



Communication and Literature: Panaceas for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals, while literature on the other hand, facilitates the expression of subjective or universal ideas which can be classified according to whether it is poetry, prose or drama. However, sustainable development is that which responds the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. Nigeria is a country plagued by several maladies such as, corruption, deteriorating educational standard, virtual collapse of the economy, ethno-religious intolerance, lack of value for human lives, impunity, insecurity, banditry, terrorism, among others. All these vices are opposed to the development of the country. Against this backdrop, this paper, based on grand narratives in literature, analyzes appropriate communication strategies in literary works which should be re-launched to foster development using literary techniques such as satire, humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule to expose and criticize social vices through literary works. This article also will contribute in the reorientation of the attitude of Nigerians towards unity, nationalism and patriotism which will eventually enhance sustainable development in the country. Therefore, the article underscores the combination of literature and communication as panacea for sustainable development. Furthermore, this paper recommends the strategic use of communication and literary experts in addressing socio-political cum economic vices as a credible method for the enhancement of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Communication, Literature, Nationalism, Patriotism, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Communication is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson et al: 2000). Communication is a very vital aspect of every society. Communication forms do not exist in a vacuum, but they are products of communities, societies and nations. These communication forms are drawn from the cultural patterns that already exist in such societies and communities.

Communication has been a vital tool for social interactions, interpersonal relationships, intercultural relationships, business relationships, political relations, economic relationships, peace building and mediation in conflict resolutions. Similarly, literature, enhances the expression of ideas of general interest whether good or vices or virtues. Through satirical works, which involves the exposition and criticism of vices, social sensitization and enlightenment occurs in society and in a country such as Nigeria. It brings the attention of the people towards unity, nationalism and patriotism. These two terms; communication and literature can be said to be closely intertwined. Therefore the role of communication in the achievement of sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to analyze the communication and literature in the context of panaceas for sustainable development.

The Concept of Communication

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, “communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour...” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication>).

Communication is giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, to seek information, to give information or to express emotions. It is two way process that involves the sender and the receiver.

Additionally, the communication process comprises the participants, contexts, message, channels, noise and feedback (Oloyede & Oni, 2020). These scholars further explained that the participants are those involved in the sending and receiving of messages during interaction process and the sender uses verbal and non-verbal codes or symbols in the transmission of messages to the receiver, while the receiver processes the messages and responds accordingly. Elucidating further, verbal communication occurs through words while non-verbal communications are facial expressions, eye contact, gesture and tone of voice. The communication process also involves encoding and decoding. Encoding is when the source of the communication puts together their intended message while decoding is when the receiver analyzes and interprets a verbal or nonverbal communication or image. The elements involved in communication are the sender, the message, the medium or the channel, the receiver and the feedback (<https://www.marketingstudyguide.com/communications-proc>.)

Again, Oloyede and Oni (2020) contend that communication involves the process of creating or sharing of meaning in formal conversations, group interactions or public speaking. By these explanations, it is obvious that communication involves interactions with people at various levels and it is a communal phenomenon that occurs among humans every day, everywhere and every time. Irrespective of the socio-political and economic situations, communication is useful everywhere.

Conceptualization of Literature

The word ‘Literature’ is a modified form of a Latin word (*littera*, *litteratura* or *litteratus*) that means ‘writing formed with letters’ (<https://literaryenglish.com/what-is-literature/>). Literature is classified into various aspects such as, poetry, prose or drama and are meant to adhere to certain aesthetic features, or genre; literary composition branded by a particular style, form, or content and there are several categories of literary genres (type), they include fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and prose (which includes satire).

Fiction; this is the most popular genre in literature and it features imaginary characters and actions. Nonfiction; this type narrates real stories and events of real people. Examples are biographies and autobiographies. Drama is specifically created for stage performances, while poetry tells oral literature and they pass on specific moral lessons.

With the formation and development of language, the human mind has found a way to express thoughts, ideas and feelings through writings, which result in literary works. Therefore, through literature, the communication of thoughts, ideas and feelings becomes an art. In addition, literature is capable of bonding people from different ethno-religious and socio-economic cum political backgrounds.

Sustainable Development

According to the World Commission on Empowerment and Development (1987), sustainable development is the development that focuses on meeting the needs of the present generation without hindering the ability of future generations from meeting their own needs. Sustainable development is people based and entails a lot of partnering between people, the leaders and the led (Kur in Olawale et al, 2012).

Communication and Literature: Panaceas for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Communication and literature are a nexus in the achievement of sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. They are highly intertwined and are viable tools for the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria in the sense that they provoke the spirit of patriotism, nationalism and awareness in the citizenry of any given nation.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, provides a shared plan for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, for the present that will also extend into the future. There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and they serve as a clarion call to all countries all over the world to come into a global partnership for action. The 17 sustainable goals are as follows: Poverty eradication, Zero hunger, Good health and wellbeing, Quality education, Gender equality, Clean water and sanitation, Affordable and clean energy, Decent work and economic growth, Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Reduction inequalities, Sustainable cities and communities, Responsible consumption and production, Climate action, Life below water, Life on land, Peace, justice and strong institutions, Partnership for the goals(<https://sdgs.un.org/goal>). Communication and literature are of great benefit in the achievement of sustainable development for several reasons. Such as:

Communication, Mediation, Corruption and Sustainable Development

Communication is very vital in all aspects of human relationships and can be used in conflict resolution internally and externally. Conflict can be defined “as a process of misunderstanding and disagreement that could degenerate to violence at the individual, interpersonal, intragroup, intergroup, national and international levels” (Gilbert 2018, pp.12). Furthermore, he stated that peace is: “a course of action that aims at the minimization or elimination of conflict and the progressive maximization of stability, control, socio-economic cum political development at the individual, interpersonal, intra-group, intergroup, national and international levels” (Gilbert, 2018, pp.8).

Communication is used in mediation, peacemaking and peace building. What is mediation? According to Godongs:

Mediation is a special form of negotiation in which a neutral third party has a role to play. Such role is to help the parties in conflict achieve a mutually acceptable settlement [...] since direct negotiation between disputants is not always feasible, given the divergent interests, needs and emotions, third party intervention becomes necessary in many conflicts (Godongs 2006, pp. 130).

The above definition shows that mediation is a veritable tool in conflict management and resolution. However, worthy of note is the fact that conflict management and mediation cannot be effective without the proper use of communication. Since the mediator is the initiator of communication channels and continues the discussions between the disputants to ultimately achieve the resolution of pending issues, promotion of relationships hitherto destroyed and restoration of peace and trust; a mediator that is unschooled in the art of communication cannot succeed in conflict management and conflict resolution. The deployment of appropriate communication expertise, therefore, enhances the attainment of peace, obliterates the tendency of people to become violent and instills the virtues of equality, justice and safety, which could ultimately result to the maximization of peoples’ potentials and the use of available resources in the actualization of sustainable development goal 16 in Nigeria. Similarly, the various catchy advertisements being sponsored by various government anti-corruption agencies such as, the Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) will eventually, result to the reorientation of Nigerians and the minimization of corruption in the country.

For example, in 2015, President Buhari’s government commenced the prosecution of some people for allegedly embezzling the sum of 2.1 billion dollars earmarked for the purchase of arms for the fight against Boko Haram insurgency. Also, he stated that about 150 billion dollars had been stolen from the oil wealth in Nigeria. Furthermore, in 2019 it was estimated that:

a total of roughly NGN 675 billion was paid in cash bribes to public officials in Nigeria...corresponding to 0.52 per cent of the entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria. The economic cost of bribery becomes even more palpable when considering that, on average, bribe-payers pay an amount equivalent to 6 per cent of the average annual income of Nigerians (UNODC, 2019, pp.6).

Obviously from the above, corruption negates the attainment of sustainable development. Therefore, when suitable communication experts and gadgets are persistently and aggressively used for the national reorientation of Nigerians from the Universal Basic Education (UBE) to tertiary levels, in the long run, resources would be saved and used for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria.

Sustainable Development through the Appropriate Use of Literature

Furthermore, the role of literature as panacea for sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. Literature through satirical works and poetry is used to criticize bad government policies, bad leadership and sensitize the citizenry about the vices of political leaders in a bid to bring about change and elicitation of remorse in leaders. For example, there was a satirical book written by a Nigerian author named Frank Ogodo Ogbeche and the title of the book is *Harvest of corruption*.

Ogbeche (2005) through the various created imaginary characters in the book criticized bribery, large-scale embezzlement in official quarters, drug trafficking, sexual immorality perpetuated by very important personalities, supposedly policy makers and law enforcement officers. The author illustrates the extent to which corruption infiltrates government institutions and every facet of the society and also the overwhelming negative impact of corruption on our daily lives. The main themes in the book are corruption, betrayal of public trust and retribution, which means that man reaps what he sows. In the book, all the corrupt characters were made to pay for their crimes.

This book accurately paints a picture of the Nigerian society where corruption, deceit, sexual immorality and embezzlement of public funds permeate every sphere of government institutions, at the expense of developmental projects. Through the message of this book, so many Nigerians are able to understand the many vices existing in the Nigerian society and the spirit of unity, cohesion and patriotism are being elicited in Nigerians to fight against these ills working against sustainable development.

Worthy of note are the satirical works that have been trending on social media, by two poets. Ezugu, Chisom in her poem titled *New Nigeria*, spoke against nepotism, injustice and inequality in Nigeria and Ige, Deji who in his poem titled *Let there be light* exposes the high level of poverty, hunger in the land, fuel scarcity and brain drain in the health sector. I am very sure that people that listened to them enumerating the evils perpetrated and perpetuated by leaders in the Nigerian society may have been educated and conscientized. In addition, some perpetrators and their accomplices of corrupt practices in Nigeria may gradually change their poor attitude.

Again, since literary works are tools for enlightenment and conscientisation, they can also be deployed in the enumeration of past and present positive national achievements that can lead to the evocation of positive emotions for the purposes of attitudinal transformation, change of mindset and opinions of the youths and citizenry for sustainable development in Nigeria. This can also be a source of motivation to good leaders and a call for greater and better achievements.

Besides, literature and literary works build critical thinking skills that enables readers to connect and compare between the characters and themes, and apply them to real life situations. For example, detecting of mistakes by past and present leaders and avoiding same, if given the opportunity to occupy any public office in the future. Furthermore, it gives the reader insight into different cultures and religions and helps to expand their horizons. They get well informed about cultural diversity and become tolerant of other peoples culture and religion. This is a necessity for national integration, cohesion and unity - unity in diversity.

Therefore, the appropriate usage of literature will assist in attitudinal changes that may enhance the reduction of corrupt practices, intolerance and aid the availability of resources for the realization of sustainable development goals in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the forgoing, it is important to note that this paper has certainly proved the usefulness of communication and language as panaceas for sustainable development in Nigeria. Thus, there is an urgent need to adopt

communication strategies and literature for the purpose of achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. In addition, the paper recommends the strategic use of communication and literary experts in addressing socio-political cum economic vices as a credible method for the enhancement of sustainable development in Nigeria. Finally, the extent to which communication strategies are applied in the attainment of sustainable development depends highly on the extent to which freedom of expression is allowed in that country. So it is pertinent for the government, political leaders and holders of public offices to note that for changes to occur for the purpose of achieving sustainable development, people should be encouraged and allowed to express their views within the ambits of constitutional provisions.

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