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# THE STUDY OF LITERATURE AS A CRITICAL FACTOR IN REVAMPING EDUCATION FOR MEETING THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF E-LEARNING IN NIGERIA

**By**

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## Abstract

*Revamping education for meeting the needs and challenges of e-learning in Nigeria aims at placing Nigeria among one of the twenty largest economics in the world. To actualize this, the Nigerian government designed a 'seven-point agenda in 2007'. Education is one of the items on the agenda. The inclusion of education on the agenda is an indication that the government recognizes that manpower production is the responsibility of the education sector. However, the standard of education in Nigeria has been a source of concern because of its downward trend. Due to the state of education in Nigeria, this paper focuses on the study of literature as a critical factor for revamping education for meeting the needs and challenges of e-learning in Nigeria. Therefore, the paper proposes the incorporation of literature in the curriculum of every school in Nigeria.*

**Introduction**

Osunkentan (2004:310) observes that:

Nigeria… is a complex society. Culturally it comprises many tribal and linguistic groups. Economically, Nigerian is poor in the midst of abundant human acre material resources because it operates a capitalist economy. Politically, it s characterized by ethnic rivalry, political corruption and social injustice culminating in political instability and national insecurity.

Indeed, Nigeria has been weighed down by too many anomalies which have hindered her growth and development. Such anomalies manifest themselves in almost every aspect of life in Nigeria thereby making it imperative for the Nigerian government to map out a strategy for the growth and development of the country.

One of the meaning of the word "Revamp" as recorded in the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners is "to Improve the way that something looks or operates by making major changes to it". Taking a cue from the dictionary meaning of the word revamping education for meeting the needs and challenges of E-learning in Nigeria is a major change intended to make for the future in order things to operate better. (i.e. plan for the future) of Nigeria and the actualization of such a plan depends on the use of "Intelligence and Imagination". One of the Nigeria's plan 2020 (NVC 2020/NSC) states that:

By 2020 Nigeria will be one of the 20 largest economies in the world able to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and establish itself as a significant player in the global economic and political arena. To actualize the plan, the Nigerian government designed a "Seven-point agenda" which revolves around "Polity", "Macro-economy", "Infrastructure", "Education", "Health", "Agriculture", and "Manufacturing". However, the focus of this paper is on the Nigerian education and its relevance in the actualization of revamping education for meeting the needs and challenges of e-learning in Nigeria. Concerning education, the plan aims at, modern and vibrant education system which

provides for every Nigerian the opportunity and facility to achieve his maximum potential and provides the country with adequate and competent manpower.

The above plan for the Nigerian education sector is timely and indicates that the government appreciate the fact that "education can be functionally describe as the cornerstone and bedrock of national development in all part of world. It is the means through which Nigeria develops both her human and material resources". (Osunkentan, 2004:310). Since the education sector plays a pivotal role in manpower production, there is every need to make the sector vibrant because the standard of education in the country has been a source of concern to stakeholders due to its downward trend. In evaluating the situation of education in Nigeria,

Nwodo (2007:116) observes:

an x-ray of our education system will reveal a catalogue of regrettable developments, disappointments and frustrations in one or several ways. The causes of these deviation from our expectations constitute the issues and the problems. A critical examination of the issue sassociated with contemporary education in Nigeria will enable lovers of Nigeria citizenry to appreciate the problems confronting education and therefore sensitize us on how best to salvage education from a threatening shadow of death.

It is indeed true that Nigeria education system exhibits traits which are incompatible with wholesome education. For instance, the reading habit of Nigerians is not anything to write home about. Students read strictly for the purpose of passing examination and once they finish from school and start working, they hardly read anything apart from newspapers and magazines until they go further studies and continue reading for the acquisition of certificates, even teachers hardly read anything apart from the course they teach while one is at a loss as to what Nigerian policy makers read.

Achebe, authenticates this ascertain when he observes:

…. I did a little crude research in a small British exercise; I proved to my own statistical satisfaction what I had always known instinctively. I discovered that the European residents of Enugu read fiction, poetry, drama etc., while Africans read history,

economics, mathematics, etc… it was clear that Africans who went to that library did not go in search of literary pleasure. They were concerned with one or other of the----- Many examination.

Basically, Nigerians read for the purpose of acquiring certificates. This type of learning is shallow since it does not offer in depth knowledge which is needed for the actualization of revamping education for meeting the needs and challenges of e-learning in Nigeria.

**The study of literature as a critical factor in revamping education for meeting the needs and challenges of e-learning in Nigeria**.

Literature in this paper refers to imagination works of art (Drama, Poetry and prose). The study of literature is really a critical factor in the revamping education for meeting the needs and challenges of e-learning in Nigeria, because it has a lot to offer to the education sector which has the responsibility of manpower production, for the country. There is no gainsaying that it is only an efficient workforce that can actualize the said vision. Therefore, there is every need to re-design Nigerian curricula right from pre-school to the tertiary level of education with a view to incorporating literature as a core course at the levels. This is because literature, according to Osunkentan (2004:312)

Produces desirable effects on the reader by means of the aesthetic experience it evokes. And a good aesthetic experience not only does no one any harm but relieves tensions and suppresses destructive impulses, this resolving lesser conflicts within us and helping to create an integration of harmony within the self.

Literature calms, the nerve and affords readers the opportunity of critically evaluating issues before they occur in reality thereby helping them to forestall unpleasant situations. This is so because readers learn from the situation of the characters in literature texts ad this enable them to know what to embrace and what to avoid. In furtherance of this view, Onukaogu (202:300) opines that:

Literature broadens our perspective on the world. Most of the people we meet are pretty much like ourselves, and what we can see of the world even in a lifetime is astonishingly limited. Literature allows us to move beyond the inheritable boundaries of our own. Reading

makes us more aware of life's possibilities. Put simply, people who read literature experience more life and have a keener sense of common identity than those who do not. It is true of course; that many people go through life without reading imaginative literature but that is loss rather than a gain.

Literature offer the readers the opportunity of engaging in a journey round the world without stepping out of his domain. All the reader needs to do is to read and acquire knowledge of literature and not knowledge about literature. The knowledge about literature merely prepares the reader for the acquisition of certificate(s) on literature as a course of study while the knowledge of literature equips the reader with the resourcefulness with which to wade through life's ever changing and challenging possibilities as well as its subtleties and ambiguities. An example of Chinua Achebe's A man of the people which depicts political thuggery and its destructive effects on the Nigerian polity. The action of the politicians in the novel are such that they wreak havoc on one chief Koko (Members of two rival political parties). "The rampaging bands of election thugs have caused so much unrest and dislocation that our young Army officers seized the opportunity to take over" (Man of the people-147). The taking over of power by the military does not alleviate the problem of misrule as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah: (214)

--- deals with victimization, the unacceptable gab between the poor and the rich, and the socio-political and economic disparity between the ruler and the ruled. It deals with a government that lacks a defined sense of direction, a corrupt and oppressive government that permanently suffers the drastic effects of its inability to lift its face and salvage the ruled.

It is a known fact that conflicts and abrupt change of government have contributed immensely to the snail speed of development witnessed in Nigeria. The military which took over power from politicians turned out to be even worse than the politicians because it "lack of defined sense of direction" and is highly autocratic. A government without a sense of direction can hardly develop the country which it governs. Judging from the themes of the two novels mentioned above, one can rightly assert that literature make it possible for the reader to known the implications of certain actions without witnessing such actions in real life situations. Thus, readers would learn that political thuggery is not a virtue because

once politicians "win" the offices they vie for, there would be little or no use keeping thugs hence those used as thugs is ephemeral and cannot sustain them throughouttheir lives. The politicians, on their part, learn that thugs are not easy nut to crack since they are capable of fomenting trouble of Unimaginable consequence. Therefore, one can deduce that literature is an instrument for peace building. Hanks in Kwasau (2006"74), describes peace as:

---lawfulness, order, harmony, amicableness, good will, friendship, Cordiality, no-aggression, non-violence, ceasefire, respite, lull, suspension of hostilities, alliance, appeasement, and reconciliation.

All these attributes of peace are necessary ingredients that are needed for the growth and development of Nigeria or any other country. There is no gainsaying that peace has been a scarce commodity in Nigeria due to the many political and religious crises in the country. There is every for peace in the country. This is so because people who are fighting a war make destruction their pre-occupation while those at peace embrace development. Therefore, there is need for Nigeria to cultivate lasting peace. Stressing the need for peace as well as the role of literature in peace building, Osunkentan (2004:327) states that:

One of the cardinal objective and inter-governmental bilateral relationship is to promote world peace and progress. Literature, according to rivers (1968) has been describe as an avenue of promoting cultural understanding, international good will and world peace. It enables the students to know about the life, thought and literature of other people who speak another language.

The world is now a global village; therefore, there is needs to interact and co-operate with other nations. For such interaction and cooperation to take place, Nigeria mush be peaceful otherwise foreigners would hardly invest their resources in an unstable country. To achieve peace literature should be vigorously studied since it "has been described as am avenue of promoting cultural understanding….and world peace"

**The incorporation of literature into every Nigeria school curriculum**

The fact to be stated there is that both the leader and led need to have the knowledge of literature. That being the case, there is every need for harmonized system of education in Nigeria.

Commenting on the need for a Nigerian education system AM. Yabo (2003) point out that:

The purpose of a system of education is to prepare the citizens to become good thinkers, good workers, good companions. All well planned and appropriate system of education enables a people in any society to be, able not only to satisfy their present needs, but also to make appropriate modifications in accordance with changing circumstances. While inculcation patriotism, it promotes comradeship among citizens.

The need for a system of education that inculcates patriotism and "promote comradeship among citizens" In Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Patriotism and comradeship would help in no small measure in the actualization of revamping education for meeting the needs and challenges of e-learning in Nigeria, because these two virtues would propel workers to tackle their jobs with such zeal that they would almost always succeed in every developmental task assigned to them, stating the role of literature in achieving this good. Onukaogu (2002) observes:

once the requirement of your degree are completed what ultimately matters are not the courses listed on your transcript but the sensibilities and habits of mind that you bring to your work, friends, family, and indeed, the rest of your life. A healthy economy changes and grows with the times; people do too if they are prepared for more than simply filling a job description. The range and variety of life that literature affords can help you to interpret your own experiences and the world in which you live.

Since literature is capable of equipping readers with the acumen for wading through the challenges of life successfully, it follows that the inclusion of literature in the school curricula right from the nursery school to the tertiary institution should be done so that every literate Nigeria can benefit from literature. The idea of limiting the study of literature

to "arts students" does no good for the country. Therefore, literature should be studied by every learner at every level of education. At the tertiary level of education, literature should be made a general and compulsory course for every department. At the secondary level, every student, (either science or arts inclined) should study literature from the beginning to the end of the secondary education while at the primary school level, pupils should be gradually introduced to children's book by experts whose duty it is to help children to cultivate healthy habit towards reading. At the nursery school level, children should be told stories and should be taught nursey rhymes. These should form the bulk of the activities going on in this nursery school.

## Conclusion

If Nigeria is not paying lip-service to whole some education of her citizens literature should enjoy the same pride of place with the English language in Nigeria. The idea of having a vision for Nigeria indicates that despite the fact that the country consists of different states; she is seen as an entity with a vision which has to be actualized uniformly in all the states. That being the case and without prejudice to local color, the paper proposes a purposeful literature curriculum in all the states of the federation. When this is done and Nigerians reap the innumerable invaluable fruits of literature, there is no way revamping education for meeting the needs and challenges of e-learning in Nigeria would not be actualized to the highest level.

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