

VISUAL ART AS THE CORE OF LIFE: PANACEA FOR TECHNOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA IN THE CONTEXT OF VISION 20:2020

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Abstract

Visual Art as the core of life; panacea for technological and scientific development of Nigeria is a material that examines art beyond the expression of feeling, behavior, custom, tradition or culture of a people and nation. It sees visual art as a means of developing and promoting curiosity, enquiry, or means for socioeconomic and personal emancipation in 20:2020. It further examines the roles of visual art in other disciplines such as science and technology which are the keys for development. Some suggestions are made on the needs to uphold and incorporate art in science and technology programmes as well as in our teaching and learning stages with a view to promoting skill acquisition among the youth. This will go a long way in liberating Nigeria and Nigerians from scientific, technological and socioeconomic dependence

Introduction

Vision 20:2020 was borne out of the desire to lead Nigeria and Nigerians to the Promised Land by the immediate past president. The current president and his cabinet have the same spirit of leading Nigeria and Nigerians to the same Promised Land. It was tailored on seven point agenda that comprised of power and energy, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, land reforms, security, health and education.

Art processes and art products can greatly contribute in creating public awareness, promotion of goods consumption and services. Not only that art and art activities can contribute in wealth creation and employment. Skill acquisition and practice in Visual Art areas like music, dance, drama, production of batik, tie and dye, tailoring and fashion design, sculpture, painting, graphic design, ceramic, culture and tourism, architectural design and so on promote wealth creation and employment.

It is not disputable that private and public sectors seek innovative and inventive ways to improve their processes and products. Art has been heralded as the panacea for all problems in the history of mankind. It is observed that art integrated schools curriculum supposedly improve academic performance and students discipline; it also revitalizes neighborhoods and promotes economic prosperity, Joshua, (2002, pp.1-11). Our educational sector should take visual art with all seriousness and merge it with science and technology program in our quest for development.

The Mainstream of Development

Countries have often been classified into three main streams namely the developed, the developing and the less developed. Developed countries are the nations that have attained technological sophistry by exploring and exploiting science, art and technology to create wealth, save human energy and provide technical services to their citizens. The developing nations are countries that are striving to attain technological development in order to improve their people's poor condition of living. While less developed countries are the nations that are faced with socioeconomic, artistic,

scientific, and technological backwardness. They depend solely on developed nations. The over dependence of developing and less developed nations on developed countries is alarming and lamentable.

This is not far from the naïve mentality of the less developed nations that foreign goods or products are superior to home made goods. Such attitude has created a culture of helplessness in the socioeconomic developmental efforts of individuals or group of individuals in the nations affected. This situation appears gloomy and irredeemable due to poor integration and harnessing of visual art into the mainstream of socioeconomic, scientific and technological development programs of such nations. This is not far from the conception of some stakeholders about art and art activities in relation to human development which leads to national development. Some people view art and art activities as child's play.

It is relevant to point out here that ideas are naturally abstract. However, they are made visible or tangible through the creative abilities and applications that are found only in the art forms, works, activities and products. Such knowledge and capabilities empower the individual or group of individuals as well as the nation.

Visual Art and National Development

Educational Research as the bedrock of development depends largely on art either as process or product. This is because inventions and innovations of ideas are concretized with the help of creative artistic powers. Drawing, design making and construction and production that promote development are art activities. In spite of the fundamental changes brought about by professionals and technology such as auto cards, corral draw among others, designers still draw. The use of drawing, certainly paper based drawing, has decreased in the daily practice of many designers. Yet, many design academics believe that drawing should have a place in the curriculum despite pressures, Schenk (2005 pp. 189-203).

The case of the German Bauhaus cannot be overlooked in our search for development. The Bauhaus was an art movement founded by Walter Gropius the architect in Weimar, Germany in the year 1919. Its main objective was to unify all the arts around the building by bringing together architects, sculptors and painters. A school of design was formed where students studied basic design courses, the principles of composition and color and how to work with different materials. Its main emphasis was on industrial or applied art to serve the need of the industrial civilization, FME (1977 p.133).

Developing nations could borrow similar idea by establishing schools of Art, Science and Technology where artists, scientist and technologists including Technocrats would come together, design and produce machines and materials needed for our total socioeconomic independence. The composition of such school should include artists like Sculptors, Ceramists, Graphic Artists, Painters, Textile designers, Photographers, and Scientists such as Physicists, Chemists, Biologists, all Engineers and Architects. Government and non governmental agencies should make deliberate plan and allocate adequate fund to facilitate research work and productivity in this aspect.

It is not contestable that art, science and technology have worked together for development of nations. Art, science and technology are interlaced such that one cannot exist without the other. According to Reads (1956) in Uzoagba (2000 p.4)

I do not distinguish science and art except as methods and I believe that the opposition created between them in the past has been due to limited view of

both activities. Art is the presentation while science is the explanation of the same reality.

This simply means that Science found Art very useful in explaining facts that are obtained from research and experiments. The facts are expressed in diagrams, charts and illustrations which are art works or forms using artistic creative abilities. Facts are also represented in forms like design making, building construction and welding.

The Concept of Visual Art and its Function

It is difficult to have a unified accepted single definition of Art because of its abstract nature and universal application which is guided by forms and principles that lead to the acquisition of any skill, craft, trade, knowledge and its application.

There are broad divisions of Art tailored to Liberal and Creative Arts. Liberal Arts comprise Philosophy, History, Literature and courses that fall under humanities. Creative Art includes performing and visual or Industrial Arts. Performing Art constitute music, drama otherwise Theatre Arts. Visual Art includes Fine and Applied Arts. Fine Art comprises Sculpture, Painting, Art Education and Art History. Applied or Industrial Arts include Graphics, Textiles, Ceramics, Glass and Plastic Technology.

According to Talabi (1991 pp.1-8) art generally is a way of life. It is the power of doing anything. It means any skill, trade, craft or acquired expertise. It is the study and creation of things in forms, texture, lines and color that gives pleasure to the mind and satisfies our sense of beauty. Art does not give pleasure to the mind and satisfies our sense of beauty only but fulfils and actualizes the aspirations of the Artists. It provides through the Art products what the public needs. Art is summarized by Wangboje (1980 p.11-17) as follows:

Art is both a process and a product. As a process, art is a means through which we give sensuous and concrete expression to our ideas and feelings about the world around us. As a product, art includes illustrations, images, pictures, buildings, automobiles, furniture, utensils, music, dance, drama, etc.

From the forgoing, art is a form in which man expresses his abstract or creative ideas and feelings into actualities or real life situations. Therefore, the processes involved in doing things and products of such things are art. It is in these ways that one discloses his feelings and abstract ideas into concrete. In an attempt for the Artist to exploit his creative power, potential and ability, the world becomes his thought and his thought becomes his world. Art can be seen as what one does through the application of knowledge and practical skills, how it is done and the practical result of what is done.

The artist therefore manipulates his environment to meet his basic needs such as food, shelter, dress, mobility, communication and protective devices. This is typified by the building structures that are used for office, residential, religious and business purposes. Other products include furniture, utensils, gadgets, tools and equipment that are avidly consumed every moment of our lives.

It is imperative to mention here that all disciplines particularly architecture, Building Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, and Home Economics are interlaced with Art. They cannot operate effectively without Art as long as creativity, design making, production and application are concerned. Having identified the place of Art, it is relevant to incorporate it in the developmental programs of developing nations to promote in the learners (the young generations) a sense of creativity and imaginative thinking in order to make them better future engineers, architects,

scientists, economists, artists and or industrialists. This will enable them to collectively contribute to the development of the nation.

Visual Art as the Core of Life

Art is highly consistent with the multifaceted dynamics of the modern life. It helps to focus on the effective way of social activity and balance all the individual and social needs. Art has a special significance, for it is a basis for the holistic personality growth building up all the main characteristics of the worldwide view that further develop and sharpen the person. This suggests the significance of sustaining and guiding art with the present multivariate dynamic ways of social life.

Another great importance of art is its role in the development of the person's creative powers, hence the enrichment of his personality. Bykasova et al, (2010 pp.9-12) said "it is necessary to turn to the organization issues of art education that develops an individual creativity needed to successfully adapt to changing technological and socio-cultural conditions of life in the fast developing world". It is relevant to note that the specifics of artistic creativity play a special educational role in the artistic culture as a space for creative self-awareness and self-development.

Art is a particularly significant sphere of human activity vital for the development of the society as a process of the person's requirement and acquisition of the humanity's artistic growth and development. According to Pavlova, (2007 pp.52-60) "by introducing the rich experience of mankind accumulated in the arts to a junior student it is possible to foster a highly moral, educated, versatile modern human being" who can withstand the challenges of our dynamic world in an era of artistic, scientific and technological challenges". The Art world flows through human feelings and emotions, enriches him with new feelings, perceptions and ideas. So through Art, the entire human goes directly into a person and the human world" Zakhovaeva, (2005 pp21-24). Invariably our thoughts through art creativity become our world and our world become our thought Therefore Art and Art Education can be seen as multifaceted and multi-functionality to the utmost in humanity.

Visual Art in Technological Development

There are varied definitions of technology more so technological development. Technology refers to ways of making or doing things. It is a word derived from Greek word "techne" which means "art or craft". Hall (1995) said in a narrower sense that technology refers to the industrial process that succeeded craft operation. But in a broad sense technology refers to all processes, materials and products that we use or consume everyday. Technological development therefore can be seen as the acquisition of a body of knowledge of practical values or the ability to apply knowledge, skills, desirable work attitudes, handle tools and equipment for the production of goods and services, Mamani, (2005 pp.112-118).

The acquisition of a body of knowledge of practical values and its applications are best achieved in art forms, works and products. It is only in art that one learns how to coordinate the mind with his hand which leads to the acquisition of knowledge of practical values and its application which are used in the production of goods and services. Art has contributed meaningfully in designing and construction of equipment, tools and machines that are used in the industries for processing raw materials and production of goods that are consumed in our daily lives. Relevant suitable posters, packages, illustrations and diagrams that inform the public of the goods produced and their values that facilitate consumption and production are produced by artists.

Developed nations like Japan found art very relevant in their development programs, through Art, such nations have been able to import abundant abandoned raw materials from less developed and developing nations, processed and produced goods that are all over the markets.

Suggestions

In order to be socio-economically, scientifically and technologically emancipated, these suggestions are made:

- i. The teaching of Art like English, Science, Mathematics and Technology should be made compulsory and encouraged in all institutions of learning.
- ii. More Art teachers should be trained and encouraged to teach the subject at all level of learning in order to propagate it and build in the young ones a sense of creativity and imaginative thinking to make them better future engineers, scientists, economists, artists and industrialists.
- iii. Create a joint project, commission or institution like the Bauhaus of Germany to consist of artists, scientists, technologist and engineers. Charge them to come up with different products using different materials to meet the developmental aspiration of the nation.
- iv. Encourage Visual Art work exhibitions from local government to national level. Select the best artists and their art works, award scholarships and all sort of incentives to participants.
- v. Focus on development of the arts and crafts that were and are practiced among every people to foster technological development

Conclusion

Despite the efforts and achievements made by the government of developing nations in improving their economy, it is significant to cement the differences created in Science, Art and Technology. This is because Art remains the springboard of the scientific and technological development of any given nation. Germany, for instance formed the Bauhaus which was a group of scientists, artists and engineers that came together to make something for themselves which triggered her development. Africa and Nigeria in particular should apply same in her quest for national development by creating a forum that can bring the Artists, Scientist and Technologists together and charge them with the responsibility to come up with different products.

Babalola (1983) affirmed the relevance of art when he stressed the role Art can play in the development or progress of a nation in the education of children; in the urban and rural development of a country; in the home community, commerce and industry in Nigeria and the vitality art can bring to the different areas of national development. He warns that the road to technological take off and development in Nigeria will continue to be rocky and under construction until creativeness otherwise visual art is incorporated and encouraged at all levels of human and national development.

It is relevant to emphasize that without art, its activities and products, life is void. It is only in art that there can be expression of the state of the mind. It is only in art that the creative ability of the human being can be developed and utilized effectively. It is only through art and artifacts that the origin of people can be traced. The same artifacts can be used as models and developed into goods that serve mankind.

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