

# THE ROLE OF CREATIVE ART IN NATION BUILDING

*G. O. Diogu*

## **Abstract.**

In Nigeria, the role of creative art in national development has not been fully appreciated. Creative art for long had been treated as an insignificant aspect of the country's educational programme. A consequence of this neglect in the improvement of the people's creative potentials is that the standard of Nigerian locally designed products remain very low and cannot compete favourably with her foreign counterparts. In this paper, the role of creative art in nation building is discussed. Some factors which have acted as cog in the wheel of creative development of individuals in the society were identified. The paper advocates for policies that would guarantee optimal utilization of creative art for national development

## **Introduction.**

In many developed countries, a major contributing factor to academic, economic and industrial success is the knowledge of creative art and its application to the development of human and material resources for nation building. The knowledge of creative art results from active participation in creative art activities in schools, at the primary and secondary school levels.

Creative art is not relegated to the background or neglected as it is done in developing countries. It takes a prime position and is emphasized along with other subjects in sciences and technology.

The scope of creative art is indeed broad and applied in various dimensions. Western art theories schematized art in relation to the basic interests from which they derive. The pragmatic or instrumental theories of art placed the subject under the following specific objectives in the child's development, in other words, the creative art could be used as:

- (a) Instrument of religious and moral indoctrination.
- (b) Instrument of education.
- (c) Instrument of manufacture of products.
- (d) Instrument for expression or communication of ideas/emotions.
- (e) Instrument for the vicarious expansion of experience.

From the Naturalistic theories of art point of view, "art is the reflection of the actual (Realism); Art is the reflection of the ideal (Idealism); Art is the imagination of actuality or unachievable ideal (fiction)" (Osborne, 1968).

The formalistic theories of art view art as autonomous creation and organic unity. This is aesthetic interest. All the above stated theories of art have one focus, namely, integrated approach to manpower development. The Nigerian traditional society developed as a result of the application of creative art in various dimensions.

## **Art In The Life Of The Nation.**

During the traditional and transitional periods of our national development (Nigeria), Art played a major role in nation building. Wittingly or unwittingly, it has been used to propagate the people's culture and traditions. Cultural knowledge has been transmitted from one generation to another. Cultural knowledge according to Fatuyi (1986) is the "product of accepted behaviour patterns of a society, their conception of life, be it product designs, works of art, mode of perception or conception or execution of manipulative or responses to things seen or unseen including aesthetic or spiritual values".

Art was fully involved in national life. The life of the society was projected through art. Art in this context implied artful thinking, artful devices produced and contained within the individual's cultural environment, techniques and technology of artifacts, objects produced or shaped by human workmanship, especially tools, weapons or ornamentations of historical and archaeological value.

Using cultural ideas rooted in the people's philosophy of life, the creative artists have been able to develop valuable things which have been used for social, religious and economic stabilization of the state.

One startling revelation is that the works produced during the periods slated above were produced by artists trained under the master-apprentice system of education. Realising that (raining under this system lacked appropriate theoretical foundation which is necessary for the enhancement of

self-sufficient, self-sustaining and self-propagating philosophy of growth among the people, the federal government of Nigeria has recently introduced creative art as a compulsory subject at junior secondary school level.

"there are many possibilities for careers in Art which are satisfying and equally challenging and the Government has relied on them for the provision of goods and services to the public. These include;

- (i) Fine Artists - They produce work which are mainly decorative. The works which could be painting, drawing and sculpture form parts of the symbolic culture of the society. (ii) Art Education - The society requires the services of art educators within and outside the school system. They are expected to fulfil a role that contributes to the integration of art in education of members of the society. (iii) Industrial Artists - These are skilled innovative designers whose advance the process of production of prototype devices for mass production in industries. Industrial artists include textile designers, ceramic designers, graphic/package designers, typographers, stage and fashion designers, etc. (iv) The government also needs the services of Museum curators who will be charged with responsibilities of organising and documenting the country's heritage.

### **Creative Art In Schools.**

It is well known that secondary education plays an important role in national development. A solid foundation is laid here for acquisition of skill at the basic level in Arts, Science and Technology. In the school curriculum, the subject has many components namely, pottery, drawing, graphics, painting, textile design, sculpture and craft.

In the final examination qualifying candidate to obtain certificate in creative art. it is compulsory for candidates to offer drawing and art history and appreciation. Candidates would also select one option from all the components listed above.

A closer look at the four key words: Creative art. Design Education, Technology Creation and Nation Building will make us appreciate the role of art generally in this education of the Nigerian child. Creative art could be defined as a discipline which trains man in organisation of formal elements, line, shape, colour, texture and space to obtain certain emotional and visual effect (Adejumo, 1986).

This phenomenon involves two basic aspects namely, the presentational aspect involving the development of forms, symbols or motif. The second aspect is the embellishment of the derived products which should have desirable forms.

Design education could be described as the activities involved in the conception of life, be it product design, works of art, mode of perception of conception or execution of technical manipulation or responses to things seen or unseen, including aesthetic or spiritual values -achieved in the school system.

Technology creation by definition are methods or techniques developed for the purpose of providing things needed by individuals in the society. Nation building could be defined as the application and transmission of intellectual and moral excellencies of the people in a logical setting for the purpose of individual and group development.

Having defined the key words, it would be pertinent to perceive the contributions of creative art with regard to its roles in child's development. Creative art is one of the core subject at the junior secondary school level and an elective at the senior secondary level. The subject is taught in school with a underlisted objectives. To enable the trainee:

- (a) Develop a language for expressing ideas, feelings, emotions and mood through a variety of art experiences;
- (b) Gain understanding of media and experiences;
- (c) Learn the proper use of tools, equipment and materials;
- (d) I understand and appreciate works of art;
- (e) Develop interest for a future vocation in art;
- (f) I have adequate skill and competence for higher education in Art; and
- (g) See the usefulness of art in subject areas. (National Policy on Education: 1977).

Emphasising this need at primary and secondary school levels. Akolo (1986) advises that a

Child can and must be trained in visual awareness if he is to become an aware adult. Taste, the ability to discriminate, to cast off the false, the unworthy and to retain the genuine, the capacity to

see what is before us. to be alert - all these are best formed in early childhood.

Aware that our children will be the future leaders of tomorrow, concerted efforts should be made to give them efficient and effective training in creative art.

In vocational schools, creative art has helped to provide skilled manpower mostly at intermediate level in the local industries, including engineering and construction sectors. It is this system of education that should be encouraged because it leads to the acquisition of practical skills as well as basic technical knowledge which every nation needs for development.

It is appreciated that the need for good engineers and scientists is understood by public then (the need for good artists but they all go together to ensure progress).

If creative art is to serve these purposes in Nigeria, then there should be emphasis on quality of content of the curriculum. The productive aspect of creative art programme must be brought into a closer relationship with the cultural, social and economic needs. Therefore any cog in the wheel of creative development should be dismantled.

### **Problems**

The problems of having functional education through creative art are many and variegated. Jegede (1986) identified "problem of curriculum emphasis" as one of the major problems. This is attributed to curriculum implementation leaders in schools who struggle to maintain their programmes in schools against other subjects.

It was also observed that parents, educators, etc exert pressure on students to use time devoted to creative art in the curriculum for more emphasis on science, mathematics and English which is assumed to be significant to national survival. Also periods allocated to creative art most often conflict with other subjects such as music, Home Economic and introductory technology among others. This attitude frustrates students who may have desire to offer these subjects in their examinations.

The implication of this malignant attitude to child's creative development is that students who are good in science subjects and have interest in creative art are denied the opportunity of offering the subject in examination.

It is also well known according to Jegede, earlier cited, that various governments have overtly or covertly supported and financed programmes in the so-called vital areas. Whereas, considering the fine arts as mere entertainment, and ignoring the meaningful values in them that enable and elevate, will only foster mediocrity in an age searching for excellence. For obviously, modern civilization must not limit its efforts to science, mathematics and English alone, even in the interest of these subjects themselves. It is important to give full value and support to other great branches of man's artistic, literary and scholarly activities.

Other problems affecting creative art which many research reports have identified include:

- (a) problem of equipment and materials.
- (b) Failure of school to make art relevant.
- (c) Failure to make art productive
- (d) Lack of counselling.
- (e) Dearth of art teachers
- (f) Misleading ambition of parents and students.

### **Proposal**

There is need to re-evaluate creative art programmes in Nigerian schools in order to provide for the needs of the society. Instructional programmes should be re-designed to make them more effective and efficient.

School administrators (principals) should be enlightened through orientation programmes, emphasising the roles of creative art, most importantly its relevance to other subjects taught in schools.

The educational purpose of creative art; objectives, needs, goals and values should be highlighted in order to sustain public awareness of art as one of the instruments for national development. In this regard, if creative art is to serve as an instrument for nation building, there must be greater emphasis on quality of content, practical and theoretical experiences in art programme. The productive aspect of art programme must be integrated with our national philosophy.

The problem of dearth of materials, tools, and equipment would be ephemeral if an integrated approach to instructional materials/equipment sourcing is carried out by artists and scientists cooperatively. Artists and scientists should work together to produce innovative instructional media/materials for the society. This is because in the words of Reed (1958) "art cannot develop without science, neither can science advance its investigations without the aid of art".

## **Conclusion**

We can see from the proceedings that creative art is relevant to national development and therefore should not be isolated. Our quest for scientific and technological development without the involvement of creative art will be disastrous and counter productive.

## **References**

Adejumo. E. A. (1986) "Artistic Creativity in the Age of Technology". Nigerian Journal of Art Education. Vol. 2. No. 1.

Akolo, J. R. (1986) "Art Education and Technological Advancement"<sup>11</sup>. Nigerian Journal of Art Education. Vol. 2, No. 1.

Federal Ministry of Education (1977). National Policy on Education Lagos FG Press.

Fatuyi. R. B. (1986) "Design Concept and Appropriate Visuals for (he Young". Nigerian Journal of Art Education. Vol. 2, "No. I.

Jegege, O. (1986) "Functional Education through Art". Nigerian Journal of Art Education. Vol. 2. No. 1.

Osborne. 11. (1968) Aesthetic and Art Theory: An historical introduction. London: Longmans.

Read, II. (1958) Education Through Art. London: Faber & Faber.