

Fiction in the Era of Globalization: Challenges and Implications for Educational Reform in Nigeria

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Abstract

Many scholars, particularly in curriculum development and instructions and educators have increased their teaching repertoire, using stories. This innovation points at the enormous resources in the compass of fiction (oral and written literature), which can engender positive molding of pupils' competences and attitudes. Realizing, that the pulse and heartbeat of the world social cultural, economic and political relations have been greatly shaped by oral and written literature, perhaps more than any other disciplines, this paper explores some of the possibilities which through fiction may further allow the harmonious integration of disparate people of the world in a modern technology.

Finally, the study examines concretely the implications and challenges of these huge resources in the universe of fiction to Nigeria's attempt at reforming its education sector with the vision to becoming an emerging economy model through the provision of sound education for its citizenry.

Introduction

Development thinking in the global world at the close of the 20th century has shifted from the traditional and comfortable sweeping beliefs in the fixed roles of states markets and the search for a "single, overarching policy prescription" (World Development Report 1999/2000) toward broad pragmatism. Thereby, progress in the 21st century depends on a constellation of factors and shifts in their configuration that take place over time. This overview on the prevailing conditions of post modern economic theories in a globalized world points to the need to step beyond holistic adherence to a system, or policy as driving force of developments. It rather gives intellectual strength to recognizing that systems or policies needed to complement each other; instead of trumpeting a particular policy as the formula that will inspire development in all times and places. Such focus on the "frontiers of development thinking" (World Bank Development Report) has a lot of implications for African governments' desire at the cutting edge of governance for sustainable development. The seething conditions of globalization in sharp contrasts to (Africa) Nigeria represent "a dole story of retardation and backwardness" (Obikeze 2003:9).

One may begin to imagine of what concern is the theory of development to a literary scholar? In response to this is the fact that the phenomenon, globalization and its challenges required that disciplines must cross borders (Obafemi, 2001). In crossing borders, ideas are however, harvested, recast and reintegrated to further reinstate and reinforce the plot structure of the moral agency of man at the fleeting dawn of creation. It becomes therefore imperative to explore this space of cross border interdisciplinary and its challenges in the field of humanities (literary art) that is being greatly discounted in the postmodern economy. Obafemi (2001) in appropriating this view claims thus, "literature must cross borders into other disciplines, in order to meaningfully apprehend the totality of human culture" (p. 7). The challenges which the new economic order labeled as post-modernity suggests for literature are though enormous and revolutionary but not unusual. The new economic order considers knowledge as an "important resource" (Obikeze 2003:8). To the extent that it institutes a significant redirection in occupational structure and drive towards scientific, technical and professional forms of employment, engendering a "growing requirement for professional workers with relevant education and training to provide the kinds of services which are increasingly demanded" (Smart 1992, as quoted in Obikeze 2003:8).

In tackling this enormous task and challenges “literature needs to interface disciplines in order to distil a more humane notion of the human condition” (Obafemi 2001: 2). We will further this argument later in this paper (and in forthcoming publication). But before then what does the current education reforms oriented around?

Current Education Reforms: Motivations, Objectives, Structures and Visions

There is no gainsaying the current education reforms are the aftermath of the larger economic reform agenda of the Federal Government. To advance this view further, Obasanjo’s administration’s discovering of the “cesspool of corruption and misapplication of natural resources” (Afemikhe 2005; 2) as the fetters that held Nigeria down on her knees since independence, thereby formulated a new economic package, termed National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), hence the corresponding reforms in the education industry. Just as reforms in the education sector is interdependent on the broader and larger economic goals of the government; it is equally motivated and fashioned after some other events both within and outside the country. The first of such outside influences was the proclamation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) eight point’s agenda, which include affirmation to achieve Universal Primary Education.

The second event outside the country is a lengthened shadow of the MDG’s. It is the UNO’s Education for All initiative whose objectives are to: expand early childhood care and education, provide free and compulsory primary education for all, promote learning and life skills for young people and adults, increase adult literacy by 50%, achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015, and to improve the quality of education. And in the same vein, the report of the studies carried out by the Federal Ministry of Education attests to the deplorable and yawning void between the annually budgeted funds and the realities on the ground. In the report titled “State of Nigerian Public Schools”, the findings include: 45% or 63 million of the estimated population of 140 million people in Nigeria are children, who fall within the age bracket of 0 – 15years, though 42.1 million of these children are expected to be receiving primary education, yet 22.3million of the 42.1 million are in school 85% of this population are however in public school system, and 50.95% of the 70,000 public primary schools in the country and 50.25% of the 14,543 public secondary schools are in relatively good conditions.

The erstwhile Minister for Education, Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili in the same ugly statistical graph added that about 47% of Nigerian children, that is, 19.8 million, who should be in school, are actually out of school. In addition to the appalling graph plotted herein, is the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)’s assessment where Nigeria tops the list of nations with most “children out of school”.

The gory analyses above merely confirm the 1997 investigation conducted in Nigeria by the twosome of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Education and Scientific Organization (UNESCO), which thought it fit to examine the level of competence of primary four pupils in numeracy, literacy and life skills. The result of the study shows that the national mean scores in the studied skills did not exceed 40% in any of the areas. (“Tell” Magazine, Special Edition, No. 21, May 21, 2007, P. 21 – 27; “Tell” Magazine Special Publication, May, 2007, P. 33).

The Federal Government’s craving for knowledge driven and knowledge dependent society locates the significance of functional and transformational education industry as the tenor and vehicle of its economic reform agenda and thus, describes education as “the vital transformational tool and a formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment (NEEDS, 2004, P. 35). The government’s aspiration of the cutting edge economy for sustainable development aligns with Watson (1995)’s view of “emergence of theoretical knowledge as the basis for innovation and policy-making...with high level competences and expertise necessary for...continued growth and prosperity” (Watson, 1995; Le Grange, 2002, As quoted in Obikeze 2003:8). The government nonetheless realized that:

Many elements that make up development process must be planned together and coordinated in order to obtain best results – and sometimes in order to arrive at any results at all... (World Development Report 1999/2000:3).

The need for the restructuring is also made much more auspicious; and thus justified within the context of the gory statistical evidences highlighted above. Recognizing the enormity of crises in education sector, the Nigerian Educational System has been restructured from the 6-3-3-4 into a 9-3-4 structure. The major emphasize being on Universal Basic Education.

In the DNPE, the Universal Basic Education is so named to:

- develop in the entire citizenry, a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its rigorous promotion;
- provide free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child from school age;
- reduce the incidence of pupils leaving school early from the formal school system, through improved appropriate forms of complementing approaches to the promotion of basic education for the learning needs of young persons, who for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling;

- ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for the laying of solid foundation for lifelong learning (P. 10).

In addition, the UBE programme emphasized mass literacy, adult and non-formal education targeted at adults, children and youths of formal school age who could not enroll in the conventional school system. They include “migrant folks, almajiri pupils, illiterate and semi-literate adults, youths and adolescents” (DNPE, 2007, P.28).

Going over the UBE document however, we would observe that its message of redemption is redolent of ideals of the MDG’s, EFA, and the government’s designed national development goals as contained in NEEDS. Thus, far, the task now is to navigate a place for literature (fiction) and its ancillaries which may either be tangible or the intangible aspects of culture in the current education reforms; and the harmonious co-existence which man desired so much in a world whose obnoxious economic indexes are astronomically inclining in favour of the techno-advanced nations (Obikeze 2003:8). For the postmodern economic order has a proclivity towards reshaping of activities across the globe...thereby increasing tension between integration and separation as evidenced in resurgence of ethnic, religious and national identities (Watson, 1995, Good and Velody 1998 as quoted in Obikeze 2003;8).

Literature: Beyond Entertainment and Economic Considerations

Imaginative writing, in aesthetic substances and discourse value has gone beyond the pedestrian view of mere story telling. It has been able to depict the marvelous. In his view, Obafemi (2001:6) “literature reflects, represents; and refracts the reality of the world across age and time”. Thus, literature though maintains its elemental features of fictionality, and entertainment; yet it is “a tool, which is employed to appeal to the people’s consciousness and mental alertness to the world around them”. These views undoubtedly project a broader emancipatory inclusiveness of ideological proclivity and thematic thrust (which African imitative group has relayed in scope, depth and diversity) in literary texts. Olu Obafemi (2001) echoing Mathew Arnold posits that:

...without poetry our science will appear incomplete and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry (P. 6 – 7)

This submission gently points at the intersection and broad relationship between literature and natural science. No wonder John Keats in his sonnet: “*On the Grasshopper and Cricket*” imaginatively and intuitively parts the curtain of poetry of life that is never ceasing – a sublime travel into the universe of interdependence of entities from the morning of creation whose reality jolt us out of the numbness of complacency. Obafemi (2001) quoting from the blurb of Robert Ossermans’ book: *Poetry of the universe: On Mathematical Exploration of the Universe* written by Mark Helpriik thus:

*... though the light of science and the light of art are inseparable
and the same their bearers speak different languages and only the
best among them understand that they are engaged in the same
enterprise...*

Mark Helpriik’s submission obviously supports interrelatedness of disciplines. Thus, “as a scientist, a realist (naturalistic) writer observes and records in dispassionate and impersonal ways” (Vincent 2005:55).

The 21st century is dominated by economic and political arrangements instituted by Western transnational. The vehicle of this new social order is the ICT burst which invariably gave rise to cultural links. In transmitting information through Internet facilities however, it also ensures that culture crosses national boundaries in new modes. Electronic media enable transmission of images across national borders. Nonetheless, literature more than all the fleeting images brought about by the screen or newsprint, is one of the more enduring multinational cultural processes which have been building the basis of a shared common tradition (Ngugi 1993:13).

Vicious economic theories, instruments, institutions and principles that discount humankind do not configure the context of a literary text. Yet, such creative text subjects economic theories and other scientific speculations to a more humane discursive sphere; thus offering scientific and economic indexes whose practitioners have sadly, but glowingly used to reduce man to mere “geometrical spirit” (Humphrey 1954) up for further cerebral debate outside the realm of abstract intelligence. While Vladimir Lenin in his tyrannous days saw no appreciable difference between man and the skull of an ape on his table – a product of wrong assimilation of Darwinian thought; literature (fiction) with the fleeting images dexterously weaved in great works of Homer, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Seneca, Shakespeare, Gogol, Brecht, Fagunwa, Soyinka, Achebe, Ngugi etc give great prominence to humanistic tradition; showing greater imaginative perception to the constant war between man, elements and cosmic laws. These writers and many others marry content to form and technique with a daring iconoclasm to give picturesque of man’s intense assertion of his intrinsic values (spiritual) with his material needs.

In the same theme park, exemplar creative prowess of ‘youngest’ African novelists such as Leila, Aboutela, Ike Oguine and Abdulrazak Gurnah in *The Translator, A Squatter’s Tale and By the Sea* have been able to investigate how globalization have shaped African experience with the theoretical constructs of Appadurai, Robertson, Featherstone, Hall, Bhabha etc (Wilson – Tagoe 2006).

Fiction: A Cultural Text for Literacy and Didactics

Scholars in curriculum development and instructions have found stories to be effective instructional software in teaching-learning interface. Gloria Reading (2005) observes that “using stories to teach literacy provides the teacher with meaningful exercises in deep reading, story-telling, journal writing, creative writing and story analysis” (p. 28).

The initial mode of transmitting these cultural texts, at the risk of stating the obvious in all essentiality is oral. Invariably, knowledge, ideas and information are transmitted through this medium. To African mind however, folktales comprehend man not only as an individual who must be encouraged through moralistic tales to great personal achievements but also as an integral member of society (Balogun 1983:55). This is because African cosmic space does not allow an untamed aspiration for personal survival and achievement, which may electrocute the general well-being of the community. The virtues extolled in African folktales, more often than not, are still the virtues we admire: selfless service to the community or nation, patience, integrity, honesty, modesty and other virtues that create positive heroism. For example, the most highly admirable heroes in our folktales are those who found personal satisfaction in the service of their communities; personal reward only becomes a consequential by-products of patriotic service; to the extent that the novels of Fagunwa and Tutuola are exemplar formal aesthetic observation and preservation of oral literature. Modern African literature through the personal insights of the writers (or artists) interrogates the once accepted ideals and mediate on the ironies and limitations of life; having its particularity from the locality or cultural setting of the writer who attempts and succeeds to enjoin the whole of humankind.

Going through examples and the web of lodestars in oral lore we can no less but agree with Gloria Reading (2005) that:

from these stories...flow multiple literacy lessons as well as a variety of opportunities for informing pupils about diverse cultural traditions, customs, symbols and images....(P. 27).

Segun Sofowote (2007), reviewing his new creative effort: *Retold Retouches: The three Tales of the Tortoise*, a didactic text posits that:

many exploits of tortoise... provide generations of human beings with entertainment and instructive lessons on the workings of the attribute of a high I.Q when it is left to range within and without constraints of virtue...(Sunday Sun 2007:44)

Sofowote concluded by submitting that to the delight of all the fans of this icon, his experiences are varied and colorful depending on the orientation of his intellect in relation to morality on different occasions (p. 44). Osofisan, however described Sofowote's literary achievement at the summit of his career as a virtuoso performance. The egghead sees the work as a "worthy act of cultural retrieval, whose value can no longer be ignored nowadays in this season of voracious globalization" (Sunday, Sun 2007:44).

Fashina (2005), emphasizing further on the utilitarian value of literature, writes on oral literature as: "the art of oral verbalization or oral performance has more affective influence on the audience either as entertainment, as moral didactic lesson, or as a medical or psychotherapeutic cure for man" (P. 105). In the syntax of fictional construct, the writer makes use of folktales, realistic stories, historical fiction (biographies or autobiographies) modern fantasy and adventure stories for instruction and edifying motifs for children. Authors in the Western world, and in Africa, work on the fact that feeding the mind is as important as feeding the body, and "feeding young minds through books (literary texts) is very crucial to African development for through books a child can be molded into a caring, knowledgeable and resourceful adult (Segun 1992:41). Plato, not minding his floundered attempt at eliminating the poets (Creative writers) from his ideal Republic, still conceives and recommends incredible fantasies and myths for his ideal citizens; probably with the insight that children's training should start with a good grounding in mythology because its formulation is a product of philosophical minds. To Anozie (1992) massive paradigmatic elements in African lore and mythology should be explored "to confront African children with basic moral and philosophical issues for critical discussion and debate", because "to read a book as it should be read calls for the rarest qualities of imagination, insight and judgment" (Virginia Wolf as quoted in Anozie 1992:10).

Basing literacy instruction on stories (fiction) however, encourage and develop curiosity, eagerness, inquisitiveness and qualitative imagination in readers. Thus, fantasy, folktales and myth serve their utilitarian purpose that is, to sharpen readers imagination. Syntagmatic weaving of these cultural texts develop readers' philosophical minds and makes children to travel years in their imagination and "practice at being a grown up" (Tucker 178:182). Similarly, Gloria opines that (2005) "stories provide a catalyst for creating an individual or group story that follows the basic plot of the original story" (P. 28).

Furthermore, she offers that, stories may be used to: “teach parts of speech, capitalization, sentence structure and vocabulary” (Gloria 2005:28). Writing earlier, Lesley and Lucy (2001) note that there is “a causal link between the use of narrative and early learning and thinking” thereby the scholars warn that “practitioners should regard stories as a very important part of early years education” (p. 4). Locating further the significance of stories in teaching basic skills in schools, Grainger (1997) affirms “storytelling enables not just teachers but children to actively use, experience and repeat the grammatical constructions which are part of the literary language of some stories and the repetitive oral refrains” (As quoted in Lesley handy and Lucy Toon 2001:4). Extending the frontiers of utility of fiction Udofia (2006) sums up by submitting that reading literature allows the fertilization of certain fundamental skills and capacities, such as the capacities for discrimination, judgment and decision making (239). Acknowledging the power of fiction, thereof Shelley (1968) opines that poets are “the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (as quoted in Udofia 2006).

Narrating National Experience: Nigerian Novels

The African novel is in no doubt, part of a larger fictional world; as events and happenings in (Africa) Nigeria have elicited grandiose and robust romanticism and psychic angst among the imitative group. Achebe in his debut, *Things Falls Apart* (1958), set the ball rolling when he saw his role as a teacher, who’s pre-occupation is to help his society regain belief in itself. From his point of view, the easy way of achieving this is to rouse in his people self-confidence with certain degree of self-glorification. He saw then in this enterprise a necessary step towards psychological and cultural retrieval. Thus, he could say: “you have heard of the African personality; of African democracy, of the African way to socialism, of negritude, and so on. They are all props we have fashioned at different times to help us get on our feet again. Once we are up, we shouldn’t need any of them anymore. But for the moment it is in the nature of things that we may need to counter racism...” (Anna Rutherford 1992: iii – iv). Interestingly, however, Achebe himself never indulged in any of these props. His fame, nonetheless, on *Things Fall Apart* rests squarely on his courage to render a balanced view of traditional Igbo society. Beyond this, however, in *A Man of the People* (1966), Achebe was already overtly critical of the nationalist politics.

From the foregoing, our focus in this paper is to locate “a close relationship between (African) Nigeria literature (novel) and its historical contests” (Kehinde 2004: 228). Having said this, we are made bold to declare that the novelist has contributed concretely to the national development through his/her art. Although most of the time his/her vision and forceful voice clash with that of the politician but his/her sworn to social responsibilities to his community ragingly keep him on the prowl. S/He details with high energy and great artistic patterns the vulnerability of the largely voiceless members of her/his society, the poor. Rendering his disillusionment about the post-independence happenings, the literary critic, Simeon Gikandi claims “the nation is not the manifestation of a common interest but a repressor of desires” (1992:380).

Thus, the bulk of post-colonial narrative texts are motifs of pains, anguish and impoverishment. More often than not, the novelist questions the colonial exegesis that created the invented community called the nation in Africa. Stepping across the generational divide among African writers, the novel becomes a social symbol that reflects on the problems of the writer's immediate society, and the world at large. So, from the twilight of Achebe's fictive debut, together with his literary coterie, the novel has been deployed to give explicit portrayal to the cultural heritage and reinvention of Africa's personality, which the bulwark of slavery and colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism had assiduously engaged to undermine. Yet, politics and the question of power are still the flaming embers the writer fans in Africa's political cauldron. The mind-set is often on the perennial dissonance that creates tension in the nation. Such seething issues include social classes, genders, ethnicity, religion, races etc. The novelist's presentation of remarkable artistic visions that capture or questions certain epistemology or social construct that bring about incoherence in our politics is what Kehinde (2004) described as "frustration or betrayal of trust" (229).

Mapping contributions of the novelist's understanding of the problems working against development programme in Africa, the novelist, more than any other practitioner has deepened the revelations and condemnation of corruption, rampant scarcity of personal integrity and failure of national government; thereby, fulfilling part of the challenges thrown at him/her by Achebe when he considers the creative artist as "a human being with heightened sensitive (who)...must be aware of the faintest nuances of injustice in human relations" (as quoted in Ojo Olorunleke 199:118), and in the seminal opinion of Soyinka, who sees in the novelist strand of prophetic powers and a recorder of the "mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time (as quoted in Ojo Olorunleke, 1999: 118).

Scrutinizing through texts, what we observe is the power of mind that has remarkably found congruence between prodigious artistic correlation and "objective correlative". In Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, the interpreters are artistic prototypes of realistic individuals in (African) Nigerian socio-political sphere; the (in)ability to make choice in the pool of many choices of life with all the accompanying commitments, the battle that the critical mind needs to win in order to experience a genuine spiritual comfort in an increasingly morally degenerated society; the palpable corruption and lack of sincerity which frustrate the efforts of sincere and well-meaning individuals; religious quackery or charlatanism; and a gullible and ignorant public; the question of revolution and the place of art in revolution (Awosika 1999:68), become the thematic concern of this literary iconoclast. Achebe pursues the rough-and-tumble politics and the question of power with renewed creative fiber in *Anthills of the Savannah*. The world of this novel is a polemical site for reasons for action and inaction in the heart of a "deeply diseased society" (Innes 1990:151). The narrative text chronicles the spate of coups and counter-coups in (Africa) Nigeria and its attendant disequilibrium in the equation for sustainable governance. The question of power is thus, the very artery of the plot of this novel. Appropriating Innes (1990) further, "the main protagonists are not those who aspire to power, and possibly a piece of the national cake in the process, but members of the elite; the been-to's who believed themselves to be among the power brokers" (Pp. 151 – 152).

The Nigerian civil war of 1967 – 1973 and the oil boom era after the war created another vortex of narrative invention, which's social and political horror is the consuming subject of Festus Iyayi in *Violence* and it equally haunts such writers like Kole Omotosho, Olu Obafemi, Femi Osofisan, Odia Ofeimungu etc. Iyayi's unique voice from Achebe and Soyinka, satirizes in *Violence*, a corrosive system which engenders dissonance in the society. In a novel full of pathos, but whose emphasis is on radical reconfiguration of social institutions and ideology; the novelist roundly condemns injustice, exploitation and oppression of the poor in the Nigerian society. Iyayi sees that corruption in Nigeria is institutional, he thus radically satirizes the Nigerian state's many sins against the poor which include: the medical service providers who throw decency, human feelings and professional ethics overboard and settle for what everyone is doing; exploiting their patients, law enforcement agents who are corrupt and encourage bribery to a very disheartening height etc.

This artistic template is a granite social-realist picturesque of the Nigerian political space; it exposes the dialectics of the scandalous under-development of the country, the comatose state of the infrastructure and the rampant collapse of humanity or values. Iyayi's artistic patterns thus conform to the view that "good realist literature achieves its valuable symbolic quality by taking to their extreme points the underlying vital tensions of a particular social situation" (Kettle 1953:177). Beyond mere chronicle of social malaise, Iyayi as characteristics of the radical writers proffers antidote: the need for a revolutionary transformation of the society; the need for the voiceless to gather their strength and force their voice through. Furthermore, the writer through the defense counsel insists that our system operates through violence, thus, he disagrees with the court's definition of violence and strives to prove that it is "lack of opportunities that drive people to crime, madness, prostitution and adultery" (p. 184).

The novels considered in this paper, being kind of obtrusive artistic patterns of social dislocation are thin representatives of oceans of creative productions which our socio-political sites have elicited. Yet, they are in no doubt, enough to jolt us out of amnesia. Writers are not mere dreamers; they are important resource in the world's aspiration towards global government. They meaningfully crossbreed other disciplines in order to bring about a totalizing and all embracing cultural outlook which the partisans and practitioners of postmodern or E-republic envisioned. More profoundly, however, the horror of realities of our time required that we take a cue from Peter Beagle (1973)'s review of J.R.R. Tolkien's Trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, in which he writes of Tolkien's thus: "the world he charts before us was there long before him, and I still believe it... he never invented them either; he found them a place to live, a green alternative to each day's madness here in a poisoned world. We are raised to honor all the wrong explorers and discoverers—thieves planting flags, murderers carrying crosses. Let us at last praise the colonizers of dreams".

To the Africans, the new conditions of post-colonial contradictions go beyond the “failure of nationalism” and the “confusing theories of neo-nationalism” (Gikandi 1992); thus writers need to be more critical of the new global order and its double speak. The Western world and all its institutions encourage the third world countries to embrace economic policy that will create free trade among nations; yet the nature and mode of competition tilted in favor of the developed world. What hope is therein for the impoverished African and his beleaguered load of debts? Such oracular economic theories, trade alliances and their burden on the oppressed people should not miss the literary lens or marksmanship of the writer.

Networking Fiction: A Multicultural Nexus

Just as fiction shapes the conditions of things within the national borders it foregrounds; its textuality also serves as a means of reaching out to the outside world. Fictive writings have become important text materials in the global order to distil positive images from the value systems of different nations. These resources have played significant roles in all trade and military adventures of the world super powers. Realizing that the pulse and heartbeat of the world social, cultural, economic and political relations have been greatly shaped by oral and written literature, perhaps more than any other disciplines, our concern here, again is to establish the cross-cultural vitality in fiction, with a view to locating how the writings of the people at the margins have been able to influence the center; and exploring further the resources in fiction that can guarantee a better and harmonious partnership in the global republic. The influence of Internet facilities as a means of dissemination of information and cultural transmission is of equal significance. Depending on the vision of the novelist, narrative art in Africa has moved from retrospection to prospection in his consideration of historical strain or social incidents. This attitude of mind only suggests the novelist’s realistic understanding of the protean nature of globalization. Through Internet facilities, events and happenings are reported at cell-phone-seconds. Similarly, through e-book, a shelf on the net and chat rooms- electronic sites for live text conversations- readers discuss and comment on writers of their choice and issues raised in his/her works. As meaning flows through, respect for one another, simultaneously engender better and harmonious global interaction. More so, travel, technology, globalizing economic activity, and commercial interests have brought the whole world into direct and continuous contact (Brann 2006), thus there is need to understand the values and practices of other societies.

At the fountain of pedagogy, Gloria (2005) states her concern on the education of a child when she writes: “pupil’s attitudes towards and awareness of outside cultures has its roots from multiple sources” (P. 28). Gloria’s submission also favors integrated curriculum, parts of recent trends in education. Children learn best when subject matter is meaningful and useful. Thus, scholars have discovered that literature brings meaning to science. Great writers have benefited immensely from such “multiple sources”. In fact it has helped in the refinement of aesthetics in African literature.

Networking through fiction has helped teachers in “class discussion, personal modeling, printed materials and building relationships with pupils, the teacher has a unique and extraordinary opportunity to impact pupils’ feelings and thought towards those who are different” (Gloria 2005:28). Writing earlier in the day Hilard (1995), writes:

responsible educators are becoming aware that providing pupils with accurate information about distant countries and cultures enables them to develop informed opinions about racial and cultural similarities and differences (As quoted in Gloria 2005:28)

Hilard continues when he says that:

Children ... need to understand that regardless of cultural differences, we are all people with feelings, hopes and dreams. If we teach children these basic similarities, the difference will become much easier to accept and appreciate (As quoted in Gloria 2005:28)

In Hilard’s perspective is couched the significance of multicultural education. This should engross a realistic vision in global world that gives higher premium to the survival of humanity and its cultural values, in lieu of economic permutation that paradoxically, wound the soul of men, and engender the ascendancy of social incoherence at the very heart of desire for global cohesion. Hilard’s view also has capacity for obliterating what Wilson (1992) refers to as “complex counterpoint between cultures (which) raises the old question of the mystery of “oneness” and the mystery of “otherness” (p.20). Narrative art will rid us of mass complacency, amnesia and read reality differently from the plagues which science and technological possibilities have brought to us. Not that we condemn science or contemptuous of technology; in fact we appreciate science within the wider view of Crocker (2006): “science is useful, necessary and even heartbreakingly beautiful both in itself and in what it enables us to accomplish. Its uses are obvious”, but the alarming spiritual somersault in us, allows “... our reliance on the scientific lulls us, makes us forget that other things with less obvious uses are as important” (P. 28).

Furthermore, Wilson, in advocating cross-cultural issues as the cultural signpost for post-modern world writes:

the block imprints of history need to be reopened and scanned within pressures that will otherwise erupt dangerously from the unconscious in nihilistic humanities and technologies. Eruptions from the unconscious may spill enlightenment within a psyche that seeks a profound attainment to space-age change, but may also spell catastrophe to nihilistic being (P. 29).

The train has come full circle. The new order (Post-modernism) should be driven towards the attainment of recognition of intuitive imagination which has the re-visionary potential to save the world from the “dictatorship of technologies aligned to sophistry and nihilism”, (Wilson 1992:29). To Bruce (1992), multicultural society is premised on the whole idea of post-modern as “an expression of the dislocations and de-centering brought by intensive social and cultural changes, especially those caused by rapid communications... information networks...with such a constant flow of facts, ideas and people any notion of a tradition or centre will seem arbitrary” (p. 39). Going over the whole drift of narrative texts of “exile” writers to the metropolitan Europe and America, Bruce claims, “the writer has become the intermediary, the interpreter of the new nations to the former colonial powers (p. 39). Arguably, the self-exile writer functions as a commentator, reporter and translator of the new metropolitan centers (Bruce 1992). The bottom-line is, through fiction the people of the world can be multicultural while being proud of their autochthonous cultural heritage, in the spirit of globalization.

Part of our scholarly troubadour in this paper is to establish symbiotic relations of disciplines, rather than dissociation, and to offer wider and broader supports for humane values which are “lilies of the field” in fictive production. For globalization and its practitioners’ have relegated developmental thinking, “ethical equity and social concerns behind market consideration” (Akindele et al, 2002:7). More tellingly, the final waves of globalization and the influence of its instruments; together with its assassin bug (internet) have indulged in us consumerism culture. Hence, Nigeria (Africa) has become a dumping ground for products such as literature, movies, music etc that largely pushed Nigerian authors and culture at the fringes. Otokhine (2000) captures the predicament thus:

The world is gradually moving in a undirected manner and, the tendency towards uniformity has never been so appealing as its is now. Consequently, there is a sections concern that nations like Nigeria whose contributions to the Internet pole is low may lose their identity (As quoted in Akindele et al 2002:8).

The drift towards global economy which has services as its hallmark of activities create a new vista which African leaders and policy formulators need to negotiate intelligently in order to translate our entrance into a much more economic and social benefits for the continent.

Challenges and Implications

Of course vibes and opinion will range wide and multipronged on the path to chart in our education reforms. Considering, our state as a developing economy, however, our main thrust in this paper is basically to rouse us into the onerous task of national reformation and development that is need-determined. Our needs as a nation and an emerging economy with strong fundamentals; and whose aspiration is to be the hub of economic and financial activities in Africa should engender in our policy formulation the courage to side-step, the once over-emphasized regional or ethnic considerations that had receded our development and potentials for long. Thus, ingenious transformation that is all encompassing where positive political will and unstinting national passion will fire our drive and industry to redirect and fast-track our education reforms and other economic agendas. This is the challenge of our time and we must not start by default. The implications of a successful transformation of our nation and education in particular without mincing words is the concrete restoration of the national ideals, which we had glowingly, paid lip service to in the past at the altar of divisive politics. For literature (fiction) and its practitioners, the challenges before them cannot be more palpable than the immediate mediocrity shown in the pronouncement of Mr. Timpere Sylva, the Governor of Bayelsa State. His ‘excellence’, in the garb of ‘His Holiness’ treaded the path of Plato of old but with zero-intelligence, to declare in one sweep that arts and social sciences and humanities are not relevant to the modernizing programmes he has for the state. Mr. Sylva’s buffoonery, ignorance and overdose ironically, loudly confirm our position in this paper about the significance of fiction. The task before the creative writers, on the other leg is that the business of cultural retrieval and personality recovery needed to be taken to our Harvard, Cambridge and Oxford trained brothers, and others in Diaspora who are still trapped in the fortress of colonialists’ psychological unsure footedness, with new transformative images. This is part of the challenges which the uncritical savoring and panting after the metropolitan cities cultural, spiritual and intellectual nectar suggests in the post-colonial era (more of this in the forthcoming publication). Entering into the global space, a significantly knowledge-society without a strong education policy and cutting edge infrastructures will only make us spectators in the theatre of a social order that places higher premium on “performativity” (Obikeze 2003), through continuous training, inculcation of skills and rebranding of products through techno-improved designs.

In the circumstance, we do not see our situation as being improbable and unsure. Thus, for the creative writer, he has to theorize the challenges at hand clinically and breathe the breath of literary fresh air to his creative production; to expose the worldview that is likely to undermine African future. This is because “our new global situation demands narratives which face up to the task of representing the ambivalences of the post-colonial situation, a situation that is more ironic than we are often willing to admit”, such situation includes the international capital’s capricious oppression and exploitation of the people of the third world; whereas “from the perspective of the governing classes in those countries, this is development; the oppressed continue to suffer under economic doctrines which are expressed through Orwellian double speak-‘structural adjustment’ and ‘open market’ (the hallmark of global economy) for example, but what they continue to aspire for, even as they suffer, are the values and images of the west, the juices from the source of suffering itself” (Gikandi 1992:380).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Literature at the risk of emphasizing the obvious is the blood bank of any community of human beings. Its oral form is uniquely the warehouse, where myriads of written texts have genetically evolved. Researchers have equally shown that in literature is the tap root of science and technological breakthroughs of any nation (Fashina 2005). Evidences abound in oral songs and stories, surrounding architectural pieces, designs, art works and other monuments of significance. UNESCO’s attempt at recovering the endangered intangible aspect of human culture is a positive measure at putting checks on the whirlpool - globalization. As we therefore embark on restructure in education industry we must divorce ourselves from policies or formulations that are likely to undermine a discipline at the expense of the other. In addition, restructuring should transcend mere improvement and enlargement of existing or new infrastructures; it should envision a radical transformation and review of curriculum, course contents, and instructional materials in agreement with the realities which the global order is enforcing on us.

For fiction, however, the art of storytelling should continue with prodigious interest in its study, not the least art should insist on an intense engagement with technology. It should illuminate an ambitious envisioning that should engender a process of innovation and renewal. Hence, renewing the art (literature) as a core field of study means, recognizing the art (literature) at the centre of the intellectual and educational mission of the government; and in so far as imparting basic skills is fundamental to the current education reforms, maintaining rigorous instruction in literature and the humanities is integral to the progress of other academic fields.

Through networking, stories should continue to cross borders unhindered, to facilitate better understanding, relationship and harmonious integration of people of the world. Love, the elixir of human community through mutual respect must flow in the stream of trade and other indices of expanding economy.

Fiction should project seductive myths that will elevate our soul beyond mechanical and structural issues which we are inclined to believe to be the sources of end to the blight of lack that surround us. Our vision of becoming one of the 20 best economies by 2020 should be powered by education reforms that recognize human resources in fiction to create better and stronger values for growth, bilateral relations and steady socio-economic development that will erode cut throat social and political tensions which exploitation through de-industrialization of some nations at the economic advantage of other countries (Nicola Bullard and Chaunda Chanypate 2005).

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