

Exploration of the Concept of Sustainable Development and its Implications for the Individual and the Humanities

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Introduction

Sustainable development as a concept was unpopular until the popular definition of the concept in the Brundtland Report of 1987, where it was explained as “the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It was through this definition that the concept has been perceived until recent times when scholars began to interrogate the definition to give a more elaborate definition which truly portray sustainable development as a concept with multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary implications and application. Today, the concept of sustainable development has direct implication on every sphere of human life such as the society, the economy, and the environment including every institution of governance at private or public, national or international and multi-national levels. The concept of sustainable development is designed to protect and preserve the present socio-economic and ecological activities with the view to striking equilibrium among social, economic and environmental forces with the goal of creating a better community for every individual and transferring same to the next generation so that the decisions of today will not impede their developmental pursuits. If the objective of sustainable development is to be fully achieved without also compromising the need of the future generations, responsibility is placed on the individual, economy, environment, health care, governance and international partnerships and relations.

Sustainable Development and its implication for

the Individuals: Individuals play a key and significant role in sustainable development. As explained by Chatterjee and Sharma (2013), government initiative such as the “Earth Day” and Earth hour” in promoting sustainable development is not sufficient and cannot be adequate and may not help to reduce negative impact of human activities as long as no conscious change takes place in individuals to deliberately change their actions to promote sustainable development. It is possible for the government to clean the environment, the rivers,

etc. but without cleaning up the individual's heart, the individual will pollute the rivers and the environment the government is trying to clean. There is, therefore, need for the individuals to clean their hearts so as to be able to clean their environment.

Sustainable development is built on the premise of sustenance such as organising how human beings live in such a way that their actions do not hamper the 'sustainable ecosystem' i.e. environment, economy and the society. One of the ways this can be achieved is through promotion of values of collectivism instead of individualism, of a quality lifestyle that will improve the standard of living which promotes materialistic tendencies to the detriment of the environment and social structure and of the need to evolve a new ideological persuasion of developing a brand new relationship with human interdependence on 'sustainable ecosystem' and of the need to realise that human existence is connected with the planet and of its structure. Macy, (1990) explained that a foundation can be laid through a spiritual awakening towards protection of all and against all forms of exploitation. Furthermore, Chatterjee and Sharma (2013) submitted that to arrive at this state, there is need to make a journey from the outer materialistic behaviour towards closed doors of spirituality while Babalola (2018) submitted that one of the critical tool to mobilise individual support for sustainable development is through concerted and specific education for sustainable development.

Sustainable Development and its implication for the Economy:

Economic sustainability is an economic model that shifts focus from pure economic development without connecting such with its environmental impact. Economic sustainability is maintaining balance between the human need to improve lifestyles and feeling of well-being on one hand and preserving natural resources and ecosystems on which the present and the future generations depend. (Centre for Environmental Education, 2007) According to Harris (2003), an economically sustainable system is expected to produce goods and services on a continuous basis, to maintain manageable levels of government and external debt, and to avoid extreme sectoral imbalances which damage industrial production.

Furthermore, economic sustainability should maintain stable resource base, avoiding over exploitation of renewable resource systems and depleting of non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made adequate substitutes. Economic sustainability entails creating dignified living conditions for all with regard to the principles of human right, fairness and equitable distribution of resources among competing forces (people) living in the society whereby, equal opportunity and access is given to all people in the country's prosperity. The Rio Declaration pointed out that reducing disparities in living standards and poverty eradication, eliminating unsustainable patterns of production and consumption are essential to sustainable development.

Some scholars like Jackson (2009) and Latouche (2009), amongst others, have decried the possibility of economic growth without negative environmental effects, they have concluded that the vision of sustainable or green economic growth is unattainable or unrealistic. It has also been concluded by Haapanen and Tapio (2016) that there is need to downsize economic actions that have negative effects on the environment and human well-being by encouraging actions with positive effects. Once human well-being and alleviation of environmental degradation is achieved, it should not matter whether the economic grows or diminishes. In essence, no economy is expected to grow at the expense of the environment and collective well-being of the humans.

Environmental implications of Sustainable Development: The environment in the three pillars of sustainable development is crucial. Since human beings cannot survive without the environment, therefore, economic activities must essentially be carried out in an environment. This is because no economy can survive without the support of its environment. It is needless to say that people and their economy are a product of the environment. An environment surrounded by water will likely support fishing activities the same way arable lands will support farming activities. However, the goal of environmental sustainability is to preserve natural resources and to device alternate means of reducing human activities that could harm the environment. These resources according to Awan (2013), can be categorised as renewable, non-renewable and continuous resources. The renewable resources are those resources that are capable of natural

regeneration into useful products within a reasonable time. They have the capacity to renew themselves and be indefinitely available as long as their capacity to regenerate is not altered by natural disasters. They include soil, clean water, air, vegetation, plants and animals. Non-renewable resources are available in limited amounts and their rate of regeneration is so slow such that their availability is fixed. These include minerals, ground water etc. However, the continuous resources are such that could not be damaged by excessive use or over exploitation. Such resources are solar energy, wind, geothermal energy, gravity etc.

As established, there is a strong interaction among environment, economy, and the society and development cannot be termed sustainable except these forces are in perfect harmony. An international report titled "Our Common Future" by World Commission on Environment (WCED) in 1987. This is commonly known as "The Brundtland Report and it explained that over exploitation of resources may constrain humanity to compromise their ability to meet the essential needs of their people in future. Settled agriculture, the diversion of water courses, the extraction of minerals, the emission of heat and noxious gases into the atmosphere, commercial forests, and genetic manipulation, were all mentioned in the report as examples of human intervention in natural system during the course of development. Awan (2013) earmarked some environmental indicators through which the development of a country can be measured; Minimum level of waste; nature-based environmental designs; percentage of population using potable water; percentage of population using sewers; percentage of population using public transport or carpooling; percentage of prime agriculture land; percentage of households participating in recycling programmes; tons of hazardous waste generated annually; tones of per capita of solid waste generated annually; tons of toxic release annually; number of institutions dealing with environmental issues; number of environmental education classes in public and private academic institutions; legal environmental structure; awareness among the people about collective benefits of clean environment; people sensitivity to pollutions; nature of waste management system; budgetary allocation for environmental projects; volume of the use of chemicals and chemical fertilizers; level of health hazards amongst others. So, for environmental sustainability to be achieved in any of these there is need to put a structure in place to determine

individual, organisation and government adherence to these principles.

Healthcare Delivery and Sustainable Development: Principle I of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development states that human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and dynamic life in harmony with nature. The goals of sustainable development cannot be attained when there is a high occurrence of devastating illnesses, and population health cannot be maintained without environmentally sustainable development. Good health usually facilitates development, and development often promotes improved health. However, while improved health may be a prerequisite for development, some behavioural determinants of health, such as attitudes towards the environment, and people's lifestyles and consumption patterns, can impede the sustainability of the development process in the longer-term. Equally, development which is economically desirable e.g. in agriculture and industry, may have harmful consequences for health and the environment.

In spite of undoubted health advances in many areas, poor health continues to be a constraint on development efforts. In some cases the process of development itself is creating conditions where, as a result of economic, political and social upheaval, environmental degradation, and uneven development or increasing inequities, human health suffers still in such areas as life expectancy and child mortality; reproductive health; infectious and parasitic diseases; HIV/AIDS; malaria; tuberculosis; acute respiratory infections; mal-nutrition; injuries and violence; mental disorders; etc. The measures required to achieve sustainable economic, social and environmental development are manifold and will require co-ordinated intersectoral action. Programmes for the reduction of disease burden and for improved health services will also require massive scaling-up if they are to play their part in enhancing well-being on our planet.

The Role of Good Governance and Global Partnership for Sustainable Development: Good governance is essential to sustainable development and in the description of Kemp, Parto and Gibson (2005) governance and sustainable development are children of the same history and parentage. Good governance is a requirement for and a positive step towards sustainability. The European Commission,

good governance consists of openness and participation, accountability, effective policy coherence and integration. Good governance entails the existence of efficient and accountable institutions—political, judicial, administrative, economic, corporate—and entrenched rules that promote development, protect human rights, respect the rule of law, and ensure that people are free to participate in decisions that affect their lives. The EU and the ACP countries in 1999 explained a relationship between governance and equitable and sustainable development. Holtz, (2000) and UNDP (1997) argue that good governance promotes sustainable development including the aspects of poverty reduction, job creation, sustainable livelihoods, environmental protection and the advancement of women rights and inclusion. Bad governance leads to the opposite of the foregoing such as increase in poverty, diseases, unemployment and underdevelopment.

Building partnership is one of the goals of sustainable development. A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level. Urgent action is needed to mobilise, redirect and unlock the transformative power of trillions of dollars of private resources to deliver on sustainable development objectives. Long-term investments, including foreign direct investment, are needed in critical sectors, especially in developing countries. These include sustainable energy, infrastructure and transport, as well as information and communications technologies. Thus, it is a fact that sustainable development is a phenomenon that permeates all aspects of life and should be fully integrated to drive development.

Language and Sustainable Development

The capacity for language is one of the greatest endowments of humans. It is a unique attribute that serves ubiquitous functions and uses. The value of language to humanity seems to be under expressed especially as portrayed by definitions of language which in most cases emphasizes the communication functions and the expression of thoughts, emotions and ideas. For instance, Goldstein (2008) defines language as a system of communication using sounds or symbols that enables the expression of feelings, thoughts, ideas and experiences. Besides, an earlier

definition of language by Sapir (1921) captures it as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. In a similar vein, Iwara (2008) defines language as a unique system of symbols conventionally agreed among its users to permit a sharing of meaning. Other dimensions of the uses of language include personal relationships, self-development, self-identity, group identity, building friendships and partnerships, empowerment, national integration, and unity, cultural transmission and preservation and a medium of education.

A striking dimension of human language is that it is an aspect of human development which is not automatic as no one is born speaking a language. Humans acquire and learn a language. This provides a natural link between language and development. Language serves as one of the basic survival tools people need especially at the early stages of life when they are helpless without the skill of speaking. While a child develops physically, emotionally, parents wait anxiously for the day it will utter the first word of its life. The capacity for speech paves the way for the child to develop in other spheres of life.

Language is the key or medium of other forms of development. Development is a concept which is associated with some layers of meaning. It can signal growth, for example physiological change in size and height. It can also indicate maturity of body parts or organs for the proper functioning of the whole body system. When applied to the economy, it indicates increase in productive capacity of goods and services, increase in physical and critical infrastructures, providing employment opportunities, establishing industries, ensuring food security by improving and diversifying agricultural activities, creation of investment opportunities and fostering partnerships and close links with other countries.

In the health sector, development begins with basic knowledge of sanitation and personal hygiene, nutrition, and extends to provision of adequate health care centres, medical personnel, drugs and other health concerns. Development also means advancement in almost all spheres of life. It includes breakthroughs in science and technology, advancement in knowledge that bring about transformation of people and consequently the society.

Although there is no consensus on what is development or sustainable development, some definitions will be examined here. Ariyo (2006) described development as comprising four elements namely: political, economic, social and cultural. While the level of political development is measured by the openness of the political system, assurance of the opportunity to vote and be voted for, good governance and respect for the choice of the people, social development is measured by peaceful coexistence among the people and appropriate provision of right type, quantity and quality of the basic needs and social services. Cultural development indicates the extent the society has gradually moved from the primitive to a modern society without losing its distinct cultural identity. However, while the ultimate goal of development in terms of the four elements of this definition, remains making life more meaningful and enjoyable to the people by providing most of the basic needs and services of the people, the issue of ensuring the future of the next generation and the safety of the environment appears neglected. This gave rise to the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development takes cognizance of the environment and natural resources and the needs of the future generations.

In line with this development, a more widely used definition of sustainable development is that given by The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) which defines it as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. Part of the definition is the recognition of economic development, social development and environmental protection as components of sustainable development. The definition incorporates not only the ultimate goal of developmental programmes but also the manner in which they are to be executed. Development should reduce the burden of living, make life more meaningful and worthwhile for the people without jeopardizing the needs of the future generation and the environment and other natural resources upon which humans depend for a good living.

As pointed out earlier in this paper, language is an indispensable tool in all forms of human interaction and communication. It makes living together possible and a vehicle for sustainable development. Whether development is in the domain of economic,

social or environmental aspect, language is involved. For instance, education which is globally recognised as the bedrock of human and social transformation and any form of development is provided through the medium of language. Olaoye (2013) observed that language is a catalyst in educational development which is an important index of national development. Language is an instrument of thought that is needed in marshalling out ideas, clarifying concepts, conveying feelings, attitudes, emotions, attitudes and intentions. Language is a medium of instruction and the quality of education is closely tied to the level of proficiency of learners in the language of instruction. Quality education is a basic requirement for sustainable development. It ensures the production of sound minds in the various disciplines (mathematics, science, arts, technology, humanities) that can affect breakthroughs in the areas that pose challenges to human life. An important outcome of this quality education is the production of a critical mass of people who by their creative and innovative skills would bring about the much-needed development and transformation of their society. Apart from quality education, literacy is a requirement for development. A certain level of literacy is indispensable for effective participation of the people in developmental programmes. For citizens to be freed from poverty, they should possess a minimum level of literacy to enable them learn some skills. The literacy may not be in English language but in any of the local languages. Development is also about working together and sharing experiences. In this wise, language is an important medium for mobilising the people to participate in developmental programmes. Again, the local and foreign languages have important roles to play. It is through language that people could be sensitised, educated, made to share ideas and mobilized to participate in developmental activities. For instance, the government (State or Federal) could mobilize people to participate in such programmes as agriculture, environmental education, sanitation, eradication of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, child trafficking, kidnapping, alcoholism and so on. According to Agwu (2016), language is the only means by which members can be conscientised and positive attitude inculcated into them. Besides, working together, cooperating with groups and other countries are essential factors in development. Here again, language plays a central role. Language of initiative, trust, mutual benefit and interdependence are necessary. There is need to assert

ones position but with humility and consideration for the other group. In dealing with other countries, the language of diplomacy will be necessary also.

Moreover, it has always been said that development can only thrive in an atmosphere of peace. Peace is fragile and must always be nurtured and maintained through careful use of language. Language of abuse, rancour, hatred and contempt breeds conflict and paves the way for disharmony and war. There is language of peace-building which is crucial to sustainable development. This also suggests that in the distribution of development projects, government should ensure equity and justice and carry out proper sensitization and involvement of the masses.

The discussion has shown that language is very central to sustainable development. However, the language situation in Nigeria reveals that the multilingual ethnic composition poses a challenge to the effective utilization of the over 400 languages spoken in the country for development purposes. The fact that only a few of these languages are developed in terms of having orthography and vocabulary to cope with the study of science, restricts their use in education. The issue of language of choice for different functions has created ill feelings among the people, yielding ground to negative tendencies such as marginalization, language loyalty, ethnic intolerance, mistrust and fear of domination. Perhaps a way out of these linguistic challenges or multilingual character of the country is to invest in the development of more Nigerian languages and encourage the various levels of government to use them and promote language tolerance among the different ethnic groups.

In the same vein, quality education is the backbone of sustainable development. The educational system in Nigeria cannot be said to have met the criterion of quality. Something urgent has to be done to make education in Nigeria qualitative. Having explored the enormous role of language in all human endeavours including all forms of sustainable development, it is suggested that government should demonstrate a revolutionary posture in the development and use of Nigerian languages and enhance effective teaching of English in order to join other countries of the world in reaping the benefits of sustainable development goals which the country is in dire need of.

The Nexus of Literature Education and Sustainable Development

Education has been a crucial means of promoting

national development and a well-educated and t population will continue to promote the development of their communities and countries sustainably. The will also be in a position to contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of any country. The Millennium Development Goals (and later the Sustainable Development Goals) have shaped this development strategy. The broad goals of the global reforms are the acceleration of economic growth and social development. Governments all over the world have rigorously pursued these goals within a broader framework of transforming their economies into Knowledge Economy (KE). Consequently, one of the subjects included in the school curricula to equip learners with adequate knowledge and values required to live responsibly in the community is Literature in English.

The Concept and Values of Literature

Literature is understood in a multiplicity of ways. It is a body of written or oral works, such as novels, poetry, or drama that use words to stimulate the imagination and confront the reader with a unique vision of life. The underlying assumption here is that a work of literature is a creative, universal form of expression that addresses the emotional, spiritual, or intellectual concerns of humanity. Succinctly put, literature is any creative, factual and imaginative work about people and what they have done, believe, and have created or are willing to create. Literature is a multitude of works; written in books, journals, newspapers and magazines; spoken; acted; sung; filmed; drawn as cartoons or shown on television. Literature should not only portray the positive side of human activities but the negative consequences with the view to command a reversal for the better. This implies a balanced representation of the realities of human existence. Literature can be experienced through a variety of media; oral, audio, audio-visual and so on. It is an expression of culture because it documents human knowledge, belief and behaviour.

Literature as a vital instrument for moral and intellectual development of the individual and society dates back to the ancient times when literature, in the forms of poetry, songs, drama or oral prose, served as an instrument of entertainment, relaxation and education. Literature also plays an important role as a subject in the curriculum of secondary schools where it is taught as Literature-in-English. Teaching Literature-in-English at secondary school level aims at promoting a systematic development of both the language skills and literary

knowledge considered as essential ingredients for effective use of English in oral and written communication and in learning other school subjects. Literature-in-English also plays an important role in the complete development of the individual. It exposes students to well-rounded humanistic education, healthy human values and the beauty and potentials of language amongst other benefits. Central to the subject is the critical analysis of how language is purposefully and creatively used in texts in order to create meaning and explore issues or themes (Gill, 2006).

In addition, Literature in English helps to know more about diversity of human cultures and helps to understand human nature itself. Its scope covers works of art from different parts of Nigeria, Africa, Europe and other parts of the world, building students to get acquainted with the lifestyle of people from a wide spectrum of societies. It is an incontrovertible fact that the reading of literary texts is one sure way of bringing about understanding and tolerance of people of different tribes, tongues and nationalities thereby leading to better world peace. Meanings and ideologies are communicated through literary texts. These texts stimulate the readers' imagination, creativity and promote the development of sound intellect. This is usually achieved through realistic setting, characterisation, interesting but simple or complex language and style which enable the reader to relate to the text and be stimulated to examine his or her attitudes and find solutions to the problems and conflicts generated in the text. The study of Literature-in-English encourages students to enter imagined worlds, explore, examine, and reflect on both current and timeless issues, as well as their individuality and humanity. While it is agreed that some subjects contribute to the formation of the whole, the study of Literature-in-English has a unique effectiveness in opening the mind, giving an in depth and better understanding of personal values and the choices of action people make continually. From the foregoing, Literature-in-English is the study of an art of expression which concerns itself with not just what is expressed but also with the manner of its expression which is connotative and referential in nature.

The major benefits offered by Literature-in-English include: its being an instrument of acculturation of other cultural groups. In reading literary texts, readers get in contact with different cultures and become acquainted with their practices. Second, it also teaches morals; morals that enhance living in the family or group and the society in general. Third, it leads to all

round development of the child (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor). Literature-in-English deals directly with the culture, art, language of the people as well as enables people to think for themselves and respect the views and feelings of other people. Furthermore, it serves as a source of entertainment to its readers. It serves as a form of relaxation during leisure, some people resort to reading of novels to pass time or calm their nerves after tedious activities.

Culture, Literature and Development

Objectively speaking, the true African Culture and Literature is still undocumented. When one looks closely at the daily lives of ordinary Africans, one is bound to come out with some bench marks of what true African literature and culture can be. The total way of life of the ordinary African and the stories, drama, art and so on are dominated by communal values. Sharing, interconnectedness and co-operation dominate. These values are reflected in their interaction with each other, song and dance. Most of the moonlight stories told to children by their parents were geared towards encouraging social solidarity and cohesion. The stage for such stories was around a fireside after an evening meal or in the moonlight. Members of the household and even neighbours could join in such story telling times. Sometimes songs were sung which convey a message that encourages group behaviours and discourages individualism. True African culture is being manifested in what we call Life Support Strategies.

The Concept of Sustainable Development

The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) 1987 defines sustainable development as that development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet her own needs. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. These 17 Goals build on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals, while including new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities. The goals are interconnected – often the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with the other. The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and

pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations. They provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the environmental challenges of the world at large. The SDGs are an inclusive agenda. They tackle the root causes of poverty and unite us together to make a positive change for both people and planet. The SDGs provide us with a common plan and agenda to tackle some of the pressing challenges facing our world such as poverty, climate change and conflict.

From the 17 goals of SD, it could be deduced that literature education is relevant and imperative for achieving goals 11 and 16 which are: *making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable as well as promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.* This is due to the fact that in reading literary texts, readers get in contact with different cultures and become acquainted with their practices. Literature education could bridge cultural gaps among the ethnic groups and thereby reduce conflicts to its barest minimum. When students are exposed to literary works from different ethnic cultures, they are helped to widen their horizon and encouraged to develop the ability to tolerate, respect the view and culture of others and learn to live in peace with people from other parts of the world (Kolawole, 2018).. The ignorance of another culture creates fear, prejudice, animosity and a disconnection between cultures in today's society. As always, to be educated about a culture different from one's own is the key to combating this ignorance, bridge the gap and erase the fear and disconnection in order to start the reconciliation process. Teaching Literature-in-English helps to achieve all these. Given the need for sustainable development in Nigeria, a step in actualising sustainable development goals 11 and 16 and given the role education has played in world civilisation, Literature education has become imperative in Nigerian schools.

Literature and Sustainable Development

As people across the globe grapple with the consequences of environmental degradation, "teaching sustainability" within the context of the humanities is imperative, yet the challenges are daunting for many educators who struggle to address

the topic within their disciplinary norms. In Literary Studies, we have seen this dilemma played out in numerous, ongoing scholarly debates about the practice and teaching of ecocriticism and environmental literature, the relative value of theory versus more experiential learning, and the merit and methods of an interdisciplinary approach and an action-oriented curriculum.

Through a variety of readings, films, speakers, discussions, and writing assignments in literature instruction, students examined how threats to the natural environment are influencing our ways of living, and how communities are working to create more balanced lifestyles, social structures, and economies. Teaching the environment within standard literary texts is capable of achieving Sustainable Development when properly integrated and used to reflect the environment. In advancing knowledge of the environment, students read literature texts that explore the theme of identity, and they absorb a good deal of the ethics in the text – all of which primes them for ongoing discussion about civic life, personal lifestyle, and moral decision making. In the identity section we consider issues having to do with race and gender, money and ambition. Reading literary texts is conducive to preparing students to think about and analyse various beliefs and behaviors regarding the environment. In Literature close attention is paid to the rhetorical practices of texts. The use of cultural texts, dystopian or apocalyptic novels, nature writing, non-fiction and journalistic pieces – articles such as this one on “frames,” found and presented by a student in the class, are successful in drawing students into an even larger conversation – about the importance of communicating environmental issues to the public at large, and about how literature and other arts can play an essential role. Literature is crucial to achieving environmental awareness.

It has been argued the humanities are especially suited to speak to the rhetoric of crisis and to problems of futurity and scale because they demand that we understand how narratives about place, about value, and about the relation of social actors to those ideas are made. Our study of such narratives and their effectiveness is central, and it is enhanced by the valuable insights and information brought into our deliberations from scholarship in a variety of disciplines. Literature is the foundation of life. It places an emphasis on many topics from human

tragedies to tales of the ever-popular search for love. While it is physically written in words, these words come alive in the imagination of the mind, and its ability to comprehend the complexity or simplicity of the text. Literature enables people to see through the lenses of others, and sometimes even inanimate objects; therefore, it becomes a looking glass into the world as others view it. It is a journey that is inscribed in pages and powered by the imagination of the reader.

With the ability to see the world with a pair of fresh eyes, it triggers the reader to reflect upon their own lives. Reading a material that is relatable to the reader may teach them morals and encourage them to practice good judgement. This can be proven through public school systems, where the books that are emphasized the most tend to have a moral-teaching purpose behind the story. An example would be William Shakespeare's stories, where each one is meant to be reflective of human nature – both the good and bad. Consequently, this can promote better judgement of situations, so the reader does not find themselves in the same circumstances as perhaps those in the fiction world. Henceforth, literature is proven to not only be reflective of life, but it can also be used as a guide for the reader to follow and practice good judgement from (Steiner, Nash and Chase, 2008).

Therefore, the study of Literature-in-English in schools offers advantages such as building social tolerance through exposure to different cultures and values across the globe. Such exposures and contacts could benefit learners by helping them to develop interest in and appreciate other people's lifestyles, customs and cultures. These, according to Ogunyinka (2011), foster understanding and tolerance among peoples of different tribes, tongues and nationalities, leading to a better world and peace.

However, Nigeria remains handicapped by political and economic contradictions, social inequality and a considerable potential for violence due to the politicisation of identity (International Crisis Group, 2006) characterized by religious, ethnic and communal conflicts, insecurity, organised crime, human rights violations among others. Between 1999 till date, Nigeria experienced critical events that undermined her coexistence. Among the various ethnic groups and religions in Nigeria have arisen distrust and lack of confidence. According to Saruq (2007) and Igubor (2011), ethno-religious conflict is a major source of insecurity in Nigeria. Frequent and

persistent ethnic conflicts and religious clashes between the two dominant religions (Islam and Christianity) present the country with a major security challenge. In every part of Nigeria, there exists ethno-religious conflict which according to Igbor (2011) have arisen as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often associated with ethno-religious identities.

The term security has been used to mean protection against or safety from a future risk of severe deprivation, injury or death and requires rules, order and impartial adjudication and application. It is the existence of conditions within which people in a society can go about their normal daily activities without any threat to their lives or properties. It embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses and the nation against sabotage or violent occurrence. Security is the protection against all forms of harm whether physical, economic or psychological. It is however argued that security may not be absence of threats or security issues but the ability to rise to the challenges posed by threats with expediency and expertise. There cannot therefore be security without provision for national security.

The power of literary texts to construct sociocultural images and reflect different ways of experiencing the world has been widely acknowledged. The use of literary texts can promote reflection on cultural differences, develop understanding of the home culture, and consequently enhance more tolerant and open attitudes towards other cultures. Some authors point out the potential of fictional texts to develop critical self-awareness by engaging both students' cognitive and affective dimensions, which paves the way to intercultural awareness and understanding (Phipps and González 2004; Zacharias 2005). Such texts not only provide opportunities for developing our students' capacity for critical analysis of foreign cultures, but also for affective response when learners vicariously experience other attitudes and values. Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004), for instance, claim that cultural awareness may be achieved through experiencing the culture, either directly through visiting a culture, or indirectly through films, music or literature.

According to Thanasoulas (2010), exposure to

literary texts not only helps students increase their language competence, but also helps them define and redefine their own cultural values by exploring and interpreting the assumptions and beliefs of the target culture. Furthermore, Bredella (2003: 230) contends that art contributes to self-reflection and imaginative immersion in otherness thus fostering intercultural skills. In the same vein, Corbett (2010: 6-7) highlights the importance of using literary works and other cultural forms of expression as effective ways of enhancing tolerance for diversity and empathy; while Ghosn (2002) remarks on the potential of literature as a change agent since good literature contributes to the emotional development of the student by nurturing interpersonal and intercultural attitudes.

Although the potential of literary texts has been underestimated in the past, present methodologies have started to appreciate the advantages of using them not only promoting intercultural competence for communicative purposes but for developing cultural understanding as well to promote peaceful coexistence of various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Fiction would meet intercultural objectives as long as analytical and creative tasks were designed to enable students to explore different cultural perspectives and compare these to their own. In this sense, literary texts are authentic materials which may help discover culture-dependent beliefs, opinions, habits and viewpoints. Since there are many English language cultures, Pulverness (2004) strongly recommends teachers to use texts and materials which relate to more than one English-speaking culture and to avoid conveying the impression that they are focusing only on British or American culture. Different views can be used to promote multicultural literature so that it can help students to vicariously experience cross cultural borders, some research have proved that multicultural stories induce empathetic responses to the experiences of the story characters (Hägglom 2006).

Multicultural literature can provide a wide variety of values, beliefs and different perspectives which can enrich and enlarge our students' viewpoints. Thus, the use of literary texts avoids superficial, simplified, impersonal, or artificial ways of presenting cultural content in textbooks. Literature could then replace course-book cultural materials since it is proven to be more representative of the multilingual diversity of English language and culture. Furthermore, literary

texts can be used in conjunction with new methodological innovations to facilitate intercultural learning processes within different contexts, as well as to complement other sources of information. Literary experiences can foster peace. Students are introduced to critical thinking, problem solving and peace making strategies. It aids them in developing a range of skills, including research, mapping, dialogue, debate, role playing, creative writing and informed analysis. A variety of strategies like role-playing, story-telling, game playing, humour, mnemonics and metaphors are encouraged. Aesthetic literary programmes, interdisciplinary experiences, social\effective education, ecological and social responsibility, literary,cultural contents for learning are appreciated.

Peace education is enhanced by a comfortable stress-free classroom environment and by literature – based, creative-arts, compassion-building and conflict resolution. The teacher is the key element in creating the environment and modeling. Displaying posters, conducting project works, expanding children's global awareness, teaching conflict resolution, modeling how to use it when a problem becomes evident, clipping articles from the newspapers are all advisable. Setting up solidarity camps that brings together children of different cultural groups for recreational activities, sports activities that build character and promote a spirit of teamwork, cooperation and sportsmanship, media awareness to reduce violence and increase the peace – content in radio and television programmes, magazines focusing on peace themes, using dance, drama ,songs to educate the community on peace values puppetry and animation to popularise the values of fairness, non-violence and social harmony, participation in role plays, dramas ,composing peace poems, peace songs, participation in various days observed internationally such as Human Rights Day, United Nations Day, Environment Day etc. are to be promoted.

Literature serves as a powerful tool in enabling students to gain a better understanding of both their own culture and the cultures of others. Through this deeper knowledge, relationships can be strengthened, bridging the gap between students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Hseu & Hetzel, 2000). As students of the 21st century are global participants, it is important that they possess cultural

sensitivity. Through extensive research, Norton (2009) discovered that when students can relate global events to the themes, conflicts and characterisations found in multicultural literature, it helps them to better understand current world issues. Students therefore develop greater cognitive skills as they learn to engage with and critically evaluate the texts that they read.

Evans (2010) conducted a research using a range of multicultural picture books. Her aim was to determine whether student perspectives on diversity and the acceptance of others altered once they were exposed to multicultural texts. Evans concluded that exposure to multicultural literature increased students' awareness of the various social practices, values and belief systems of other cultures. Literature fosters positive self-esteem and prevents students from feeling isolated. It has the ability to nurture respect, empathy and acceptance among all students (Steiner et al, 2008). *Whoever You Are* is an older publication that illustrates perfectly how literature can promote unity among different cultures. The story highlights the fact that all children feel the same emotions no matter where they live in the world, what language they speak, or how they look. It suggests that although people have many differences, there are common traits that unite them.

Literature promotes the interaction of children across differing ethnic backgrounds (Steiner et al., 2008). Stories portraying cultural diversity can foster the belief that race is not a barrier, but rather a contribution to the beauty of our multicultural world. This ideal is portrayed in Kobald's *My Two Blankets* (2014). A young girl named Cartwheel relocates to a westernised country to escape the war that is occurring in her homeland. She feels lost and lonely until she meets a young girl in the park. Over time their friendship develops and the young girl helps Cartwheel to understand her new world. Literature can help students develop global awareness by introducing them to current cultural issues. When students vicariously experience the feelings and emotions of others through literature, they are encouraged to look critically at the world and gain a greater understanding of the global community (Monobe & Son, 2014). Literature also reveals the hardships that refugees often experience when seeking a place of safety. They allow students to reflect upon and critically analyse the issue of asylum seekers and the idea of a fairer community. John

Marsden portrays the above issues in a unique and thought-provoking manner in his book *Home and Away* (2008).

The argument is that if literary works about the total way of life of people are given keen attention, the world will realise a cursory link between culture, literature and sustainable development. Respect for other cultures, be they inferior or dominant, high or low is a necessary condition for a global attempt to achieve sustainable development with every stakeholder getting involved and staying engaged. This is an important value derived from the teaching and learning of literature as a humanising discipline. The relationship between culture and literature calls for a discussion of culture and sustainable development.

Culture and Sustainable Development

The meaning of culture depends on the views or standpoints of various disciplines. This is because it is a construct that cuts across human life and living hence, its definition by an anthropologist, a sociologist and a person in the arts and or humanities would be from the perspective of each discipline. Culture is the complex and broad set of relationships, values, attitudes and behaviours that bind a specific community, consciously or unconsciously. A group of people living together are doing so because of mutual agreement on language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts and whoever would live among such a group would have to acculturate before he or she can fit in. This is because every human society has its social behaviours and norms which are transmitted through social learning in the society. (Balogun and Morolahun, 2017).

Furthermore, it must be stated that man is born into a specific culture with prevailing values and opportunities. This, by implication, means that as man changes alongside circumstances around him, his culture also changes. This is in line with the submission of Falola and Dauda (2017: 443) who submit that culture is dynamic and ever changing. They observe that the change is a worldwide one because it is not limited to a group of people. The reason motivated Williams (1958) previous submission that culture is dynamic, shaping and being shaped by those who occupy it.

The culture of a people is broad and encompasses such elements as the arts, clothing, literature, entertainment, mass media, tourism, tradition, performing arts, visual arts and so on of the people.

These elements give significance to people within a particular community because of the shared values. As a result of the importance of culture to the human race, it has been considered an important pillar by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) since 2010. The organisation discovers that achieving the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) would be a mirage if the culture of the people is not taken into consideration. To this end, culture is considered the fourth pillar of sustainable development by UNESCO. Culture could therefore be regarded as a driver and an enabler of sustainable development.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Enu and Bateye (2017) report that sustainable development is the offshoot of the United Nations Brundtland (1987) Report and that it is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as Global Goals, are a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations (2015). The formal name of the SDGs is 'Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' that has been shortened to 2030 Agenda. The goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. A further explanation was offered by Kolawole (2016).

The goals are developed to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which ended in 2015 and the framework does not distinguish between developed and developing nations, it applies to all the 193 member states of the UN and the global civil society. The SDGs build on principles agreed upon in Resolution A/RES/66/288, entitled, "The Future We Want". The fourth of the SDGs, which is the focus of this paper, states, "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning". If this goal is to be achieved, particularly in the developing countries, it can only be through the culture of the people.

The overall essence of the MDGs and SDGs is to ensure universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world. While most developed countries have no problem in setting machineries in motion in order to achieve these goals, the actualisation of such in developing countries has always been a big task. A major cause of this is the use of foreign culture to pass

across these goals.

It is a known fact that majority of people in developing countries are illiterates and live in rural areas where social amenities that will facilitate development are not provided hence, they resort to traditional ways of doing things. Lofty and laudable as the goals of SDGs are, they can only be successful if the indigenous languages of the people are used to inform and educate them. Case studies of how the goals of the MDGs were achieved in some countries through indigenous languages are recorded by Summer Institute of Linguistics (n.d.) and other documents. If inclusive and quality education for all is to be achieved, rural dwellers have to be sensitised. However, sensitisation cannot take place in a vacuum, the manpower to use has to be employed and trained while adequate materials will be provided by the government at all levels.

Realising that education is in the concurrent list, stakeholders at all levels of governance have to collaborate to ensure that material resources are provided from time to time in order to ensure that the goal four of SDGs is achieved. This also can be achieved if government goes back to the era of inspectors of education. Means of transportation should be provided by government while there should be regular meetings between government and the people where each party will express its opinion. Realising the fact that lifelong education is both formal and informal, it becomes imperative that the culture of the people in a given community would enhance the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. This is due to the fact that the ways of life of a people is best transmitted through the language of the people. If the development agenda by the year 2030 which SDGs is all about is to be achieved successfully, the culture of the people is a *sine qua non* to achieving this and one way of inculcating the education into the sustainable paradigm is through education.

Education and Sustainable Development

Education, as a concept, has been defined by many scholars and experts in different ways. Fafunwa (1994) defines education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours which are of positive value to the society in which s/he lives. Education was also conceived as a process of transferring and transmitting culture thorough formal and informal means and it also involves training of people mentally, physically and

psychological in order to foster social development. Education helps to foster growth and continuity through transmission and dissemination of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to adults and young adults in the society. Holborn and Haralambos (2004) see education as an institution that enables an individual to think freely and rationally which makes social progress and innovation possible. UNESCO (2000) conceives education as the total process of developing human ability and behaviour.

Education is seen as the light that drives away the darkness of ignorance and enables mankind to find its ways through the tortures and labyrinth of development and civilisation (Ikechukwu, 2006). Osuji (2004) posits that the essence of education is the harmonious development of individual's physical, mental, spiritual and social powers, so that he or she is equipped to offer useful service to God and humanity. Education entails the development in the three domains of education which includes cognitive, affective and psychomotor for optimal function and performance of individual in the society. However, assistance should be rendered to individual to maximise their potentials mentally, emotionally and psychologically. Education is not an end in itself but a means to an end. It is a long-life process that liberates people from ignorance and superstition. Education could help individuals in developing their personality so that they can contribute their own quota to the development of the society and become acceptable member of the society. Three forms of education could be identified i.e. formal education, which we obtain in schools, non-formal education that has the semblance of apprenticeship system such as learning catering, tailoring or carpentry and informal education which we obtained from the church, mosque, farm, market, farm, family and peer group. The three forms of education combined to contribute meaningfully to the overall personality development of an individual and help him to be a useful member of the society.

In all nations of the world, education is seen as instrument for promoting national development. Development in all spheres of national life can only be achieved through the instrumentality of education. Development is associated with a positive change in the condition of individual, groups, communities or even a country as a whole. Education and sustainable development are Siamese twins and two sides of the same coin. The two concepts are interrelated, interwoven and correlative. Education is a tool which

can be used to orchestrate sustainable development. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in 2002 states that sustainable development is built on three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars namely, economic growth, social development and environmental protection and sustainability which must be established at local, national, regional and global levels.

Education for sustainable development goes beyond a concept to become an approach to teaching and learning based on the principles and practice of sustainability. It is an approach that combines the development needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of the future while also maintaining ecological integrity (Osuji, 2004). It means that attention should be geared towards ecological and environmental issues via our initiative, resourcefulness and discipline. Meeting the needs of the present generation through the instrumentality of language should not be a clog in the wheel of meeting the needs of the future generation. The goal of sustainable development could be achieved when there is improvement in numeracy and literacy. Sustainability involves such issues as human rights, poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, international understanding, global solidarity, environmental protection, democracy, health, biological and landscape diversity, climate change, gender empowerment and equity, protection of indigenous cultures.

The role of education for sustainable development is to inculcate the right values, knowledge, skills and attitudes to help individuals to make informed decisions that would affect their life positively now and in the future. The objectives and goals of education for sustainable development are not restricted to formal education alone but also extend to non-formal and semi-formal education. Education is perceived as the foundation and agent of change to realising the goals and objectives of education for sustainable development. It is imperative, from the foregoing therefore, to examine the interface of language, literature, culture, education and sustainable development in our concern to using these concepts to drive development sustainably.

The Interface of Language, Literature, Culture, Education with Sustainable Development

In discussing the interface of language, literature, culture and education with sustainable development,

it is important to state that since the transition of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) project (2000) into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) project (2015), sustainable development has become a very popular concept used in diverse fields. Though several scholars have explained the concept in different ways, no single definition is fully comprehensive to capture all the characteristics of the term. Thus, the wide range of definitions also reflect the inherent similarities and contradictions of the several interpretations of the term (Adesoji and Adetoro 2014).

However, in spite of this diversity, there is a main concern, which is to keep in check the impacts of the ever-expanding human activities and development on earth in order to ensure that the resources and the living conditions meet the societal needs without upsetting the environment and other natural systems (Smith & Rees, 1998; WHO, 2005). In addition, sustainable development is seen as the development that satisfies the present needs without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs (Smith and Rees, 1998). It is the need to ensure a better quality of life now and in future, in just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystem (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (2003). According to Falaye (2014), sustainable development as an organisational principle, addresses natural systems for now and in the future linking the present to the future and it is most often fragmented into three domains namely environmental sustainability; economic sustainability and social sustainability. Hasna (2007) observes that sustainable development has been further extended to cover other domains such as ecological, political and cultural sustainability. Indeed, sustainable development now covers all areas of human endeavour including such critical areas as language, literature, culture and education with which are concerned in this paper. Thus, in our discussion, we have explored the relationship of each of these areas within the concept of sustainable development as well as their interface.

In our discussion of language and sustainable development, it was observed that the capacity for language is one of the greatest endowments of humans. It is also a unique attribute that serves ubiquitous functions and uses and helps in communicating whatever is to be achieved. We also stated that the striking dimension of human language is that it is an aspect of human development which is

not automatic as no one is born speaking a language. Humans acquire and learn a language. This provides a natural link between language and development hence language is the key or medium of all other forms of development and indeed an indispensable tool in all forms of human interaction and communication. It makes living together possible and serves as a vehicle for sustainable development. That discussion concludes by stating that language is central to sustainable development. However, it notes that the language situation in Nigeria, which is as a result of the multilingual ethnic composition of the country, poses a challenge to the effective utilisation of the over 400 languages spoken in the country for development purposes. It suggests that a way out of the linguistic challenges will be to invest in the development of more Nigerian languages and encourage the various levels of government to use them and promote language tolerance among the different ethnic groups. The importance of using indigenous languages to achieve SDGs cannot be over emphasised. Kolawole (2016), after identifying some goals in areas that are critical to sustainable national development, stated that it is impossible to convey the issues to the people in the medium of the English language.

Next is the nexus of literature, education and sustainable development. We started the discussion on the nexus of literature education and sustainable development by quoting Marope (2005) who stated that education has continued to be a crucial means to national development and that a well-educated and trained population is found to contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of any country. Also, the MDGs which transited into the SDGs have shaped this development strategy with its broad goals being the acceleration of economic growth and social development. This is what governments all over the world have rigorously pursued within a broader framework of transforming their economies into Knowledge Economy (KE). Thus, literature in English is one of the subjects included in the school curricula to equip learners with adequate knowledge and values required to live responsibly in the community.

The third critical issue that we have discussed in this paper is culture and sustainable development. In our previous discussions, it was stated that culture is generally regarded as whole way of life or the totality of what a people or community believe and practice. It is the complex and broad set of relationships,

values, attitudes and behaviours that bind a specific community. The culture of a people therefore encompasses such elements as the arts, clothing, literature, entertainment, the mass media, tourism, tradition, performing arts, visual arts and so on. These elements give significance to people within a particular community because of their cherished and shared values which are jealously guarded, preserved and transmitted from one generation to the other. The culture of a people is therefore so important that the United Nations Educational Scientific and cultural Organization (UNESCO) considered it cardinal to the achievement of the MDGs and SDGs goals. As has been observed, the overall essence of the MDGs and SDGs is to ensure universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world. While most developed countries have no problem in setting machineries in motion in order to achieve these goals, the actualisation of such in developing countries has always been a big task. A major cause of this is the use of foreign culture to pass across these goals. With culture comes language and since majority of the people are illiterate and live in rural areas, it stands to reason that for the SDGs to be successful the indigenous languages of the people should be used to inform and educate them. The suggestion here is inclusive of quality and life-long and life wide education. Thus, the culture of the people would enhance the achievement of the SDGs. The last critical issue of discussion in this paper is education and sustainable development. The paper discusses the concept of education, goes on to discuss the concept of sustainable development and lastly discusses education and sustainable development. It states that in all nations of the world, education is seen as an instrument per excellence for national development and development in all spheres of national life can only be achieved through the instrumentality of education. Education and sustainable development are considered to be two sides of the same coin and so they are interrelated, interwoven and correlative. The paper states that sustainable development goes beyond a concept to be an approach to teaching and training based on principles and practice of sustainability. It is an approach that combines development needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of the future while also maintaining ecological integrity. It concludes by saying that education for sustainable development is not restricted to formal education alone but also extends

to non-formal and semi-formal education. Education is therefore perceived as the foundation and agent of change to realize the goals and objectives of education for sustainable development.

Conclusion

What has become clear from all the discussions is that language, literature, culture and education are interconnected and inter-dependent in achieving sustainable development goals in specific areas when and if properly employed. They are not mutually exclusive. In other words, they should go together and cannot be divided. Conscious effort should be made to establish a strong synergy among them for maximum results. For instance, we know that language is indispensable in every human communication and interaction and it is the key and medium of other forms of development, it has to be the right language. For language to achieve the desired result in this particular context it has to be the language in which the people think and live and carry on their daily activities. It is therefore the indigenous languages that can serve this purpose. Literature on the other hand is a vital instrument for moral and intellectual development of the individual and society. Literature in time past, in the form of poetry, songs, drama or oral prose, served as an instrument of entertainment, relaxation and education. Literature offers a rich resource for not only language but also for culture and our lives as rich cultural information is embedded in Literature. Literature helps us to know more about the diversity of human cultures and helps to understand human nature itself. Culture is all embracing and so whatever is not in the culture cannot find expression in the language. It is through education that language, literature and culture, that the people can be informed about sustainable development as they meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It can be concluded that annexing these diverse concepts into one single act of achieving sustainable development is one sure way of taking development to the door step of the people for whom development is a critical issue that must be comprehensively tackled.

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