CREATIVE ARTS EDUCATION AS THE BEDROCK OF TECHNOLOGY IN NATION BUILDING

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Abstract

Human beings live within the context of an environment filed with material images. From this environment, the human brain selects information, which is useful to survival at ill levels-physical, emotional, and intellectual. This information, assessed tluough the five impressive senses, as well as through subliminal routes to the sub-conscious, becomes the bank from which mental images are formed Based on the above information, creative arts Education has been identified as the only viable medium through which individuals can be helped to adjust into the society in which they live. In the absence of the government employment, the Creative Artists are self-employed. It is in fact one of the basic elements which goes to form a society. This paper is meant to discuss art and technology; Art and industry, its major problems and possibly make some useful recommendations on how those problems can be solved.

Introduction

In Nigeria society, everyone knows what art is. Evidence of artistic skills is seen in drawing, painting, architecture, woodcarving, pottery, beadwork, mat weaving, and other scores of Art works. Harold (1981:23), states that, "an African takes food and exercises as a natural and ordinary need and satisfies his need with joy and laughter". This being the case, art is produced with natural effort, and it is related to everyday life. The individual is surrounded by examples common to his people and mode of life and from these, he selects, modifies and uses them.

Art is a fundamental human process. Every society from the most primitive to the most sophisticated has expressed itself through art. But more important, every person has put thoughts and emotions into an art form. According to D'Amico (1960:24), "art is a personal and satisfying activity at any age, for although the arts are responsible for a greater awareness of the external world, it is also the arts that give vent to the emotions the joys and fears of life". Young children use art as a means of learning, through the development of concepts, which take visible form, through the making of symbols, which capture and are an abstraction of the environment, and through the organization and positioning of these symbols together in one configuration.

Art is a dynamic and unifying activity, with great potential for the education of our children. The process of drawing, painting or constructing is a complex one in which children bring together diverse elements of their experience to make a new and meaningful whole. In the process of selecting, interpreting and reforming these elements, children have given us more than a picture or a sculpture; they have given us a part of themselves how they think, feel and see.

In our present educational system, most emphasis has been put upon the learning of factual information. To a great extent, the passing or failing of an examination or of a course or the passing on to the next grade, or even the remaining in school depends upon the mastery or memorization of certain bits of information that are already known to the instructor. The function of the school system, then would seem to be that of the producing people who can file away bits of information and can then repeat these at a given signal. Once the student has achieved a certain competency at producing the proper bits of information at the correct time, he is considered ripe for graduating from school.

The Greeks and Romans probably had the same idea as Oscar wiled - at least, their words for what we call arts were equivalent to our words for skill and technique. Obviously nature is a very flexible term - so flexible that Oscar found it possible to suggest that nature is the creative of art. That is lo say, the arts like agriculture and building were methods of imposing the human will or matter organic or inorganic as might be. As such, the art continued to be thought of in most civilization at most periods, until, in the imagination of certain poets and philosophers, and arts was ordered to imitate this ideal. In fact, art became the approved method of realizing this ideal, of giving it visible shape.

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Arts And Technology

There is an integral relationship, which exists between art and technology. Before one makes a motorcycle or aircraft, one will first of all draw the plan or sketch it. Anything at all that is of a technological product has to be sketched on paper. Read (1974:103), opines that, "there is nothing one does without consulting "Art". He continues, by saying that technology is a way of life. It is a scientific knowledge used in practical ways industry, for example, in designing new machines". The early man in fact, started technology. He then co-optes Art in the bit to bring about his stone-made stool. The fact still remains that man made and produced tools which were actually technological production and that these products were made by way of art.

Throughout the industrialized world, the creative arts occupy a subsidiary and peripheral place in the school curriculum. The situation vanes or course from country to country but the trend is clear enough. Technological progress has brought with it an emphasis on the development of specialist skills, thought to be essential for social administration and management of technical systems. Priorities and resources have been tilted heavily in favour of the formal academic curriculum to the disadvantage of the creative arts. Excepting only those special few children who are clearly destined for career; as artists, the majority of children and then' parents are encouraged to view the creative arts as of how prestige in the educational ventures, as pleasant or .recreational, but as not worth the investment by children of too much time and effort given the more " important" demand that education is making upon them.

The price that will pay for this bias in the educational system is a heavy one. It is not a matter of cultural refinement or therapy recreational opportunities foregone. The creation of this technological world demands two things of us if we are to adopt sufficient and to survive. It demands a creative and flexible response to the problems it has brought with it and it demands too that technology be meaningfully related to people's lives in terms of the subjective experiences that they have in the world. To help meet the first demand, education needs to concern itself with creative action in all fields of human endeavour. To meet the second, it needs both to recognize and develop the use of experience media, which is the work of the creative arts, for it is through the uses of experience media that the sincere life is ordered in mind. The arts stand in relation to the intelligence of feeling such as the sciences do in relation to logical reasoning. The fact is, however, that education is still far from any fundamental concern with creativity even in the sciences and academic disciplines towards which it is biased. As for the intelligence of feeling, most educators are apparently unaware that anything like it exists, let alone able to recognize the function of the creative arts and the use of expressive media in developing it. Nevertheless, I believe that we have now reached the stage in the advanced industrial world where an understanding of the importance of both the creative response in general, and intelligence of feeling in particular, will grow as our problems become increasingly intractable to mechanistic and materialistic solutions.

Viewed in this light, technological advancement must absorb aesthetic import through the arts. We must be exposed to our immediate environment be it natural or artificial through art means; this should be the core or a central goal of world education.

We must become aware that at the physical level of life, our survival depends upon the survival of the environmental life support system, and the at the emotional and intellectual level of life, the quality and nature of our survival will depend upon the kind of environment that web imagine into existence. We have to come to terms with our power to create. The awareness of this power demand the acceptance of responsibility and assumption of control. In recognizing this, we need to accept responsibility for our imaginative genius, and so assume control of our environmental circumstance, which not only reflects us as we arc in the present, but also colours us, as we shall become in the future.

Arts and Industry

Industrial design, the design of objects for machine production, is an integration of art, engineering, and merchandising. Although its foundations go back to prehistoric man's first attempts to better his life by shaping tools and equipments, industrial design as we know it today was born in the 1920's. Its beginnings were hesitant and superficial "art" was "applied" to machine-made objects in superficial "styling" of external appearances by persons who had "good taste" or "fair".

How do industrial designers approach and solve their problem? The way in which one industrial designer handles a problem has been informatively discussed by Loewy (1952:39). The hypothetical case history he describes is that of a conservative manufacturer of ice cream freezers who for twenty-five years and successfully sold the same mode-until a new freezer by a rival manufacturer had seriously cut into his sales. Then she recognized the need for an experienced designer and called Mr. Loewy's in to help.

The first step in Loewy's programme is fact-finding, a process that has two phases. One is the getting of full information on the product to be redesigned and comparative information on the competitors. Although the client can readily supply the designer with some of the data, such as sales booklets and sales records, additional independent investigation is in order. The designers representatives go into the field for first hand information form dealers and salesmen, and they also lake several freezers into their shop for thorough, comparative testing. Not only is the product studied but the whole, promotional procedure is scrutinized wrappers, packing boxes, sales literature, and even the company's stationary and trademark. The other phase is getting all the pertinent information on the manufacturers mechanical facilities for production and on his key personnel. For this, a task force from the designers'office visit the clients factory to see what equipment is available and. equally important, to become well acquainted with the personnel experience, skills, and attitudes.

Then, as the second step, designing begins with many preliminary sketches and models. This is a period of creative exploration during which literally hundreds of drawings may be made. The sky is the limit-but appearance is by no means the only consideration. Because the fact- finding programme disclosed, among many other point, the fact that the current model both look bulky, and heavy. Alternative materials and manufacturing techniques are carefree checked with the company Engineering Department. Then comes the time to judging the many sketches and selecting the three or four that hold the greatest promise. Models of these are made and attractively displayed for a meeting with company officials. Discussion on them may last only a few hours, or go on for several days. As a result of this conference, the designs are improved. Again, models are made, bul this time, they are finished to look exactly as though they were ready to be used. These are studies in detail from all points of view, even to the taking of photographs to see how all the products will show up when printed or televised in advertisement. Again, there is a conference between the designer and client on further design revisions.

The third step is the making and testing of working models. From accurate mechanical drawing the company produces by hand a few working models. These are used to check such factors as ease of operation and maintenance, cleanability, and noise. Also they are abused to the extreme; dropped, banged, hit and subjected to extreme temperatures. If they stand up well, final drawing lead to the necessary changes in the manufacturer's plant and programme. When the first units are manufactured, the designer checks everything again and pay special attention to such details as finish, colour, trademark, and packaging. Then full-scale production begins and the freezers are soon in the distributor's hands.

Promotion is the forth steps. Hotel ballroom or convention hall are rented in the large cities and celebration parties are organized. After refreshments, speeches and music, the new product is dramatically unveiled to buyers from representative stores. Then the arts of advertising call it to the attention of the buying public, and it succeeds or fails in terms of how millions of potential purchasers react to it.

Problems

In Nigeria context, we talk of art and technology, do we really achieve anything? Where does the problem lie? The problem is, we have so much neglected art and relegated the artists to the background. The government has gone ahead to set up institutions of science and technology, polytechnics etc. government has gone ahead to give priority to science people, and more so the establishment of the ministry of science and technology by the defunct civilian administration some years back. The payment of science allowances to science teachers by some state governments and also giving priority to science students in the award of scholarship by both federal and state governments. This is to show that science has much been publicized above all other field of endeavours. Science alone cannot bring about technology in this country.

Now, let us take a look at what other people and nations did in order to bring about technology proper in their various places. In Federal Republic of Germany, technology is a way of life. People are made to see work as work.

In France, according to Sieber, (1971:204), "Pupils are made to be aware of economic and social factors in the world of industry. Technology is a science, as well as a language. It is linked with construction. It then affects the culture of the people". As fulfillment measure, France has therefore compulsorily set up in its school subjects like handcraft, art and physical education natural science, history and geography etc

According to Lloyd et al (1973:58), "In Japan, work is work. No single minute passes without their doing one particular job or the other "in Nigeria we go to work as from 7.30 am, how many hours do we actually put to work, how many hours do we take for break and how many holiday periods do we have in a year? etc. It was just after world war II that Japan started waking from deadly bombs on their two cities of Hiloshima, and Nagasaki and down to raise a technology hence second to none in the world. They did not put "art" on the fence hence all these are art based.

Another mountain of problem that is on our way of progress toward technological advancement is cultural conflict or religious conflict which amount to cultural conflict or religious which amount to cultural self annihilation because we prefer the white man's religion most and turn round to condemn our religion. The white man sees our spirits and demons as juju' or Fetish' or "superstition' but we in turn see his demons or Fetishes as religious art. Somebody talks of saints and another talks of 'Ancestors' show me the difference.

Today in our time we do not have saint Ode, or Ogah but we have Saint John; saint Theresa etc. Why do we need to sit down and wait for the white man to send to us from abroad their technological products which is consuming all our oil and yet we have never acquired. In Europe, the conflict between aesthetic and functional classes of art could not have been resolve but for W. Gropius of the Bauhanus. The artists and engineers and the craft man were brought together to build a technology by the help of their joint knowledge. Hence in Nigeria, we have distinction. It is the engineer that makes or designs the product and the consumers are satisfied. Because the engineer is not an artist himself, the designs he produces cannot march with the ones made aboard. It is time we tried the first by way of giving him prominence in technological development and only then can the campaign by "made in Nigeria goods" be a success. Dewey (1959:85), opines, "technological development cannot be left only in the hands of scientists. The artist has a vital role to play". If only the government supports the teaching of art in our schools, then art will truly be the bedrock of technology in the nation. In order to bring art and craft at the same level the distinction has to be done away with. According to Smith (1964), "all forms of art have utilitarian purpose therefore any distinction brought about between craft and fine arts is purely artificial".

Our educational system was brought about by the British government when they colonized the Nigerians. The British government did not introduce art in our school curriculum probably because it never realized the function of art. The economic pressure in Europe forced Britain was quite inferior to goods produced in the world. Since they were inferior, they did not attract market. An inquiry had to be made by the British government as to why her product could not compete favourably well in the open and international market. According to Carline (1968:76) " some of these countries whose products were competing favourably well in the market were Germany, France, Russia and others". Several notable personalities were invited aboard to find out the conditions in those places. French designs were so superior and theirs were highly emphasized. The committee gathered that France, the workman is himself the artist and that in Germany, government had included drawing (art) compulsory in its national education policy. Britain, then knew why its products were not ranking with those of other nations Britain never included art in its curriculum hence the poor production of their designs. It was from here that the inclusion of art and designs in Britain educational policy" was recommended by the committee. Government accepted this recommendation and by 1835 art and craft were taught as subject of their own in British primary and post primary schools.

Carline, (1968:103) continued "unless we make art the base of our learning process and introduce the subject in our national education policy we would go nowhere". China and Hong-Kong have recently discovered that products from craft shops produced by then have contributed immensely in strengthening their external trade.

(*reative Arts Education as the Bedrock of Technology of Technology in Nation Building*

Art in our national educational policy can help a long- way in building this nation technologically, especially now that we have reverted to the 6-3-3-4 system of education. When we had our independence in 1960, we had sought to find a proper educational style for our schools. We then come to discover that the educational system, which Britain brought to us which was 6-5-2-3 did not augur well for us after all. After all it had been imported. Since the time of Indirect rule, 1900 to the time of independence, 1960 marked the period in which we were ruled by the British people. We started to stop operating their form of education because it did not take into cognizance Nigeria's cultural, political and socio-economic backgrounds of this nation. The national curriculum conference (NCC) through the Nigerian Educational Research council (NERC), which was formed by the Federal Military Government in 1969 was to provide a forum to discuss what brought about 6-3-3-4 system of education.

This is where Nigeria can lay hold of the opportunity and include art in the nation's school curricular and by so doing we establish art as the bedrock of technology in the country. The white men could not have made art the base of their learning process if they did not recognize the importance of art in the development of a nations technology. If Nigeria can go ahead and make art the backbone of this great nation as the western world would, we will never be what we are by now?

Nigeria should give serious thought of making use of prisoners to be craftsmen. Old people's home should be built differently so as to keep the occupants busy with crafts of various kinds. For example, there is practical technology in the Tiv puppet-theatre show popularly known as KWAGH-11IR in Benue State. Everything in Kwagh -hir is wood. It is like a bulldozer digging nearby. There is no metal mixed up in the construction of this Kwagh-hir. Is this not a technology? Those who produce this are called artisans. They do not even have any special tracing. It is the combination of the artists, scientists, artisan that form a full-fledged technology. When we talk of technology, we mean therefore, whereby people produce certain things to meet their needs and not something that has to come from abroad. According to Murray (1975:24), " technology entirely depends on the harnessing of our God given abilities which are creative".

Recommendations for Possible Solutions.

I. These are the ways by which these ambiguities and abnormalities can be solved. And if they must be solved at all, the government and mass media, the populace of the society and our art galleries and museums must be involve.

n. The government should establish art and craft centres. This should particularly be in the rural areas where those who are talented in various fields of art can apply their artistic skills,

in. Adult education programmes should be established so that the traditional artists can acquaint himself with the tools of todaj.

iv. Like in the time of FESTAC, government should sponsor National and state festival of art and culture,

v The government should establish a national Endowment fund for arts like that of the United state of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK),

vi. Nigeria craft schools, technical/vocational schools to be adequately financed in order to produce suitable and qualified craftsman who can be self employed through such grants sponsored by such government. MI. Government should allow the subject, art to be taught in the schools in the country particularly, polytechnics. Viii. Government should sponsor and recognize the Kwagh-hir puppet-theatre show, having in mind that technology starts from the crafts, even toys.

Conclusion

This is where Nigeria can lay hold of the opportunity and include art in the nation's schools curriculum and by so doing we establish art as the bedrock of technology in this country.

Today we are still experimenting with materials and structural devices. Some of which are briefly discussed in this paper, we are also 'humanizing' factories. The shapes of rooms and machines and their surface are being made stimulating and satisfying.

Being at the utilitarian end of the scale, industrial shaped towards economical out-put, but our ideas of efficiency and economy differ form those held a century ago. Instead of concentrating solely

on machine efficiency, we think of human economy, which brings profit and satisfaction for all, in the long run.

Despite the fact that human life is becoming more and more technological, it cannot afford to be at the expense of the development of artistic creativities. As was stated earlier, the two need each other. They should develop together for the benefit of the society. Artistic creativity is natural to human existence. It makes life more meaningful. Here lies the role of the arts and artistic creativities in a technological era. Human life is multifaceted and should be treated as such. Technology and the arts have to compliment each other.

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