

# VOCATIONAL ART EDUCATION AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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*Talatu Titus Umbugadu*  
*Department of Fine and Applied Arts,*  
*College of Education, Akwanga,*  
*Nasarawa State, Nigeria.*

And

*Aliyu Muhammad, (Ph.D)*  
*Department of Fine Arts,*  
*Ahmadu Bello University,*  
*Zaria – Nigeria.*

## **Abstract**

*It is no longer news to state that, there is worldwide concern for redundancy, mainly as it touches teeming jobless youths generally and women to be specific. This concern is specifically more pronounced in developing countries, including Nigeria. Hence empowerment can only be achieved through the training of youths, with special interest on women in skills acquisition and vocational art education/studies. It is on basis of the preceding that this paper brought to light the dynamic part vocational art education play in making one to be self-dependent. The paper also advocates ways that could enable the awareness of such objectives.*

He, who educates a woman, educates the nation. This has become a popular national saying amongst some individual members of the society when it comes to the issue of appraising women and the role they play in a society. The paper takes a cue from the views expressed by Ahmed (2007) on education thus: “Education is basically training and imparting of knowledge to humanity, it is also a social institution where the values, cultures and traditions of the society are transmitted from one generation to another”. It is in view of this, therefore, that one tends to agree that education plays an important part in the transmission of culture; it goes hand in hand

with what obtains in the society as they directly reflect each other. In this case, the issue of vocational art education becomes indispensable due to the changing nature of the society.

“Also, education socializes and equips people to live fully, interacts meaningfully and functions effectively in the society. Education provides the appropriate endowments and to contribute to societal well-being, growth development. Through education, the individual gets the enlightenments to understand and appreciate the dynamic of society and human rights” (Sa’adu, 2000). The individual acquire the high – level desire for peaceful co-existence, co-operation and a sense of community.

From the above remarks, it would be safe to state that to educate is to give intellectual and moral training, to behave well, to think constructively, create, to discipline, and to develop one’s qualities and capacities. In view of this, therefore, this paper will deliberate on the concept of vocational, art education and empowerment. This paper proffers some recommendations that if taking into due consideration, vocational art education would make a meaningful contribution into lives of individual members of the society, particularly women.

### **A Purview of the Term Vocational**

The dictionary meaning of “vocational” ordinarily refers to “an urge and inclination towards particular career or profession. The career in the sense is usually practical and demands acquisition of professional know-how and skills. Technical and vocational skills are basic to all societies because the practitioners constitute the middle level manpower. In support of this, Okolocha (2012) is of the opinion that, there is no gainsaying that education remains the key to sustainable development of any country. It was in realization of this that a National Policy on Education was formulated. The trend now in the society shows that the level of one’s education does not have a significant effect on one’s growth rather the effect is more pronounced on the level of skills possessed and the ability to apply the skills in the real world of work.

Technical and vocational education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving the study of technologies and related sciences on one hand and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes and knowledge on the other hand, relating to occupations in various sectors of the economy and social life. In this regards, vocational and technical education as stated in the National Policy of education (NPE, 2004), states thus:

- a. An integral part of general education
- b. A means of preparing for occupations field and for effective participation in the world of work.

- c. An aspect of lifelong learning and preparation for responsible citizenship.
- d. An instrument for promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development; and
- e. A method of alleviation poverty.

The goals of vocational and technical education as centered in the National Policy of Education (NPE 2004) includes inter alia.

- A. Provision of trained manpower in the applied science, technology and business particularly in craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
- B. Provision of technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commercial and economic development and
- C. Provision of training and importing the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

It is stated in the NPE that the early stage of educational system, elementary technologies should be introduced into school curriculum so that student would be exposed to practical using their hands in making, repairing and assembly things. Vocational art education should provide practical skills; this will provide the bedrock for trade, or profession.

Vocational arts education may provide the needed lock for a sustained initiative towards reducing women idleness. To this end educational curricula in such vocational centres should be revised to include vocational arts/entrepreneurship and should be reviewed periodically, say every three years in order to accommodate changes that may result from universal demands. At the very least one course on vocational arts should be made compulsory irrespective of the programme of study. Skills training must be incorporated in all aspects of education so that the products will be equipped for employment or at least be creative in the area of job creation.

In line with the above, Okolocha (2012) states that, vocational technical education can be defined as an educational training which encompasses knowledge, skills, competencies, structural activities, abilities, capabilities and all other structural experiences acquired through formal, on-the-job or off-the job which is capable of enhancing recipients opportunity for securing jobs in various sector of the economy or even enabling the person to be self-dependent by being a job creator.

Muhammad (2008) says that “the caliber of women or students to be trained will be those with skills and general knowledge of science and humanities (art inclusive)”. This will incorporate the emergence of a new body of knowledge for the purpose of up grading the responsibilities of lower level professional manpower needed for vocational art education for women. The need for training and re-training of women will enable them to develop appropriate skills for various occupations to

enable trainers get empowered and therefore, became self-reliant. This is imperative especially since vocational art education provides training and skills and specific trade that will provide women to be self-employed and with entrepreneur skills.

### **Empowerment**

In view of the preceding, therefore, the paper would briefly enlighten the reader the link between vocational arts education and women empowerment. In other words, this part would provide the benefits that the women would gain from such enterprise. Mustapha (2009) defines empowerment as “the process and the result of the process whereby the powerless or less powerful members of the society gain greater access and control over materials resources, challenges and ideologies of discrimination and subordination”. It appears that, there are powerless members in a society until men move power to meet the challenges of their time to which women folk falls if they are to make any meaningful contribution in re-branding the nation.

Similarly, Fatima (2009) remarks that “women globally are relegated; they are not given the necessary encouragement needed adequately especially educationally to enable them to be self-reliant. Vocational art education is an important way of empowering women is to educate them especially through vocational education which will give women ample time to perform their dual responsibility of managers of the family as well as greatly engaged in vocational activities such as sewing, knitting, snack-making, interior decorations, soap making and a host of other related activities, women can be encouraged to do all these without any hardship through been given financial assistance. Credit facilities could also be given to women for income, generally activities like cottage industry, farming, livestock rearing and petty trading, women could also be given encouragement to go for further studies.

Alternatively, women could form groups in their various communities and be empowered with all the facilities needed in a particular trade; this will go a long way in reducing female idealness in such locality. Professionals could be trained to select some members of a community for a stated period, after which these same group from their members, that is, train the trainer programme. An example serving, women will get engaged in services of vocational activities within a short time, this consequently brings all round development.

### **Recommendation**

For any meaningful vocational art education to be realized, vocational and art/technical education must take its rightful position through effective planning and implementation. Since the acquisition makes an individual self-reliance because it equips the recipient with both the general education and techniques of practical skills

and knowledge relating to occupations in various sections of economic and social life. Vocational and art/technical education as a tool for empowerment can be described as the provision of adequate opportunities to women to develop their potentials through vocational knowledge and skills to enable them get the educational foundation needed to put them on course and also encourage them towards making meaningful contribution in re-branding Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

From the preceding discussions on vocational art education and women empowerment, it will be inferred here that, the vital part women play in the furtherance of the society in particular and nation at large cannot be quantifiable. The women's lives is embedded and replete with constraints from conception to old age with constrains ranging from discrimination in family, community and national levels which is merged by education or ignorance. The women are potentials in a given society, and that if fully educated with necessary skills on a particular profession, can equally help in sustaining the family as a whole. It is important for government at all levels and stake holders to be committed and also take appropriate steps to effectively educate the women by ensuring equal access to education by taking measures to eliminate educational imbalances in favour of the men at all levels. The paper also conclusively agrees with Iriweiri (2009) who states thus: "art acts as a creative force in employment reduction and as cultural catalyst, which should not be neglected but rather serve as a roadmap for National development.

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