

RE-ENGINEERING AND RE-POSITIONING OF FINE AND APPLIED ARTS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper sought to reposition and repackage Fine/Applied Arts for the 21st Century Nigeria that is in dire need of industrial, educational and technology development. Over the years, Art has been given a non utilitarian posture in schools and societal circles. This disdainful treatment of the discipline is largely due to the lack of knowledge and understanding of what Art entails. The new Art education philosophy sees Art as a problem-solving discipline. In this regard, the attributes of Art like creativity, skill, imageries, conceptualization, aesthetics etc are seen as the bedrock of inventions. In the school system, Art is used to teach other subjects, for example subjects like Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Agric science., physics etc depend largely on Art. America and other developed nations knew this quite early and they strongly made Art part of their schools curricula. Over the years also, Art was applied in American industries so as to compete favourably with industrial products from Europe. In this dispensation, Nigeria's quest for technology, economic and industrial development should be anchored on Art. Technology cannot be transferred but can be developed through Art because art evolves and science involves, i.e. Art creates what science produces.

Fine and Applied Arts is founded on creativity, imageries, skills, aesthetics, conceptions, pictorials and so on which have over the years been the basis for inventions and production of industrial goods.

It has become very clear that nearly everything that is made was in the first place, conceptualized (thought out) then, drawn and produced or manufactured. Cars, air planes and so on that are used today were imagined or seen through the minds eyes as pictorials before they were drawn, designed and then manufactured (Amadi, 2009).

The above strongly buttresses the fact that art is in everything and everything is art. All creations of the Almighty God are works of Art. The rivers, oceans, hills and mountains, trees, animals and man who is also a work of Art and made by the greatest Artist God in his own image. Man uses other creatures as models to produce works of Art. For instance, a beautiful landscape which is a work of Art is also used as a model by man to produce a painted picture (work of Art). Before the advent of the Europeans, a Nigerian traditional artist was well aware of the fact that Art was inseparable from his society. He therefore produced works of Art in his own way i.e. based on his culture and tradition.

Unfortunately, the colonial masters had no empathy on the works of the traditional artists; instead of recognizing them they labeled them as crude.

Oloidi (2011) hinted that the history of reprehensive and deriding societal attitude to art goes to the beginning of colonialism. The British colonizers, who could not understand the artistically cultural and conceptually symbolic nature of Nigeria traditional Art, easily concluded that the Nigerian traditional artist totally and naturally lacked the creativity to produce Art like a white man. This damage subterfuge and deception by the colonial masters was the beginning of the many troubles and distresses that accompanied even Modern Nigeria Art in schools and the larger society where it has always faced rejection and repudiation.

According to Amadi (2011), the society at large also forms their opinion about art. They do not see Art as a career subject. They would rather want to be associated with the sciences and in most cases, would want to address their wards minds to medicine, engineering, pharmacy etc.

In this dispensation, Art needs to be re-engineered, repositioned, ransomed and redeemed despite the damagers done to it, in order that it will be properly positioned to play its role of economic, technological and educational development of Nigeria in the 21st century.

Definition of Terms

Fine Art These include works of Art that are created to be beautiful e.g. painting, sculpture and drawing (Hornby, 2001).

Fine Arts as a study, covers the area of painting, sculpture, drawing, photography Art history, Art education, Fine Arts criticism, Art administration and Museum studies. The studio areas of Fine Arts are primarily concerned with the production of decorative, aesthetic or beautiful things that appeal to the eyes or one's mood. In addition, works produced can serve social, political religious, therapeutic historical, educative and generally humanistic needs. Works of Fine Arts have made history more historical or factual, alive and convincing through pictorial and sculptural documentation of events or historical as well as notable religious characters (Oloidi, 2011).

Applied Art When considering the type of Art that has totally and indispensably saturated the utilitarian needs of the society, or, the only profession that has authoritatively imposed itself on the daily physical or practical needs of the people; it is Art, and in this case, Applied Arts. That is the specialized areas of graphics, ceramics, textiles, fashion design aspects of sculpture and metal design. Applied Arts therefore, is the Art form that is designed or produced by an artist-designer and which can be mass produced by an industry as an industrial product for utilitarian or practical use. This is why it is referred to as an industrial Art or the Art for industry (Oloidi, 2011).

In this regard Fine and Applied Arts could be said to be the employment of skill, creativity, aesthetics etc. to produce work Art for appreciation or for the industry.

Art Stigmatization

Art stigmatization implies that Fine and Applied Art with all the resources it has for development has been stifled and not given the opportunity to play its role in our educational system, industry, society science and technology. This situation can still be traced to the colonial master's lackadaisical attitude to Nigeria's traditional Art which in turn has seriously affected the image of Nigeria modern Art.

Nigeria Educational System Nigeria Educational System has never in reality accommodated Fine and Applied Arts. Art is seen as a recreational subject and this situation informs why it is treated with levity in schools. More so, it is also seen as a subject for the indolent because of its association with craft. For these reasons, subjects like English language, Mathematics and other subjects are considered more important than Art. Mbahi (1997) confirmed that in most schools, English language and Mathematics are given most serious attention. They are studied throughout secondary education. Art is only compulsory in the Junior Secondary School. During the third year, students are asked to choose a limited number of subjects which they could study in Senior Secondary School and for the WASC and GCE examinations. This choice is frequently determined by such grouping or option system that a school operates. A large number of children, particularly the more intelligent ones, give up Art on the basis of its lack of social and economical relevance.

A recent survey shows that the ratio of Art teachers to other teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria was about 1:30. This means that one could find a whole school without an Art tutor because the staff populations in many schools are less than thirty (Mbahi, 1997).

There have been situations where Art teachers are not given the opportunities to go for service training and refresher courses. This causes serious setback to the teachers and the subject alike. It also brings regrets to the teachers who in most cases, think that they chose a wrong discipline. The Yaba Technical Institute later known as Yaba College of Technology, was the first college, or institution of higher learning in Nigeria. As should be expected, Art was not made part of the college curricula. Also, when in the late 1940s the university college, now University of Ibadan, was opened to be an

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extension of the University of London, colonial apathy or even antipathy for visual arts totally eclipsed the discipline (Oloidi, 2011).

The same situation would have been the portion of the Art programme of the University of Nigeria Nsukka had Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the founder of the university not suggested that the Art department be made part of the programmes in the university in 1961.

Having studied in the United States of America he was well aware of the importance of Art in the development of any nation.

In the larger Nigeria society, there is also a great apathy against Art. Many parents and guardian have succeeded in discouraging their wards from studying art in the higher institutions for fear that it does not have societal acceptability, more so, it lacks the ingredient and what it takes to put food on ones table.

At the higher level, the government and education stake holders do not see much good in Art. All attention goes to science subjects which are considered appropriate and indispensable to national, economic and technology development.

Re-engineering and Repositioning Fine and Applied Art for National Development.

Perhaps, the first step in Re-engineering and Repositioning Fined Applied Arts is to show case what it entails. Until now, many do not know what entails or means. Oftentimes, many have associated Art with appreciation and cultural roles only.

This is only a part of the manifold roles of Art. By enumerating the manifold roles of Art, clarity, novelty and prominence would have been given to a discipline which hitherto, had been in obscurity due to the society's lack of knowledge and understanding of what Art entails.

Educational Role of Art

Mamani (2009) in Amadi (2010) posited that Art is the only subject that finds practical use in all subject areas. An ability to create and draw diagram or illustration accurately describes points more than words can do. In America, the 1850's and 1860's justification for art as a subject to be taught in schools was that it was necessary for the development and prosperity of American industries. (Amadi, 2010).

Nwoko (2006) stressed that the importance of Art education to the realization of the physical growth and development of scientific and technological knowledge must have been fully recognized by the Western World who had to make Art the base of their learning process. Apart from the types of mind and personality development it gives the student, artistic illustration forms the visual language of education. It therefore became imperative that the language of graphic art should be mastered during normal education process. Accordingly, a child's formal learning started with drawing, painting and modeling at an early age of three.

The above should therefore inform why Art should be strongly rooted in both primary and secondary schools curriculum as it helps in a child's developmental process. Since Art has found an invaluable instrument in teaching school subjects like biology, physics, chemistry, architecture, medicine etc; it becomes therefore pertinent that this resourceful discipline be understood and embraced by all for national development.

Technological Role of Art

Amadi (2006) posited that the ideals and resources in Art like aesthetics imagery, conceptualization, skill etc are stimulants to inventions and discoveries.

The imagination of the artist visualized the first flying machine as in the drawings of Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) and other visualizers who predicted space rocket to the scientific fiction artists who designed the first space suits and conditioned protective costumes (Nwoko 2006). Mbahi (1997) made a supportive statement when he asserted that the artist indicates the possibilities of a new invention by his creative powers, the scientist creates the knowledge through the systematic study of natural phenomena or abstract ideas and the engineer or technician deals with the systematic

use of organized knowledge to solve the problem. One could thus say that science is the knowing, Arts is the creative act involved in giving an object a form and technology is the doing. *Art evolves, science involves, and technology produces.*

From the above, it can be rightly said that the technological roles of Art is profound and consummate. Art, science and technology are intertwined. As earlier mentioned the advanced countries saw this early, they quickly and fully infused Art in their schools' curricula. Today, they are technologically driven. It therefore becomes clear here that technology development becomes a reality only with Art. The resources in Art which blends with science and technology are what bring about technology advancement; technology cannot be transferred but developed with Art as an indispensable ingredient.

Industrial Role/Utilitarian Role of Art

Sad to say that many do not know that nearly everything that are used today have artistic inputs. Indeed, Art has saturated the needs of any society. Products ranging from shoes, clothings, books, bottles, wristwatches, plates(breakables), bags, caps, furniture's, electronics have direct or indirect input of art. In fact, Art has overwhelmingly dominated every aspect of human life. Oloidi (2011) affirmed that Art is the only profession that has authoritatively imposed itself on the daily physical or practical needs of the people.

Economic Role of Art

Economically, Art has been in the frontier of the development of any nation. Already, artists are economic developers by way of being self reliant as well as in labour employment. Because art is a skill-oriented profession, many graduates of the discipline end up being self-reliant as well as employing and training others.

Many also open galleries where they produce, collect and sell works for export and local use. Ajayi (2003) submitted that the establishment of Art galleries, either government or private is on the increase. Its primary purpose of preserving art works has been enveloped and substituted for marketing especially the private galleries.

In this regard also, tourism has been boosted because foreigners come into Nigeria as collectors of Nigerian art which they consider very rich thematically and traditionally. Abdullahi Muku, the Director General of the National Gallery, Abuja in his interview about 'what is wrong with the Visual Arts Subsector' authoritatively said: The message I have is that the Visual Arts Subsector is one area that can contribute immensely to the GDP of the country just like oil. It has the capacity to generate so many funds and all that we need in the support from the private sector. Government has been doing that. People should also see Arts as some kind of treasure because very soon Art will be used as a medium of exchange and store of value. Just like gold that appreciates, same is for Visual Art, something that is bought for four million naira can appreciate to eight million naira later. It is big business which we need to key into (Suleiman, 2011).

From here, one can strongly infer that Art is a major factor in the development of any nation.

Conclusion

This paper exhaustively and completely poses that art is a major factor in the development of any nation. Over the years, especially during the industrial revolution and the renaissance era, Art has been known as a key player in the development of learning, industrial growth and development. In this regard, part of the re-engineering and re-positing the subject will be done in the minds of the society, education stakeholders, the government, school authorities etc in understanding that Art goes beyond drawing and painting to being a problem-solving discipline which can bring about development in every facet of life.

When the purpose of art is understood by all, efforts will be made by the government and the education stake holders in placing it at par with the other schools subjects so that it will be properly

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positioned and equipped to build the minds of the learners for skill acquisition to foster over all development in Nigeria as was done during the industrial revolution and renaissance era.

Suggestions

1. To fast-track the re-engineering and repositioning of the Art subject, the Nigerian Society Education Through Art (NSEA) as an Art association, should see to it that seminars are always organized in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions on the purpose and relevance of Art.
2. The Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) should also educate the society and the government on the importance of Art through exhibitions, symposia, workshops etc.
3. The Nigeria media should help play a supportive role in ensuring that art programmes, writings, seminars, exhibitions etc are both published in the dailies and made part of enlightenment programmes in the media houses.
4. Art teachers and lecturers in the tertiary institutions through their writings and publications on the relevance of art in technology development, will go a long way in creating avenues of understanding of the subject.
5. The government should establish a research institute of Art Science of Technology as a platform for Nigeria's Industrial and Technology Development. By this also, the importance of art in partnership with other disciplines would have been known by all.

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