementation of government policies and programmes that would foster/enhance growth and development of their nation. However, a situation where teachers are not aware of government programmes, such as the SDGs, they may find it difficult to align with or work towards achieving the respective goals in the SDGs. As reported in a cross-sectional study carried out by Omisore, Babarinde, Bakare, and Asekun-Olarinmoye (2017) drawing their respondents from academic and non-academic staff and undergraduates from universities in South-West Nigeria, results show that 43% of the respondents are aware of the SDGs, 4.2% have knowledge of the SDGs while 52.8% have no knowledge of any SDGs. The report concludes that respondents with high awareness/knowledge level are those with higher educational qualifications or those who get to know through individual research about the SDGs. This situation does not augur well for attainment of the SDGs – a programme unknown to implementers and beneficiaries.

Teachers' Attitude towards their Job

The term 'attitude' as perceived in this paper is the belief system or feeling one holds towards a social or environmental issue of concern which can be positive, negative or ambivalent. Most teachers often develop negative attitude

towards teaching because of the ways both the government and people perceive it as a non-lucrative profession. Most people believe that teaching is a job meant for less fortunate and ‘unconnected’ people who have little or no hope for a brighter future. This perception has always had a negative effect on the attitude of teachers towards their job. The Literature teacher is not an exception in this case as he too sees himself as not being accorded the right recognition like his colleagues in other professions. This, has one way or the other, posed a problem to the achievement or sustainability of the development goal envisaged in Literature as a core subject in Nigeria’s education system.

- **Learner’s Attitude towards achieving the desired goal**

The notion that the Nigerian public is not a ‘reading public’ is often exhibited by Nigerian secondary school students, especially in the public schools. Researchers have shown that most students in the public schools lack basic/recommended textbooks especially in English Language and Literature-in-English. In particular, they complain about ‘too many books’ being recommended on Literature by the examining bodies. The lack of books, coupled with shoddy preparation for examinations, is a major factor that has always been responsible for the mass failure in English and Literature-in-English year in, year out. Yisa (2015) laments this attitude as he aptly says:

It is an undisputable fact that attitude of Nigerians to reading generally is not really encouraging. Very unpalatable is students’ unfavourable disposition to reading, courtesy of many apparent factors. Among them are: inadequate/lack of motivation of learners and their teachers, teachers’ non-possession of zeal to foster reading skill, students’ access to technological advancement such as internet and mobile phone, environment that is not conducive, lackadaisical attitudes of some guardians and parents on the education of their wards and children, among others.

The reading habit problem is also partly responsible for bad leadership and bad followership. If Nigerian leaders have read and digested some literary works, especially classical literature texts, their political lives would have been positively moulded to properly handle leadership challenges, among which are temptation to mismanage and embezzle public funds. The sum-total of this discourse is that it is one thing to have literary works created around developmental themes but it is another thing entirely to have them read by people such works are meant for. Therefore, one of the factors responsible for the crawling state of Nigeria’s development and its inability to reach the sustainable development goal in education is poor, inadequate reading habit of her citizens regardless of the abundant reading textual materials available at the citizens’ disposal.

- **Teachers’ Involvement in Government Policy Formulation and Implementation**

The low turnout rate in the involvement of teachers in the preparation of the curricular is a factor that has contributed to the inadequacies of Literature-in-English. Findings in major researches show that a low percentage of the subject’s teachers are involved in the planning and implementation of the curricular. More often than not, the Ministry of Education officials and personnel from the examining bodies, are responsible for planning the curricular. This major action of involving just a low percentage of teachers at the planning stage has been responsible for the lapses in Literature-in-English curricular design.

It should be noted that teachers’ experiences when implementing curricular programmes usually depict whether some of the objectives are achievable or not or whether the contents are probably contextually relevant or are at variance with

the learners' background. This partial or non-involvement of teachers in the planning of the curricular, has also been responsible for the disregard to cultural and socio-economic background of the learners and the inappropriate methodologies adopted in the class. This and other factors have contributed to the mass failure of students in both English Language and Literature-in-English at WAEC and NECO examinations in Nigeria secondary schools As earlier noted, Literature-in-English is a core subject in the humanities. It is therefore important that any instructional strategy employed by the teacher in the class should be able to yield the desired result of enabling students to massively pass the subject.

- **Government Attitude**

For accomplishment or implementation of any policy, government should be aware that workers or civil servants in the various sectors e.g. Ministries and parastatals are the actors while in the education sector, teachers are the major stakeholders. One of the impediments of successful implementation of policies is government's negative attitude towards the implementers. Most of the time, government finds it difficult to encourage teachers through incentives to do their work as it should be done. Delay in the payment of teachers' salaries, incessant and arbitrary transfer, favouritism for a few 'connected' people, etc; are some of the factors that have always militated against attainment of the sustainable goal in education.

- **Negative influence of Politics**

Another impediment for Literature to contribute its quota to national development is the un-conducive environment in which Nigerian Literature writers write. There is no doubt that politics over-rides all spheres of life directly or indirectly in Nigeria. The consequences of bad government range from epileptic public power supply, high cost of living, insecurity, and low standard of living, among others. Insecurity-wise, the early writers in the 1960s were more hit, and as epitomically put by Ikheloa (2016):

The early writers were priests burdened with their writing and many of them wrote under difficult conditions (Wole Soyinka famously wrote 'The Man Died' on toilet paper), many like the mythical Christopher Okigbo who died in a rain of bullets...

In addition to the above, writers like Ken SaroWiwa and Dele Giwa to mention a few, fell by the military gun bullets and bombshell for daring to condemn the excesses of the then military oligarchy in Nigeria. However, in this era of democratic governance, even though writers are free to write to condemn, such writings are often 'suppressed' by politicians who try to buy them over. Writers thus find it difficult not to be influenced and therefore resist writing the truth. However, where it is difficult to say or write the truth, the society may not grow or develop or reach its development goal, as being experienced in Nigeria today.

- **Teacher's Quality and its Effects**

Another problem which Literature encounters in Nigeria today revolves around the quality of teachers teaching it as a subject. In the classrooms, there seems to be little or no innovation on the part of the teachers. It is pathetic to note that most teachers of Literature still adopt any method at their disposal (Ogunnaike, 2016) to teach the subject. For example, the non-provision by government of ICT-based tools to complement the teaching of Literature is a problem. Coupled with this, the shoddy preparation of the teacher to the class, non-provision of in-service training workshops and seminars for improvement of teachers, all culminate into poor performance and poor results in the subject.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above discourse, the following are recommended:

- i. Government should encourage Literature teachers by giving them special incentives that will motivate them to achieve their goal.
- ii. Teachers of Literature should change their lukewarm attitude towards the teaching of the subject. Teaching should be done with the enthusiasm it deserves. Teachers should act as model or mentor to students so that they will see in the teachers an effortless command of literary texts. Teachers should propagate and encourage emotional and aesthetic responses in students, so as to make them become more sophisticated readers, capable of reading and understanding any literary text with little or no assistance from their teachers.
- iii. School authorities should endeavour to set up poetry and drama clubs in schools and award prizes to the best students after competitive performances. This will go a long way in serving as motivation to Literature students. Government should also provide and equip school libraries, where teachers and students can consult.
- iv. Academic learned associations such as the Nigeria English Scholars Association (NESA), Nigeria Literary Writers Association (NLWA) , Poetry Club, School Drama Association, Curriculum Organization of Nigeria and a host of other literary associations, should be more proactive and note that organizing or calling for conferences should go beyond mere paper presentation or theorization to achieving result-oriented conferences where effective and workable frameworks for implementation can be set to achieve the development goals for the benefit of their associations and the entire Nigerian society.
- v. The Literature-in-English Curriculum and programme should be re-appraised, re-invented and re-tooled to align itself with the current global realities that accompany the SDGs. Such re-tooling will no doubt create the needed awareness and knowledge of SDGs in the pre-service teachers undergoing professional preparation programmes.
- vi. Granted that learning from the mistake of the past is one of the best ways to correct a re-occurrence of an error, it will be a plus if there is a synergy and co-operation between the teacher education training institutions and the government's office coordinating the implementation of the SDGs at the Federal, State and Local government levels.
- vii. Literature experts such as poets, playwrights and novelists should try to produce literary texts that are within the level of the learners by making use of simple language and structures that the learners can easily comprehend.
- viii. Literature teachers in secondary schools should be trained on the use of methods that will promote higher achievements of Literature as a subject.
- ix. Incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) – based tools into the Literature Curriculum and training teachers on how to use them to complement their teaching strategies, will enhance and improve both the teaching and learning of Literature in schools.
- x. Mass recruitment of professional Literature teachers, especially university graduates, to teach the contents of the senior secondary school Literature curriculum, is of utmost importance and a solution to the dearth of teachers in schools.

CONCLUSION

The SDGs, spanning the years 2015 – 2030, should not be seen as a feat not realisable. If Nigeria has not been able to achieve completely the 8 goals of the MDGs in 2015, government should now be ready to put all machineries in motion to accomplish the SDGs. Education sector should be financially beefed up, teachers generally should be encouraged, while policies and programmes put up should be implemented and not allowed to be kept in view as it used to be in the past. Bureaucratic bottleneck should be removed during the process of implementation, funds for implementation should be properly monitored to avoid being diverted to other areas while every Nigerian should demonstrate and exhibit actions that are in consonance with patriotism. All the above, coupled with attitudes that will encourage government should be put up by the citizenry to accomplish the task of meeting the SD goals even before the target year of 2030.

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